

Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament
RELS 2104-001
Denny 102
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Office Hours: Tuesday 2 -3:30 and by appointment

This syllabus is a contract. Please understand that you agree to its provisions by remaining in the course.

Course Description: There is no such thing as "the Bible." But there is a fascinating story behind the creation of biblical literature. In this class, we will find out why we are visiting a library (rather than reading a book), contend with the evidence that helps us understand who wrote biblical literature and why, and prepare to study the Hebrew Bible on its own terms and in its historical context. This is not a survey of the Hebrew Bible, but a class teaching students how to approach, analyze, and understand its texts.

Our Sources: Most translations of the Hebrew Bible are influenced by modern religious perspectives that did not exist at the time the texts were composed and recorded. Finding the Hebrew Bible in a non-sectarian, linguistically responsible English translation is, in a word, a tough call. But not impossible, as the course text *The Jewish Study Bible* proves. You will also be reading from James Bowley's *Introduction to Hebrew Bible: A Guided Tour of Israel's Sacred Library*. Please be aware that you may not rely on other translations of biblical texts in this course; we all need (literally) to be on the same page!

Goals:

To give you a basic knowledge of the types of literature to be found in Hebrew Bible

To help you understand why scholars are absolutely certain that, among other things:

- There is no such thing as "The Bible."
- Hebrew Bible was not the work of one person.
- Hebrew Bible authors did not write for future generations.
- Hebrew Bible authors had agendas.
- Many Hebrew Bible texts are composite documents.
- The Hebrew Bible is, in effect, a library.

To help you acquire the knowledge and skills to (among other things):

- distinguish between an academic approach to Hebrew Bible and a faith-based approach.
- approach Hebrew Bible as a scholar

Attendance Policies: *This means active participation in class dialogue informed by your careful and intellectually informed assessment of the assigned readings.* Policies below are from the *UNCC Faculty Handbook* and the UNC-system handbook:

1. Students are expected to attend **punctually all** scheduled sessions in the courses for which they are registered and are responsible for completing the work from all class sessions.
2. Students who miss class are responsible for the work missed.
3. Instructors are not required to give make-up tests except in the case of religious observance (see below).
4. You must be **on time** to be counted as present.
5. Students **may not** miss more than two classes without seriously affecting their grade.

ABSENCE POLICY:

- **1 absence:** You miss the benefit of any class announcements about changes or expectations, you will miss critical lecture material and class discussion. **It is your responsibility** to acquire notes and information from other students. If you miss class, we will not repeat lectures, quizzes, or exams given in that class. (See 2 & 3 above.)
- **2 absences:** you lose the "benefit of the doubt" at your final grade, if your work falls on the line between two grades.
- **3 absences:** you lose ½ letter grade on your final grade for the course.
- **4 absences:** you lose one full letter grade on your final grade for the course
- **5 and more:** Two and a half weeks of missed classes or more will result in receiving an "F" for the course.

All assignments are due at their announced dates and times. In other words (and please note well), there will be **NO MAKEUP OPPORTUNITIES** scheduled except in the case of a **documented emergency**. Completing work on time is mandatory.

Please note: Documented emergencies do **NOT** include:

- Seeking medical care for routine illnesses or choosing to schedule medical appointments during class hours.
- Your car breaking down.
- Similar unforeseen issues.

Plan for the possibility of having to attend a funeral or be ill with flu or have your car break down. Assume that you are likely to have to miss class for some unforeseen reason. You have two days to do exactly that without serious penalty. Attend class all the time so you have two days in reserve to have at the ready for unforeseen circumstances.

*As Prof. John Reeves, Blumenthal Chair of Judaic Studies writes: "Emergency does not include your social involvements, travel plans, job schedule, disk and/or printer failures, the state of your love life, your obligations to other courses, or general malaise over the state of the world. The world has been in a mess as long as anyone can remember, and most of the world's work is done by people whose lives are a mass of futility and discontent." I know, it's dark. But here is the takeaway: **More than two absences will seriously affect your final grade.***

Religious Observance: Students may take two absences for religious observance *per academic year*. Students must fill out the "Request for Accommodation for Religious Observance" form and turn it in prior to the census day (September 4) to be granted such an absence. See (<http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-134.html>) and (<http://legal.uncc.edu/sites/legal.uncc.edu/files/media/policies/ps-134-AccommodationForm.pdf>).

Academic Integrity Students have the responsibility to know and observe the requirements of The UNC Charlotte Code of Student Academic Integrity (Undergraduate Catalog p. 299). This code forbids cheating, fabrication or falsification of information, multiple submission of academic work, plagiarism, abuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Any special requirements of permission regarding academic integrity in this course will be stated by the instructor, and are binding on the students. Academic evaluations in this course include a judgment that the student's work is free from academic dishonesty of any type. Grades in this course will be adversely affected by academic dishonesty. Students who violate the code can be expelled from UNC Charlotte. The normal penalty for a first offense is zero credit on the work involving dishonesty and **further substantial reduction** of the course grade. In almost all cases the course grade is reduced to F. Copies of the code can be obtained from the Dean of Students Office. Standards of academic integrity will be enforced in this course. Students are expected to report cases of academic dishonesty to the course instructor. See <http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html> for further information.

If you are ever found to be acting dishonestly (please see the UNCC guidelines on academic honesty), the most stringent possible responses will apply. While I encourage students to work in groups on material or when preparing for exams, your final product must be an individual one and is graded as such. I will never assign group projects of any kind.

Course Syllabus: The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class or by email notice. If you miss class, be sure to ask other students (not me) if there were important announcements you should note.

Instructor's absence or tardiness: You must wait a full 15 minutes after the start of class before you may leave without being counted absent, or follow any written instructions we may give you about our anticipated tardiness.

Disability accommodations: Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

Class Components and Grading:

Quizzes (lowest dropped):	10
Exam 1:	20
Exam 2:	20
Exam 3:	20
Final Exam:	30

The grading scale used in this course is as follows:

90 – 100	A	=	demonstrable mastery of material; can creatively synthesize
80 – 89B	=		some demonstrable proficiency in control of material & analysis
70 – 79C	=		satisfactory performance of assignments; little or no analysis
60 – 69D	=		inadequate and/or faulty understanding of material
0 – 59 F	=		unacceptable work

Ten Rules for Classroom Engagement

Below is an indication of my expectations; please read carefully. Your continued presence in this class constitutes **full acceptance** of the policies below of the policies below and all terms otherwise described in the syllabus. Please note: Failure to abide by the policies and terms of the syllabus may result in points deducted from the final grade in the course and/or reports to appropriate university officials which can have consequences for the student in question.

1. This class assumes a scholarly attitude to religious beliefs and texts. We will look at religion scientifically as a historical phenomenon. All texts and materials are treated as human products with human agendas. Faith-based interpretations and approaches may be appropriate in seminaries, houses of worship, and the like. They are not admissible in a secular setting. This classroom is a secular, academic space.
2. Come to class prepared. Check your email every day. Before each class, make sure you have done the reading and thought about it so you can participate with clarity, honesty and intelligence. Such things are highly valued by your instructor. (See also #4, below.)
3. All homework assignments must be typed. Work does not conform to basic literary standards will not receive a passing grade. If you have trouble with punctuating, writing complete sentence, developing a thesis statement, and the like, seek help at the Writing Resource Center.
4. Class discussion is encouraged, of course. But if you are going to say something, make sure that it is well thought out and contributes to the class before you speak. Please remember that students come from many backgrounds and may have different opinions: ***If you cannot be respectful during discussions, you will be asked to leave.***
5. The instructor of this course is to be addressed in all communications as “Dr. Thiede.”
6. Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert will hunt an antelope by running it to death, chasing after it until it literally collapses from heat exhaustion. Please let this amazing show of perseverance inspire you when *you* go hunting for information. For example, before you send an email to the instructor asking for an exam time, what pages were assigned, or the like, check course documents like the syllabus first. Do not expect a response if you send a question to the instructor that can be answered by reading the syllabus or other course communications.
7. The standards for extra credit work are high in this class: While students are free to choose any topic they wish, it must be of sufficient quality to win the author a nomination for the Nobel Prize in Religious Studies. Any extra credit work without proof of nomination will be rejected out of hand.¹
8. Your classmates deserve their privacy. Do not give personal information or email addresses to outsiders who are not a part of this class. Class lists may not be used to advertise your particular affiliations, student groups, and the like. This constitutes spamming other students. The Student Organization Handbook explicitly states that “Student organizations may not disclose or collect information in e-mails that they are privileged to access because of their position at the University.” Class time and student emails are not to be used to promote personal viewpoints, agendas, or organizations you might belong to.
9. Any guests may attend this class *only with the written permission of the instructor.*
10. If you have any issues that might compromise your ability to perform well in this class, please inform the instructor **as soon as the issue is relevant**. Think of this class as a nice residential home. If you had a serious problem with the house, such as an infestation of African killer wombats, you would want to do something about it as soon as possible. You would not want to wait until the last moment, for instance, when the wombats have eaten all your gardenias, and are about to construct an ICBM to demolish your house for good. Similarly, you should inform the instructor of any issues early, when something can still be done. Please.

¹ Please remember that the Nobel Committee only releases the list of nominees fifty years after their candidacy. Therefore, you should consider getting your work done well in advance.

Assigned Readings from texts and/or texts sent via email or Moodle are listed on the day they are due.

Introduction to the Course: How to Read Hebrew Bible

Aug 25	Topic: Introduction to the course: course contract and syllabus
Aug 27	Topic: The Past is Foreign Territory, Part 1 <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Assorted Sacred Texts, Hamlet Summary, “Shakespeare in the Bush” and “General Principles”
Sept 1	Topic: There is no such thing as THE Bible <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Bowley, <i>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</i> , Chapter 1, pp. 1-23; PowerPoint What does it Mean? Bible in Translation <i>Quiz 1</i>
Sept 3	Topic: How do we study Bible? <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Bowley, <i>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</i> , Chapter 2, pp. 38-53; PowerPoint: On the “Isms” of the Ancient Near East
Sept 8	Topic: Putting Bible in Historical Context, Part 1 <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Bowley, <i>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</i> , pp. 55-66. Selected maps, timeline
Sept 10	Topic: Putting Bible in Historical Context, Part 2 <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Bowley, <i>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</i> , pp. 66-77. Selected maps, timeline <i>Quiz 2</i>
Sept 15	Class Review!
Sept 17	Exam 1
Sept 22	No class: Topic: Answering Questions of “When” – The Literary Production of Biblical Texts <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Bowley, <i>Introduction to Hebrew Bible</i> , Chapter 4, pp. 79-93. (We will discuss this in class on Sept. 24.
Sept 24	Topic: The Documentary Hypothesis, Part 1 <i>Assigned Reading</i> Collection of Evidence Article; Collection of Evidence Chart; “Two Many Cooks Biblical Texts” and “Who Killed Goliath” <i>Quiz 3</i>
Sept 29	Topic: The Documentary Hypothesis, Part 2 <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Pentateuch Article from Encyclopedia Judaica, pp. 730-744 (up to “The Laws”). Chart for Documentary Hypothesis.
Oct 1	Topic: The Documentary Hypothesis <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Pentateuch Article from Encyclopedia Judaica, pp. 730-744 (up to “The Laws”).
Oct 6	Class Review!
Oct 8	Exam 2
Oct 13	Fall Break
Oct 15	Topic: Four Flood Stories and biblical flood doublets <i>Assigned Reading:</i> Four Ancient Flood Stories; Introductory Material on the Gilgamesh and Atrahasis Flood Stories, Legend for flood stories by color, flood stories by color, comparison chart for four flood stories.

- Oct 20 **Topic: Four Flood Stories and biblical flood doublets**
Assigned Reading: Four Ancient Flood Stories; Introductory Material on the Gilgamesh and Atrahasis Flood Stories, Legend for flood stories by color, flood stories by color
- Oct 22 **Topic: More Genesis doublets**
Assigned Reading: JSB: Genesis 1-2:4, Genesis 3 (pp. 10-16) and commentary; Chart for comparing Genesis stories
Quiz 4
- Oct 27 **Topic: More Genesis Doublets**
Assigned Reading: JSB: Genesis 15 and 17 (pp. 35-36 and 40-42); Genesis 15 and 17 Chart
- Oct 29 **Exam 3**
- Nov 3 **Topic: Understanding Bible in ITS Context (Not Later Ones) – On Satan in Bible, Part 1**
Assigned Reading: The Absence of Satan in the Old Testament – Hebrew Bible
<http://michaelsheiser.com/TheNakedBible/2010/02/the-absence-of-satan-in-the-old-testament/> See also the video that is linked to this blog post; it will be part of the required material
- Nov 5 **Topic: Understanding Bible in ITS Context (Not Later Ones) – On Satan in Bible, Part 2**
Assigned Reading: How do Common Nouns Compare in Hebrew; On the Name “Lucifer” and the use of the Root s-t-n; Opposing, an Opponent, to Oppose in Hebrew Bible; YHVH – Angel of the Lord – Prince Mastema in Exodus; Afternoon Tea, study guide on Satan material.
Quiz 5
- Nov 10 **Topic: What do Biblical (and Archeological) Texts and Inscriptions Say About YHVH?**
Assigned Reading: *Jewish Study Bible:* Gen 6:1-4, p. 19; Ex 15:11, p. 128; Deut 32:8, p. 419; Ps 29:1-11, p. 1298; 82:1-8, p. 1361; Job 38:4-7, p. 1548). See also: Is. 27:1, p. 817; Is. 51:9-11, pp. 869-70; Ps 74:12-17, pp. 1349-50; Ps 89:5-14, pp. 1367-68. See also: Isaiah 46:3, p. 859 and Isaiah 49: Verses 1, 5, and 15, pp. 864-867. See also, Proverbs 8, pp. 1450-52. Read commentary!
- Nov 12 **Topic: The Divine Feminine**
Assigned Reading: Biblical Texts Imaging God as Female; Proverbs Text – Lady Wisdom and YHVH’s Delight; Queen of Heaven and Asherah Texts in the HB; YHVH’s Wife - Notes from an Ancient Israelite Archeological Site; Lecture: Jarvis Lecture (on Moodle).
- Nov 17 **Topic: Monotheism vs. Monolatry: With Special Emphasis on Deut: 32:7-9**
Assigned Reading: *Jewish Study Bible:* Gen 6:1-4, p. 19; Ex 15:11, p. 128; Deut 32:8, p. 419; Ps 29:1-11, p. 1298; 82:1-8, p. 1361; Job 38:4-7, p. 1548). See also: Is. 27:1, p. 817; Is. 51:9-11, pp. 869-70; Ps 74:12-17, pp. 1349-50; Ps 89:5-14, pp. 1367-68. See also: Isaiah 46:3, p. 859 and Isaiah 49: Verses 1, 5, and 15, pp. 864-867. See also, Proverbs 8, pp. 1450-52. Read commentary
- Nov 19 **Topic: The Language of Hebrew Bible, Part 1**
Assigned Reading: Reread texts assigned for November 19, please.
 Three Versions of Deuteronomy 32: 7-9 *Quiz 6*
- Nov 24 - 26 **No class: Instructor away at conference and Thanksgiving break**
Assigned Reading: *Assigned Reading:* James Bowley, *Introduction to Hebrew Bible*, pp. 25-31, 97-105. Also: *Jewish Study Bible: Genesis*, Chapters 24, pp. 45-48; Chapter 27, pp. 51-53; and Chapter 28; pp. 53-55. Read commentary! Texts for in class PPT: How to Read the Hebrew – Genesis 1:26; Interpretation Through Punctuation; What does YHVH mean?; Hebrew -More on Consonantal Issues and Wordplay.
- Dec 1 **Topic: The Language of Hebrew Bible, Part 2**
Assigned Reading: *Jewish Study Bible* Genesis 2:5 – Chapter 3, pp. 10-16. See also Genesis 18, pp. 36-37 and Genesis 21, pp. 40-42. Read commentary.. Read commentary. Texts for in class

PPT: Eve and God's Reality Check – online lecture (Moodle site); Eve and God's Reality Check – Text

Dec 3

Topic: Humor in Bible: On Blind Prophets and Seeing Donkeys

Assigned Reading: *Jewish Study Bible*: Numbers, Chapter 22. pp. 312-14. Read commentary! See also: Was Balaam a Real Dude in Ancient Near Eastern History?

Dec 8

Topic: Review and wrap-up.

FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY DEC 15 11-1:30 pm