Genres and Themes of Biblical Literature I  
CG-Bible-502A  
Hebrew College Mekorot Year Fall 2014

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<td>in Hebrew Bible</td>
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FALL SEMESTER

Genres and Themes of Biblical Literature I

Mondays 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

Pre-requisite: Hebrew IV

CG-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 *JPS Tanakh* or 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 Oct. 6th**; 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. 17th**; 3) on Inner-biblical interpretation, “The Foundations of the First Temple,” **due Dec. 1st**.

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. 19th.

1. **First Class. Monday Sept. 8th. “In the beginning….”** Theogony vs. Cosmogony

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.


**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: Monday Sept. 15th, 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.


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<th>Hand-out FIRST ASSIGNMENT: “Noah and the Flood” (due Oct. 6th)</th>
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No Classes Mon. September 22nd (Thursday Classes on Monday);
No Classes Sept. 29th – Oct. 3rd, High Holidays.
3. **Third Class: Monday, Oct. 6**

*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).


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**No Class Mon. Oct. 13** (Thursday classes on Monday).

4. **Fourth Class: Monday, Oct. 20**

*The Book of the Covenant (Exodus)*

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


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5. **Fifth Class: Monday, Oct. 27**

*“The Holiness Code”*

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


6. **Sixth Class: Monday, Nov. 3**

*The Deuteronomistic History Part I*

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

**Secondary Reading:** Steven McKenzie, “Deuteronomistic History”, Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. II, 160-168 (in Course Reader);

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7. **Seventh Class: Monday Nov. 10**

*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. 17th** The Request for a King

**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.

**Secondary Reading:** Robert Polzin, “Saul among the Baggage”, from *Samuel and the Deuteronomist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993), 126-151 (on Schoology).


**Primary Reading:** 1 Samuel 15-18 (the election and rejection of Saul); focus on chapter 15-16 (Hebrew).


Hand-out **THIRD ASSIGNMENT** on Inner Biblical Exegesis, DUE Dec. 1st


**Primary Reading:** 1 Samuel 4 & 2 Samuel 5-8; prepare 2 Sam. 7 in depth.

**Secondary Reading:** Joel Rosenberg, “1 and 2 Samuel”, from *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, 122-145 (in Course Reader)

11. **Eleventh Class: Monday, Dec. 8th**, The Divided Monarchy

**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).

12. **Last Class Monday, Dec. 15th** Restoration and Return: The Beginnings of the Second Temple Period

**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.
Review – on the question of canon, the critical study of biblical literature, questions and answers related to exam.

Final Take-Home Exam due Friday, Dec. 19th at 9 am
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 online 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/](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  

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

6) The Jewish Encyclopedia  
   [http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/index.jsp](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/index.jsp)  
   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…).  

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](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)
12) **Resources for the Study of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha:** Online
Critical Pseudepigrapha [http://ocp.tyndale.ca/](http://ocp.tyndale.ca/) (original language of extant texts);
for English translations see: [http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha](http://wesley.nnu.edu/sermons-essays-books/noncanonical-literature/noncanonical-literature-ot-pseudepigrapha)
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/)
2) The Bar Ilan Project – Judaica Responsa (Bible & Rabbinics)

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