HRS 121: HEBREW BIBLE
DR. PHILIP C. DIMARE
FALL 2007
MENDOCINO HALL 3009; MW: 4:00-5:15

OFFICE: BENICIA 1011
OFFICE HOURS: MW: 1:00-3:45; Thursday: 4:00-5:30, or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

CATALOUGE DESCRIPTION:
Survey of the historical narratives and other literature of the Bible, analysis of archeological evidence and introduction to the basic problems of textual criticism. Topics of study will include the origins and development of early Judaism and its interaction with surrounding cultures. Note: this course fulfills three units of the General Education C4 requirement.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:
As the Catalogue Description suggests, “Hebrew Bible” is a course that examines the so-called “Old Testament” from both an historical and literary perspective. It is analytical in approach, and thus will address issues such as archeological evidence and textual criticism. The context of this analysis will be that of Israelite society prior to the Common Era. As such, this course is oriented toward the academic study of the Hebrew Bible. It is not a course that seeks to deepen the faith experiences of students, although this would certainly be a positive result; and it is also not a course that seeks to “tear down” the faith experiences of students. Neither of these approaches is appropriate for the academic study of religion, whether related to sacred texts or not. With this in mind, classroom discussions will concentrate on the cultural experiences and perspectives of ancient Israel, and will therefore presuppose that the only appropriate frame of cultural reference will be that of ancient Israelite thought. No later system of theological reference will be introduced into our discussions, nor will allegorical or typological interpretations of Biblical texts (usually grounded in post-Biblical theological assumptions) be acceptable as a basis for discussion. This rule applies to all later systems of theological reference, whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim.

Our goal here, then, will be to explore the evolution of early Israelite culture, paying particular attention to the underlying assumptions of Biblical historiography, and to the study of parallel texts and cultural artifacts in contemporary societies of the Ancient Near East. Consideration will also be given to questions surrounding the Canon itself, as well as to the central themes of Covenant, Election, and Redemption.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
1. Students will be exposed to the historical and cultural influences that have played significant roles in the evolution of the values, beliefs and ideas of Western societies, through the study of significant historical, literary, and religious texts.
2. Students will acquire a familiarity with the theories and methods of the social sciences in order to enhance their understandings of the major institutions in our society, and the roles that both individuals and groups play in shaping experience.
3. Students will achieve a thorough familiarity with the diverse genres of biblical literature.
4. Students will come to an understanding of the historical/cultural interaction between ancient Israel and its neighbors.
5. Students will acquire an historically informed view of the problems of text-dating, audience reception and authorship that have been raised by contemporary scholars.

REQUIRED READINGS:
Stephen Harris and Robert Platzer:  *The Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*
Jewish Publication Society:  *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*

REQUIREMENTS:
1) You are required to do all readings and come to class prepared to discuss the material assigned for that session.
2) You will submit twelve questions and short answers dealing with assigned reading material. (See “Question Schedule” below for due dates.) These questions will be worth ten (10) points each, for a total of 120 total points. Each student will present one of his or her questions in class during the semester. These presentations will be worth ten (10) points, for a total of ten points. Together, your twelve questions and single presentation will be worth 130 total points. Students will be chosen at random for presentations, so be prepared with your questions. If you miss class with an unexcused absence on the day that you are called on to present, you will lose twenty (20) points. All questions must be submitted in class on the day that they are due! Questions will not be accepted by e-mail.
3) You will be given two in-class essay exams during the course of the semester. (See “Exam Dates” section below for exam dates.) These exams will ask you to discuss and analyze material we have read and covered in class to that point in the semester. You will be given an exam prompt at least one week prior to each exam. These exams will be worth forty-five (45) points each, for a total of ninety (90) points.
4) You will submit a 4-5-page paper at the end of the term. (See “Paper Due Date” section below for due date.) You will be given an extensive prompt explaining what is required for this paper at least two weeks before it is due. This paper will be worth eighty (80) points.
5) Although I do not have a formal participation grade beyond your presentation, I am a big fan of discussion, and your questions and comments may convince me that you deserve a higher grade.
GRADING:
Questions: 130 points
Exams: 90 points
Paper: 80 points
Total: 300 points

Exam Dates:
First Exam: Wednesday, October 17
Second Exam: Wednesday, November 21

Paper Due Date: Monday, December 17

Grade Breakdown: 300-285: A
284-270: A-
269-264: B+
263-255: B
254-240: B-
239-234: C+
233-225: C
224-210: C-
209-204: D+
203-195: D
194-180: D-
179-0: F

Question Due Dates:
Question 1: Wednesday, September 12
Question 2: Wednesday, September 19
Question 3: Wednesday, September 26
Question 4: Wednesday, October 3
Question 5: Wednesday, October 10
Question 6: Wednesday, October 24
Question 7: Wednesday, October 31
Question 8: Wednesday, November 7
Question 9: Wednesday, November 14
Question 10: Wednesday, November 28
Question 11: Wednesday, December 5
Question 12: Wednesday, December 12

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICIES:
Cell Phones are not permitted for use in classroom during class sessions unless there is an emergency. This includes listening to messages, texting, e-mailing, etc. Turn phones to vibrate when you enter the room. If you are using a Cell Phone in the classroom during a class session you will be asked to leave the room for the rest of the session. You may use a computer in class to take notes or to check relevant course material. If you have other work to do on your computer, or simply want to play games or watch videos, do those things somewhere else!

ACADEMIC HONESTY:
The Sac State Catalogue says the following about Academic Honesty:

The principles of truth and honesty are recognized as fundamental to a community of scholars and teachers. California State University, Sacramento expects that faculty, staff, and students will honor these principles, and in so doing, will protect the integrity of academic work and student grades. Students are expected to know and abide by university policy about cheating, including plagiarism. The entire document, Policies and Procedures Regarding Academic Honesty, may be found on the university’s web site.

Cheating will not be tolerated in this course. If you cheat by using disallowed sources, copying from someone else’s paper, or plagiarizing, you will receive a failing grade for the course. You are also subject to being expelled from the university.
COURSE OUTLINE:

Week One: September 3-7 (note: no meeting on Monday, September 3, Labor Day)
Introduction to Course
Topic for discussion: The Hebrew Bible in Context
- “Old Testament” and “Hebrew Bible”
- The Tanak
- The God/Human Relationship
- Sealing a Covenant
- The Canon of the Hebrew Bible
- The Ancient Near East
- The God of Israel
- The Books of Moses
- The Books of Torah
Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
   Chapter 1: The Hebrew Bible
   Chapter 2: The Process of Formation
   Chapter 3: The Ancient Near East
   Chapter 4: The God of Israel
   Chapter 5: Who Wrote the “Books of Moses”?
   Chapter 6: The Five Books of Torah (Divine Instruction)

Week Two: September 10-14
Topic for discussion: The Book of Genesis
- The Primeval History
- The Story of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs
Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
   Chapter 7: In the Beginning: The Book of Genesis
   Genesis: 1-35; 37-48; 50

Question 1: Due Wednesday, September 12

Week Three: September 17-21
Topic for discussion: An Israelite “Exodus”
- Israel Enslaved in Egypt
- Moses and YHWH
- The Flight from Egypt
- Wandering Toward the Promised Land
- Theophany at Sinai/Horeb
Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
   Chapter 8: Freedom and Responsibility: The Book of Exodus
   Exodus: 1-15; 19-24; 32-34

Question 2: Due Wednesday, September 19

Week Four: September 24-28
Topic for discussion: An Israelite “Exodus” (cont. from Week Three)
Read: Continue reading from Week Three
Question 3: Due Wednesday, September 26
Week Five: October 1-5

Topic for discussion: The Regulation of the Divine/Human Bond
- Holiness
- Transgression and Sacrifice
- The Establishment of Purity Laws
- Rituals of Atonement
- Leviticus and Deuteronomistic History
- Israel in the Desert
- The Conception of God in Numbers

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 9: Regulating the Divine-Human Bond: The Books of Leviticus and Numbers
Leviticus: 11-12; 18-20; 23-25
Numbers: 13-14; 16-17; 22-24

Question 4: Due Wednesday, October 3

Week Six: October 8-12

Topic for discussion: A New “Book of Law”
- The Deuteronomic View of History
- Good King Josiah
- Covenant Renewal and National Restoration
- The Death of Moses

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 10: A Mosaic Legacy: The Book of Deuteronomy
Deuteronomy: 4-11; 24-25; 28-31

Question 5: Due Wednesday, October 10

Week Seven: October 15-19

Topics for discussion: Israel’s Origins and the Rise of YHWH’s Warriors
- A “Deuteronomistic History”
- Historical Origins of Ancient Israel
- Myth and History
- The Conquest of Canaan
- The Conquest as Holy War

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 11: Introduction to the Deuteronomistic History
Chapter 12: The Origins of Israel: The Book of Joshua
Chapter 13: YHWH’s Warriors: The Book of Judges
Joshua: 1-2; 6; 10; 24
Judges: 1-8; 11-16

First Exam: Wednesday, October 17

Week Eight: October 22-26

Topic for discussion: Monarchical Beginnings
- Samuel and Saul
- Saul’s Reign
- The Great King David
- From Tribal Organization to Monarchy

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 14: The Birth of the Monarchy: The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel
(Week Eight, cont.)

1 Samuel: 1-10; 15-31
2 Samuel: 1-7; 11-19

Question 6: Due Wednesday, October 24

Week Nine: October 29-November 2
Topic for discussion: The Struggles of “Two Kingdoms”
• Two Editions of Deuteronomistic History
• The Glorious and Tragic Reign of Solomon
• The Death of Solomon
• The Kingdom Divides
• The Prophets Elijah and Elisha
• The Assyrian Invasion
• Judah Stands Alone
• Josiah as the Deuteronomistic Hero
• The Final Days of Judah
• The People and YHWH

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 15: Parallel Stories of Israel and Judah: The Books of 1 and 2 Kings
1 Kings: 1-3; 8-11; 17-21
2 Kings: 2; 17-19; 22-23

Question 7: Due Wednesday, October 31

Week Ten: November 5-9
Topics for discussion: Prophecy, Amos, and Hosea
• The “Spokespersons of God”
• Forms and Characteristics of Prophecy
• The Historical Amos
• The Historical Context of Hosea

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 16: The Nature and Function of Israelite Prophecy
Chapter 17: Prophets to the Northern Kingdom: The Books of Amos and Hosea

Question 8: Wednesday, November 7

Week Eleven: November 12-16
Topic for discussion: The Crisis of the “Northern Kingdom”
• The Assyrian Crisis
• Isaiah of Jerusalem

Read: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Chapter 18: The Assyrian Crisis: Isaiah of Jerusalem, Micah, Zephaniah, and Nahum
Isaiah: 1-13; 24-25; 40-45; 49-53; 60-66

Question 9: Wednesday, November 14

Week Twelve: November 19-23
Topics for discussion: The Rise of Babylonia and the Prophecy of Jeremiah and Ezekiel
• The Structure of Jeremiah
• Exile, Restoration, and Covenant Renewal
• Ezekiel’s Prophetic Warnings
• Israel’s Redemption and Individual Responsibility
(Week Twelve, cont.)

Read: *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*

Chapter 19: The Babylonian Threat: The Books of *Jeremiah*, *Habakkuk*, and *Obadiah*
Chapter 20: Prophets in Exile: The Book of *Ezekiel* and Second Isaiah

*Jeremiah*: 1-7; 23-31
*Ezekiel*: 1-11; 18; 37

**Second Exam: Wednesday, November 21**

**Week Thirteen: November 26-30**

**Topic for Discussion: The Psalms**
- Hebrew Poetry
- The Book of *Psalms* and Davidic Authorship
- Categories of Psalms

Read: *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*

Chapter 24: Worshipping at the Second Temple: Hebrew Poetry and the Book of Psalms

*Psalms*: Selected Readings Announced in Class

**Question 10: Due Wednesday, November 28**

**Week Fourteen: December 3-7**

**Topics for discussion: Job and Ecclesiastes**
- Issues in a Postexilic Age
- Job’s Existential Anguish
- YHWH’s Whirlwind
- The Limits of Human Understanding

Read: *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*

Chapter 25: Israel’s Wisdom Writers: The Books of Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes

*Job*: Entire Book

*Ecclesiastes*: Selected Readings Announced in Class

**Question 11: Due Wednesday, December 5**

**Week Fifteen: December 10-14**

**Topic for discussion: An Alternative History**
- The History in Chronicles
- From Solomon to Hezekiah
- The Placement of Chronicles in the Canon

Read: *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*

Chapter 27: Reinterpreting Israel’s History: The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles

1 Chronicles: 10-23; 29
2 Chronicles: 1-2; 7-8; 12-13; 33-36

**Question 12: Wednesday, December 12**

**Week Sixteen: Finals Week, December 17-21**

**Paper Due: Monday, December 17**