Genres and Themes of Biblical Literature II – CG-Bible-502B
Hebrew College Mekorot Year, Spring 2015
3 graduate credits

(Draft)

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SPRING SEMESTER: Class meets on Tuesdays, 11:00 am-1:00 pm.

Pre-requisite: Hebrew V

Description of Course:
This course entails an introduction to the full complement of Biblical poetry, in its literary and historical context, and to modes of poetic interpretation and analysis. The course will cover selections from the Torah, Psalms, Proverbs, and the Book of Job, as well as selections from the Prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. We will discuss poetry within narrative, genres of Prophetic writings, apocalyptic revelations, and wisdom literature.

Goals of the Course:

- Attain a basic familiarity with the content, dating, themes, and canonization of poetic selections in the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh).
- Exposure to different genres 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 JPS Tanakh or the bilingual Koren edition (preferred!).
Other selected articles and readings will be together as a Course Reader (from hereon “Reader”).

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. Typical preparation consists of close reading of an individual poem or poetic unit, in Hebrew, during Beit Midrash periods; bulk reading of Biblical and extra- Biblical primary sources in English, supplemented by secondary readings.
2. Three Short Assignments (20% each): 1) on “Characteristics of Ancient Biblical Poetry”, **due Feb. 24**th; 2) on “Wisdom Literature” due **March 31**nd; 3) on “The Prophets” **due May 5**th.
3. Final exam (30%). The final exam will be cumulative and may address any of the readings and class discussions. It will be done in class, OPEN BOOK, on the last day of the semester, **Monday, May 19**th, **11 am - 1 pm**.

**Unit 1: Biblical Poetry (4 classes)**

1. **Feb. 3**nd Introduction to the Art of Biblical Poetry

- Primary Reading: Exodus 15.

**Hand-out Assignment #1** – Literary Analysis of Biblical Poetry, due **Feb. 24th**

3. **Feb. 17th**, The Psalms of David
- Primary Reading: Psalm 1

4. **Feb. 24th**, Psalms in Liturgy & Assignment #1 Due!
- Primary Reading: Psalm 145

**Unit 2: Wisdom Literature (4 classes)**

- Primary Reading: Job chs. 1-2, 42; Who is *ha-Satan*? The challenge of Job’s Wife.

6. March 10th, The Book of Job Part II; ‘The Lament’ and ‘Disputation’
   • Primary Reading: Job ch. 3-4.
   • Harold Fisch “Tragedy is not Enough”, chapter 3 of *Poetry with a Purpose*, 26-42 [uploaded to Schoology].

   • Primary Reading: Job chs. 38-41 (this is very difficult poetry – so cover as much as you can; ch 42 is the denouement – read that in English).

Hand-out Assignment #2 – Wisdom Literature – Proverbs, due March 31st

8. March 24th Proverbs and Sirach (of the *Apocrypha*) on “The Evil Woman/Good Wife”
   • Primary Reading: Proverbs 7:4-23 and 31 (in Hebrew); Sirach (or *Ecclesiasticus*) 25:13-23 and 26:1-18 (in English).

Unit 3: Biblical Prophecy (6 classes)

9. March 31st What is Biblical Prophecy? The Initiation into Service
**Assignment #2 on Wisdom Literature due today!**
   Primary Reading: Exod. ch. 3; Isaiah ch.1 & 6; Jeremiah ch. 1; Ezekiel chs.2-3.

No Classes on April 7th, Passover

10. April 14th Hosea and Ezekiel “Israel, the Harlot,”
    • Primary Reading: Hosea chs. 1-3 (in Hebrew), Ezek. chs. 15-16 (in English)

11. April 21st  Amos and Amaziah

   **Handout Third Assignment** – Biblical Prophecy, due May 5th

12. April 28th  The Prophet as Intercessor: The Call for Repentance
   Primary Reading: Hosea ch. 14 and Jeremiah in the Potters House (Jer.18:1-23).

13. May 5th  Second Isaiah  Prophecy of Consolation
   - Primary Reading: Isaiah 51:12 - 52:12.

14. May 12th  Zechariah: Addressing the Communities in Exile;
   Primary Reading: Zechariah 1:1-5:1 (focus on ch. 3); What is Apocalyptic Literature?

15. May 19th, Final Exam (in class), 11 am-1:00 pm

**Bibliography (Preliminary)**


