THE ART OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE
Liberal Studies – LSHV 449
Spring 2015

Professor Tod Linafelt
Office: 126 New North
Phone: 202-687-6238
Email: linafelt@georgetown.edu

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 Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), and students will gain the skills needed to fully explore 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 modern, Western literature; and by learning what is distinctive about biblical literature, we may begin to read the Bible with new eyes and may also come to fresh insights about the theological and ethical dimensions of these texts as well.

Required Texts

Course Requirements
(1) Attendance and participation: Come to class regularly and prepared to discuss the readings for the week. (2) Three short papers: Three pages (or so) on an assigned question or topic, these papers should present a clear thesis and support it with evidence from the texts under consideration. (3) Term paper: Due at the end of the course, this paper of approximately 10 pages will present your own interpretation of a biblical text, based on close literary analysis.

Course Schedule
Jan 8 Introduction to the Course
Biblical Literature and the Western Literary Tradition

Part I: Narrative
15 Genesis 1-3
Phyllis Trible, “A Love Story Gone Awry,” pp. 72-115 only
(on Blackboard)
Alter, Narrative, chs. 1 & 9

22 Genesis 12-36
Alter, Narrative, ch. 2
*** short paper #1 due ***
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| Feb 29 | Genesis 37-50  
Alter, *Narrative*, chs. 7 & 8 |
| Feb 5 | 1 Samuel 1-31  
Alter, *Narrative*, chs. 4 & 5 |
| 12 | 2 Samuel 1-20  
Alter, *Narrative*, ch. 6 |
| 19 | The Book of Ruth  
Alter, *Narrative*, ch. 3  
*** short paper #2 due *** |
| 26 | Alter, *Poetry*, chs. 1-3 |
| Mar 5 | The Song of Songs  
Alter, *Poetry*, ch. 8 |
| 12 | No Class Meeting – Spring Break. |
| 19 | The Song of Songs  
Focus on 3:1-5, 5:2-8, and 8:6-7  
*** short paper #3 due *** |
| 26 | Psalms 1, 8, 13, 18, 30, 44, 74, 81, 86, 88, 109, 137, 145  
Alter, *Poetry*, ch. 5 |
| Apr 2 | No Class Meeting – Easter Break. |
| 9 | Attend Mason Lecture, Copley Hall. |
| 16 | Job 1-27 & 38-42  
Alter, *Poetry*, ch. 4 |
| 23 | *** term paper due *** |
**Academic Standards:** MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

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