This course will introduce the major literary prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Book of the Twelve. Themes include ethics and concern for the poor and marginalized; attitudes toward Temple, ritual, and Torah; covenant, threat of exile, promise of restoration, the role of Jerusalem and the future of Israel; the marriage metaphor, messianic hopes, interplay of universalism and particularism, condemnation of idolatry and the promotion of worship of Israel’s God; discernment and the issue of true vs. false prophecy; reception, rejection and eventual canonization of prophetic messages and texts. We will pay attention to lexical and structural matters, literary/poetic style, aspects of persuasion and rhetoric. We will track prophetic personalities and careers, their sense of calling and vocation, their social location and theological concerns. We will look at prophets in canonical perspective and the trajectory of biblical history from tenth to fourth century BCE. Finally, we will be attentive to the tripartite division of Tanakh, and the role the prophetic books have played in later Jewish theology and liturgical life.

As we attend to conceptual and theological issues, our core aim in each class will be to read, study and absorb the words, phrases and larger units of the Hebrew text in their beauty and power. You will be asked to read with fluidity and confidence; to translate sentences and passages with attentiveness to ambiguity, polysemy and paronomasia (wordplays), and to address theological perspectives of each prophetic work. Students will make class presentations summarizing readings and will write a final paper on one of the above-mentioned themes.

Schedule:

Weeks 1-5: Introduction: the role of prophets in Israelite society (‘fourth estate’); the role of prophetic books in the Bible; the right and left hands of prophetic message (Reuther).

Introduction to Isaiah. The shape of Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah: chapters 1-39; chapters 40-66.

Isaiah chapters 1,2,5,6,11,12, 18, 25-33, 40, 41, 44, 51-58, 66.

Weeks 6-10. Introduction to Jeremiah: personality, vocation, message.

Jeremiah chapters 1,2, 7, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26, 27-32, 34-37.

Weeks 11-12. Introduction to Ezekiel. Theology, ritual, vision of restoration.

Ezekiel chapters 1,2, 8, 14, 20, 36, 37, 47.

Weeks 13-15. Introduction to the Book of the Twelve. The trajectory of Israelite-Jewish history.

Theology of exile, second Exodus, return.

Hosea chapters 1, 2, 11-14. Joel ch. 3; Amos chs. 1-3, 7-9; Micah ch. 6; Haggai chs. 1-2; Zechariah chs. 1-4, 8. Malachi chs. 1-3.
Readings


Levenson, Jon D. "The Jerusalem Temple in Devotional and Visionary Experience", in *Jewish Spirituality From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, edited by Arthur Green, vol. 1 (New York: Crossroad, 1988)


Moberly, R. W. L. *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)


