

Professor Robert Platzner
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Office Hours: W/3:00 -4:30 p.m.

HRS 121 **Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)**
GE Area C4

Course Description:

A survey of the historical narratives and other literature of the Hebrew Bible, an analysis of archeological evidence and an introduction to basic problems of textual criticism. Topics of study will include the origins and development of biblical Judaism and its interaction with surrounding cultures.

Course Objectives/Methodology [Spring 2008]:

HRS 121 is both a literary and an historical approach to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, and one that limits itself to Israelite society prior to the Common Era.

Particular attention will be paid to the evolution of early Israelite culture, to the underlying assumptions of biblical historiography, and to the study of parallel texts and cultural artifacts drawn from contemporary societies of the Ancient Near East. Consideration will be given to questions surrounding the formation of the biblical canon, as well as to the central themes of Covenant, Election and Redemption.

Please note:

Classroom discussion will concentrate on the cultural experiences and perspective of *ancient* Israel. That focus presupposes that the only appropriate framework for the academic study of the Hebrew Bible is that of ancient Israelite thought. No later system of theological reference – whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim – will form the basis for textual analysis, nor will allegorical or typological interpretations of biblical texts (usually grounded in post-biblical systems of thought) be acceptable as a basis for discussion.

Required texts:

Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures (JPS, 1985)
Harris/Platzner, *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (McGraw-Hill, 2008, 2nd Edition)

Reading Schedule:

Jan. 30 Introduction to the biblical canon
 Genesis 1-11
 H/P Chap. 7-8

- Feb. 6 Genesis 12-35; 37-48; 50
H/P Chap. 8
- Feb. 13 Exodus 1-15; 19-24; 32-34
H/P Chap. 9
- Feb. 20 Leviticus 11-12; 18-20; 23-25
Numbers 13-14; 16-17; 22-24
H/P Chap. 10
- Feb. 27 Deuteronomy 4-11; 24-25; 28-31
H/P Chap. 11

March 5: Pentateuch Quiz

- March 12 Joshua 1-2; 6; 10; 24
Judges 1-8; 11-16; 18-19
H/P Chaps. 13-14
- March 19 1 Samuel 1-10; 15-31
2 Samuel 1-7; 11-19
H/P Chap. 15
- March 26 1 Kings 1-3; 8-11; 17-21
2 Kings 2; 18-19; 22-23
H/P Chap. 16
- April 9 The Nature and Function of Prophecy
Amos/Hosea
H/P Chaps. 17-18
- April 16 Isaiah 1-13; 24-25; 40-45; 49-53; 60-66
H/P Chaps. 19, 21, 22
- April 23 Jeremiah 1-7; 23-31
Ezekiel 1-11; 18; 37-38
H/P Chaps. 20-21
- April 30 Apocalyptic Literature: Daniel
H/P Chap. 29
- May 7 Wisdom Literature: Ecclesiastes and Job

H/P Chap. 26* [term paper submitted]

May 14 The Book of Psalms
H/P Chap. 25

May 21 Final Exam

Course Requirements:

1. Pentateuch Quiz (identification); Final Exam (identification/essay)
2. Term Paper* (a minimum of 5 pages. Double-spaced, documented, on an Old Testament text *not* studied in class. Consult Term Paper Format before beginning work on term paper). **Paper due May 7**
3. Regular and punctual attendance

Learning Objectives:

1. a thorough familiarity with the diverse genres of biblical literature
2. an understanding of the historical/cultural interaction between ancient Israel and its neighbors
3. an historically informed view of the problems of text-dating, audience reception and authorship

Grading Policy:

Pentateuch Quiz = 20%
Final Exam = 40%
Term Paper = 30%
Class Participation = 10%