

Theo-011
INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL LITERATURE
Summer 2017

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

For centuries the Bible has been recognized as a primary source for ethical and theological teachings, but recent years have seen a renewed appreciation for the Bible as a work of literature. This course will explore the literary artfulness of the Bible, and students will gain the skills needed to analyze both the poems and the narratives that constitute so much of the biblical canon. The style of biblical literature often differs greatly from that of both modern and other forms of ancient literature; by learning what is distinctive about biblical narrative and poetry we may begin to read the Bible with new eyes, and we may also come to fresh insights about the theological and ethical dimensions of these texts as well. The summer version of this course is slightly different than in the academic year, in that we will cover less material but will instead focus in closely on representative texts and will work to become skilled readers of biblical (and other) literature.

TEXTS

The New Oxford Annotated Bible (College Edition), New Revised Standard Version, edited by Michael D. Coogan.
Stephen Mitchell, The Book of Job. Harpercollins. Paperback, 1992 reprint.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- (1) Attendance, preparation, and participation (20%):** Come to class regularly and be prepared to discuss the readings for the day. Plan to spend, on average, a couple of hours preparing for each session – reading, thinking, taking notes.
- (2) Three short papers (20% each, for 60% total):** About 3-4 good pages each on an assigned question or topic, these papers should show a real analytical engagement with the biblical texts.
- (3) Two class presentations, a.k.a. ‘star of the day!’ (10 % each, for 20%):** Everyone will have two days when they take special responsibility to guide our discussion and present their own literary analysis of the biblical reading.

COURSE SCHEDULE

May	22 M	Thinking about the Bible in literary ways.
	23 T	The workings of biblical narrative. Read: Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar" (on Blackboard) Read closely: Genesis 22:1-19
	24 W	The workings of biblical poetry. Read: Robert Alter, "The Medium of Poetry" Read closely: selection of biblical poems and lines
	25 Th	Tragically heroic men and the women who love them. Read closely: Two passages from Judges 4 & 5; excerpt from the Iliad Read: J. P. Fokkelman, "Preliminary Exercise" (on Blackboard)
	26 F	The book of Ruth: a classic short story. Read closely: Ruth 1-4
	29 M	Memorial Day – No Class Meeting.
	30 T	Prelude to the story of David -- the world's first novel? Read: 1 Samuel 1-15
	31 W	The rise of David. Read: 1 Sam 16-31
June	1 Th	The Saul sandwich. Read closely: 1 Sam 24-26 *** Paper #1 due ***
	2 F	Poetry and rhetoric in David's elegy for Saul and Jonathan. Read closely: 2 Sam 1
	5 M	David takes control. Read: 2 Sam 1-12 Read closely: 2 Sam 11
	6 T	The decline of David. Read: 2 Samuel 13 – 1 Kings 2

- 7 W Biblical love poetry, part 1.
Read: The Song of Songs
Read closely: Song of Songs 8:6-7
***** Paper #2 due *****
- 8 Th Biblical love poetry, part 2.
Read closely: Song of Songs 3:1-5 and 5:2-8
- 9 F Read: Stephen Mitchell's Introduction;
Carol Newsom, "The Book of Job as Polyphonic Text."
- 12 M Read closely: Job 1-2
- 13 T Read closely: Job 3
- 14 W Read: Job 4-21
- 15 Th Read: Job 22-31
Read closely: Job 28
- 16 F Read closely: Job 38:1 – 42:17
***** Paper #3 due *****