Genres and Themes of Biblical Literature I
CG-Bible-502A
Fall 2016-2017

Instructor:  
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FALL SEMESTER

Genres and Themes of Biblical Literature I

Mondays 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm ( Beit Midrash from 10:45 am – 1:00 pm)

Pre-requisite: Hebrew IV

BIBLE 502A

Description

This course will focus on Biblical prose and law. The course will cover the arc of biblical history and historiography, examining prose in the Torah, as well as selections from the books of Judges, Samuel I and II, Kings I and II, and Chronicles. A few sessions will also focus on legal, prescriptive and proscriptive material, including ritual and civil law.

Particular attention is paid to understanding of the Hebrew text, and to the linguistic and literary characteristics of the different genres. First part of a two-semester sequence.

Goals of the Course:

- Attain a basic familiarity with the content, dating, themes, and canonization of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh).
- Exposure to different genre in the Tanakh, including cosmological history, historical narrative, legal codes, novella, and court tales. (We will look at prophetic oracles, biblical poetry, wisdom literature, and apocalyptic writings in the second semester).
- Acquire a basic familiarity with the methods of critical biblical scholarship and be able to apply them to the reading of biblical texts.
Enable students to become more adept at reading the Tanakh in the original Hebrew. This will be accomplished by introducing/reviewing some salient features of Biblical Hebrew phonology, morphology, and syntax, and through the usage of the concordance, B.D.B., and grammar resources.

**Required Texts:**

- Any Hebrew Bible. Recommended: The Bilingual Koren edition (preferred!).
- Other selected articles and readings will be uploaded to Schoology.

**Highly recommended reference works:**

- Thomas O. Lambdin’s textbook, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, can serve as a rough and ready simplified reference grammar, and is therefore highly recommended for students without extensive experience reading Biblical Hebrew.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

1. Participation (10%). Attendance and active involvement in discussion is critical to progress in this course. Preparation for each class entails reading a large section of the biblical text (in translation), preparing a shorter section in the original Hebrew, and reading at least one secondary source (introducing a critical reading strategy pertinent to passage at hand).
2. Three Short Assignments (20% each): 1) on Biblical Criticism, “Noah and The Flood”, due Mon. Sept. 26th, 2) on “The Hexapla” -- the history of the reception of the Hebrew Bible, which will familiarize you with questions of canon,
translation & alternatives to the Masoretic text – LXX (the Septuagint) and the
texts of Qumran, due Nov. 21st; 3) on Inner-biblical interpretation, “The
Foundations of the First Temple,” due Dec. 5th.
3. Take-home final exam (30%). The take-home Final Exam will be cumulative and
may address any of the readings and class discussions. It is due on Friday at 9
a.m., Dec. 23rd (last day of classes).


Part I: Orientation to the Bible its contents: The Formation of the Biblical Canon.

Part II: Cosmogony and Primordial History in the Ancient Mesopotamian context.

Primary Reading: Genesis chapters 1-11 (Primordial History); Gen. 1:1-2:4a (prepare in
Hebrew); selections from Enuma Elish (“The Epic of Creation” in Stephanie Dalley,
Myths From Mesopotamia, 228-277). Alternatively see: http://www.piney-
2.com/Enuma.html (trans. By N.K. Sandars) or http://www.sacred-
texts.com/ane/enuma.htm (L.W. King)

Secondary Reading: Marc Brettler’s essay “The Canonization of the Bible”, in JSB,
2072-2077. Additional useful background information is found in the following essays in the
JSB, which you are encouraged to read at your leisure: "Languages of the Bible” (pp.
2062-2067); "The Bible in the Dead Sea Scrolls" (pp. 1920-1928); "Textual Criticism of
the Bible" (pp. 2067-2072); and "The Development of the Masoretic Text" (pp. 2077-
2084).

2. Second Class: Mon. Sept. 19th, Comparing Genesis 1 and 2 – Introducing the
Documentary Hypothesis.

Primary Reading: Genesis 2-3 (in Hebrew), compare with Gen. 1:24-31. Introducing the
etiological narrative.

Secondary Reading: Documentary Hypothesis/Introducing J, P, E etc…. “The Modern
Study of the Bible” JSB, pp. 2084-2096. James Kugel, How to Read the Bible, pp. 2-57
(optional, on hold in library).

Hand-out FIRST ASSIGNMENT: “Noah and the Flood” (due Sept. 26th)

3. Third Class: Mon. Sept. 26th The Patriarchal and Matriarchal Narratives; *First
assignment on “Noah and the Flood” due.

Primary Reading: Genesis chapters 11-22 (The Abraham Cycle). Prepare “The
Abraham, Hagar and Sarah Triangle” Gen. 16 and 21, Deut. 21:15-17 (in Hebrew).

Secondary Reading: Robert Alter, “Biblical Type-Scenes and the Uses of Convention” in
The Art of Biblical Narrative, pp. 47-62; Joseph Blenkinsopp The Pentateuch, pp. 98-133
(uploaded to Schoology). Key terms: toledot, berit. Key literary concept: “Doublet
Scene”, “type scene”, “over-turn of primogeniture”.

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4. **Fourth Class: Wednesday Oct. 19th** (Make-up during HaMoed Sukkot)
The Book of the Covenant (Exodus)

**Primary Reading:** Exodus chapter 19-24. Comparison with Vassal Treaty and Ancient Near Eastern Legal Codes (Hammurabi, Assyrian).


**Primary Reading:** Leviticus chapters 17-26. Prepare Lev. 11 and Deut. 14:3-21 (in Hebrew).


6. **Sixth Class: Monday, Nov. 7th** The Deuteronomistic History Part I

**Primary Reading:** Joshua 8 and 23-24; Prepare Judges 8-9 (in Hebrew).


7. **Seventh Class: Monday Nov. 14th** The Deuteronomistic History Part II; In the Wake of the Judges

**Primary Reading:** Judges chapters 17-21; Prepare ch. 19 (in Hebrew).

8. Eighth Class: Monday Nov. 21st The Man Who Would Be King (The Election and Rejection of Saul); second assignment due.

Primary Reading: Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Sam. 8-15 (read for overview in English); prepare Deut. 17:14-20 and 1 Sam. 8 & 10 in Hebrew; 2nd assignment due.

Hand-out THIRD ASSIGNMENT on Inner Biblical Exegesis, DUE Dec. 5th

9. Ninth Class: Monday Nov. 28th, The United Monarchy: The Davidic Covenant and Zion Theology; third assignment due!

Primary Reading: 1 Samuel 16-18; 2 Samuel 6-7 (Hebrew).

Secondary Reading: Joel Rosenberg, “1 and 2 Samuel”, from The Literary Guide to the Bible, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, 122-145; selections from Jon Levenson’s Sinai and Zion (uploaded to Schoology).

10. Tenth Class: Monday, Dec. 5th The Divided Monarchy and King Josiah’s Religious Reforms; *Third Assignment Due.

Primary Reading: 1 Kings 11-13, prepare ch. 13 (in Hebrew); also 2 Kings 23-24.

Secondary Reading: JSB introduction to the book of Kings; Friedman, “In the Court of King Josiah,” from Who Wrote the Bible, pp. 101-135 (on Schoology and on hold in the library).


Primary Reading: Ezra 9:10-10:44; and Nehemiah 8-9 (prepare in Hebrew). Secondary Reading: See the introduction to Ezra and Nehemiah by Hindy Najman in JSB, pp. 1666-1671, and 1688-1689. The Problem of “Foreign Wives”; question: Who was a Jew?
No Class during Finals Week (Dec. 19th);
Rachel at AJS Conference, San Diego

Final Take-Home Exam due Friday, Dec. 23rd at 9 am (last day of classes).

Appendix Supplementary Resources – on the Internet, CDs, and Other Sources (Work in Process)

1) **JPS: Tanach** - Hebrew and English
   http://www.breslov.com/bible/

2) Comparing translations. You may access the NRSV on line at:
   [http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm](http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm). To compare translations see:
   [http://www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org). See also “The Unbound Bible”, which has an effective search engine and allows you to compare versions:
   http://unbound.biola.edu/

3) [http://earlyjewishwritings.com/](http://earlyjewishwritings.com/) - Includes Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha (Deuterocanon), Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, and Philo

4) Machon Mamre, Tanach in Hebrew (including one with cantillation marks), English (JPS 1917), and parallel Hebrew and English, plus Targum Onqelos
   http://www.mechon-mamre.org/

5) Glossary of Basic Terms in Judaism [http://www.jewfaq.org/glossary.htm](http://www.jewfaq.org/glossary.htm)

   This website contains the complete contents of the 12-volume Jewish Encyclopedia, which was originally published between 1901-1906.

7) **Ancient Near Eastern Texts (ANET)**-- historical overview (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, and so forth), as well as ANET (Enuma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, Code of Hammurabi, Atrahasis etc…). 
   http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook1.asp

8) **Sacred Texts**, includes ANET, as well as sources for comparative study -- books about religion, mythology, folklore and the esoteric online.

9) **Orion Center For The Study Of The Dead Sea Scrolls** - An invaluable site, which includes a Qumran cave tour, Orion Center DSS Bibliography, and online index of DJD volumes. [http://orion.msc.huji.ac.il/index.html](http://orion.msc.huji.ac.il/index.html)

10) The Dead Sea Scrolls Project (DSS) and Other Hebrew Manuscripts
    [http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/scr/](http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/scr/)
11) **Septuagint Studies** (LXX) – new English translation, includes also online resources for the study of the Septuagint: [http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/#res](http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/nets/#res)


Or [http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/](http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/) (includes Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha (also called Deuterocanon), Pseudepigrapha, Philo and Josephus)

CDs available:

1) Bible Works – excellent collection of resources (comparative translations, searchable, grammars, lexicons) [http://www.bibleworks.com/](http://www.bibleworks.com/)


**Applications for IPhone, Blackberry etc…. (Your call):**