Syllabus: Winter, 2022

TS 610: Studying the Old Testament

Instructor: Derek Suderman
Class: Tues., 9-12, Room 2201
Email: dsuderman@uwaterloo.ca
Office: 2126, Office hours by appointment

Territorial Acknowledgement
I acknowledge that I live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee (aka Iroquois) peoples. Conrad Grebel and the University of Waterloo are situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations in perpetuity that includes 6 miles (approx. 10 km.) on each side of the Grand River.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the cultural and historical contexts, language, literary genres, composition, and canonization of the Old Testament. In it students will investigate the formation of Scripture from ancient traditions and explore various hermeneutical approaches to biblical material, focusing on their potential contributions to Christian theological interpretation. We will focus more on how one approaches “Studying the Old Testament” than on providing a comprehensive survey of its content. To do so, students will consider diverse modes of inquiry, gain hands-on experience with resources related to the Bible, and explore various issues related to biblical study and interpretation.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course students will:
• gain insight into the language, content and diversity of material within the OT;
• examine the shape of individual biblical books to consider their interrelationship in Scripture and how this can inform Christian theological interpretation;
• be introduced to various scholarly approaches to the OT, including issues related to its origin, composition, transmission, and canonization;
• explore hermeneutical issues and challenges (problems and opportunities) involved in interpreting and teaching ancient documents in the 21st century;
• consider how Mennonite scholars in particular have addressed specific issues related to the Old Testament;
• engage in theological reflection to consider the ongoing witness and function of the Old Testament as Scripture for Christian communities of faith; and
• gain first-hand experience with basic tools for biblical study such as concordances, Bible dictionaries and commentaries, as well as multiple Bible versions.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. READING MATERIALS

The following materials are required.

1. The Bible

This is the most important textbook in the course. I will provide a “Reading Guide” for each week that identifies biblical passages to concentrate on along with questions to guide your reading. Since we will not attempt to survey the content of each biblical book in class, biblical readings will not be exhaustive. Students with limited background in Old Testament material may require more reading to provide context and ‘connect the dots’ between passages identified in the Reading Guides and discussed in class.

No one Bible version is required—in fact, having a diversity present will enrich class discussion. However, paraphrases and Bibles which use a ‘dynamic equivalence’ approach to translation will not be appropriate for this course (the Message, Good News Bible, Today’s English Version, etc.). If you have a question about this, please ask.

Note: If you are very familiar with the Bible, consider purchasing and using a different version than that with which you usually use; this often helps to hear material in a new way. Students are also expected to have more than one version available for consultation. Though we will not explore “apocryphal”/“deuterocanonical” books, consider having at least one Bible that contains this material; “reference” versions and “Study Bibles” are also particularly helpful.

In no particular order, students are welcome to choose from among:

• Tanakh (JPS - Jewish Publication society )
• New American Bible (NAB), New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the older American Standard Version (ASV)
• Common English Bible (CEB)
• New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) or the older Jerusalem Bible (JB)
• 21st Century New King James Version, or the New King James Version (NKJV), or the venerable Authorized or King James Version (AV or KJV)
• New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Revised Standard Version (RSV)
• Revised English Bible (REB) or the older New English Bible (NEB)
• the older New International Version (NIV)
• Net Bible (available free on-line at http://www.bible.org). This can be used for comparison, but students will be expected to bring physical Bibles to class so this will not be sufficient as the only version.
2. **TS 610 Course Reader**
   This collection of articles and book chapters is available for purchase at the UW Bookstore. Secondary readings are identified in the ‘Class Schedule’ below. Some additional material (newspaper articles, online videos, etc.) may be provided through **electronic course reserves** (available on-line through the course LEARN site), in the library, or circulated by email.

3. **Additional Recommended Books and Resources (Not Required)**
   Other Introductions worth consulting include:
   - David Carr, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*  
     (primarily historical; imperial contexts and function as sacred text)
   - Corrine Carvalho, *Encountering Ancient Voices*  
     (primarily theological; Catholic)
   - John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*  
     (primarily historical; historical critical)
   - Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*  
     (primarily theological; Reformed Protestant)
   - Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament*  
     (primarily sociological and literary)
   - The *Fortress Commentary of the Old Testament and Apocrypha* (FCOT)  
     (primarily historical and theological; written by a team of specialists)

   Joel B. Green, *Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture.*
   In previous years I have used this as an additional textbook. An insightful, accessible discussion of major topics related to biblical studies (both OT and NT) and faith.

   **Michael Harvey**’s *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing* provides a helpful guide to writing, both re: general style (active vs. passive voice) and the specifics of academic writing (footnotes, bibliography). I strongly encourage you to purchase this or a similar resource early in your program, and to refer to it consistently. *This resource is on reserve in the library.*

   Re: additional resources, **Bible Atlases** can be very helpful and **concordances** are key resources (in my view, every church community should have access to a concordance and teachers taught how to use them). Strong’s on-line concordance is the most simple and effective for entry level use. I also highly recommend **Bible software programs**, particularly for those involved in church ministry or further study. Logos (originally PC) and Accordance (originally Mac) are both excellent.

   **N.B.** - While such programs can be helpful, **be aware (beware) of material that comes ‘bundled’ with them.** Not all of this is either current or helpful.

---

1 Joel B. Green, *Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2007).
B. ACADEMIC STYLE

Article reviews for this class will use in-text citations, i.e: (Suderman, 54). All other papers with references will use bottom of the page footnotes and bibliographies that comply with the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS).

In Biblical Studies certain conventions apply when citing biblical documents:

- Unless written within the flow of the paper, abbreviations consisting of the first three letters of biblical books should be used. Thus: “At the beginning of Genesis...” within a sentence, but (Gen. 1:1-6) as a reference following a sentence.

- Chapters and verses are separated by a colon, while verses within the same chapter are listed with a hyphen when describing a section (Pro. 1:1-7) or separated by commas when speaking of specific verses (Gen. 5:14, 17). Verses from different chapters or different books are separated by a semi-colon (Job 2:1-4; 42:1-6; and Ps. 2:1-4). As noted here, the parentheses should precede ending punctuation.

- Unlike other citations, Bible citations are generally made in (parentheses) within the document itself. During discussions clearly marked as dealing with a specific chapter, abbreviations for verse and verses should be used (v. and vv. respectively). If you provide a list of references (for instance, several other places where the same term is found), these should be placed in a footnote.

- Reference to terms in biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) are placed in italics. So, you write peace (English) but shalom (Hebrew).

C. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The main written assignments will be due in LEARN dropboxes Mon. at 10 PM, since they will usually provide the basis for class discussion. All assignments (except for the article review) will conform to the Chicago Manual of Style, with bottom-of-the-page footnotes.

**Reading Self-Evaluation** 10%

**Modes of Inquiry Assignment** (DUE: Feb. 14) 30%

**Key Word Assignment** (DUE: Mar. 22)
- Handout + Overview post
- Paper Milestone 30%

**Podcast Overview + Response** 5%
Critical Article or Podcast Reviews  (DUE: various)  
Handout + Moderating Online discussion (x2)  
Milestone  
Paper  
Curated Discussion Posts (x2)  
Milestone

D. DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. Weekly Reading / Reading Self-Evaluation  
   For this course students will read a significant portion of the Old Testament along with selected secondary material. Reading Guides will specify biblical material to read in preparation for each class session along with the secondary readings identified in the syllabus. The Reading Self-Evaluation reflects the importance of this task. Students will evaluate their own participation, by providing a mark at the end of the term for the degree to which they completed assigned readings (/5 for Bible and /5 for secondary readings).

2. Modes of Inquiry Assignment  
   This assignment will introduce students to a variety of questions being asked and methods employed in commentaries related to the Bible. Students will write a short paper (5-6 pp., 1500-1800 words) that compares and contrasts the approaches of several commentators to the same biblical book.

3. Key Word Assignment  
   This assignment will explore the ‘semantic range’ and use of a specific term in the Old Testament in order to gain first-hand experience with Bible dictionaries and concordances. Students will write a short paper (5-6 pp., 1500-1800 words), prepare a 1-p. handout (one-sided), and write a brief blog post to introduce their word.

4. Podcast Overview + Response  
   Students will choose a podcast from the ‘Bible for Normal People’ to describe in a brief online post, and then write a brief response (300-600 words). Students can choose from the suggestions at the end of the syllabus or find another on a topic of interest to them.

5. Critical Article / Podcast Review  
   Each student will choose two substantial articles from among those bolded in the Class Schedule to introduce during the term. They will provide a 1p. outline (one-sided) and then initiate and moderate an online discussion of this element. Students will choose ONE of these elements to write a brief critical review of their chosen article/podcast (3-4 pp., 900-1200 words). Since the outline will already depict the piece’s structure and argument, the review should concentrate on your response/critique in light of your own thoughts as well as class discussion. Students will choose articles to present early in the term, which will then
be discussed on the day listed in the syllabus. *Variable, but assigned on specific dates.*

5. **Integrative Paper and “Coffee and Conversation”**
   This assignment consists of writing a brief reflection paper (3-4 pp., 900-1200 words) that identifies some of the challenges you encountered in the course. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on your own goals for engaging the OT and how this course may inform your future interaction with the Bible and interpreting communities. *These papers will be shared with the others in your conversation group, and are DUE 24 hours before the conversation appointment.* Students will also sign up for a “Coffee and Conversation” time slot, where students will meet with the instructor and a small group to discuss their papers and their experience in the course.

III. **CLASS SCHEDULE**
In addition to biblical material, Special Topics will be explored in class. **Names in BOLD** in the “Required Readings” column identify articles or podcasts suitable for a critical review. **FYI** identifies related resources that are **NOT required reading** but may be of interest. **BFNP** stands for “the Bible for Normal People” podcast, hosted by Peter Enns.

**Since your uwaterloo email address will be our primary means of communication between classes, make sure to consistently check this email.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11 - <strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modes of Inquiry</td>
<td>dynamic translation vs. formal equivalence; “semantic range;” Translation (versions) as interpretation</td>
<td>Enns, “When the Bible Doesn’t Behave”2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A brief history of Bible</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suderman, “Created as Male and Female”3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Challenges for interpreting ancient documents (Gen. 1-5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

2 Peter Enns, “When the Bible Doesn’t Behave,” in *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture has Made Us Unable to Read It* (New York NY, 2014), 4-7.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Torah (Pentateuch)</strong> &lt;br&gt;Jan. 18 - <strong>Genesis</strong>&lt;br&gt;“In the beginning/When it all began...” (Gen. 1-11) &lt;br&gt;Covenant, Naming, and Family Matters (Gen. 12-38)</td>
<td>Women in the OT; Introducing the “Modes of Inquiry” assignment (Green, “Methods” helps to consider approaches you encounter in this assignment.)</td>
<td><strong>Meyers</strong>, “Everyday Life”&lt;sup&gt;5&lt;/sup&gt; &lt;br&gt;BFNP, Ep. 46: <strong>Gafney</strong>, “Womanist Midrash”</td>
<td><strong>FYI</strong>: for an overview of feminist hermeneutics, see: <strong>Wacker;</strong>&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt; for a reevaluation of patriarchy in the Bible in light of the history of feminism, see <strong>Meyers;</strong>&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt; for a classic comparison of Hebrew narrative with Greek mythology, see <strong>Auerbach.</strong>&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 25 - <strong>Exodus narratives</strong>&lt;br&gt;Out of Egypt “with a mighty hand”&lt;br&gt;“10 Words” and immediate problems</td>
<td>‘Source Criticism’ and ‘Form Criticism’</td>
<td><strong>Janzen,</strong> “Ethical Model Stories”&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt; &lt;br&gt;Suderman, “Remembering the Gospel of the Exodus”&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<sup>4</sup> Joel B. Green, “Methods,” in *Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 103–42.


<sup>10</sup> Derek Suderman, “Remembering the Gospel of the Exodus (a Sermon)” (Wanner Mennonite Church, 2007).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You shall be Holy…” (Lev.)</td>
<td>‘Redaction Criticism’</td>
<td>BFNP, Ep. 11: <strong>Benjamin D. Sommer</strong> “Jewish Views on the Bible”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 8 - <strong>Deuteronomy:</strong> <em>What is Scripture and how should it function?</em></td>
<td>Characteristics of Scripture; Covenants and Deuteronomy; Reading the Torah/Pentateuch as a Whole</td>
<td>‘Canonical Criticism’ and (New) ‘Literary Criticism’</td>
<td>Childs, “Intro to the Pentateuch” (selection)¹² Suderman, “Who’ll Be a Witness?”¹³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 15 – <strong>Starting Life in the Land; Kingship</strong></td>
<td>Differing Views of Entering ‘the Land’ (Joshua; Judges) From Judges to Kingship (I Samuel)</td>
<td></td>
<td>FYI: For an article that explains this further focused on Judges, see: “Introduction: The Importance of Everyday Life,” King and Stager¹⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feb. 21-25 --- BREAK</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--- and The Danger of <em>Not</em> Reading Joshua...! (Abdicating Interpretation)</td>
<td>FYI - For a classic Mennonite reading on this issue refer to the chapter re: Joshua in Lind, for a “revolutionary” reading of Joshua, see Brueggemann</td>
<td>BFNP Ep. 30, Peter Enns “Taking a Shot at Divine Violence”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 8 - II Samuel, I-II Kings (+Chronicles): The Rise and Fall (and Rise?) of the Monarchy of Kings and Prophets (I Kings) and Bumbling towards Exile (II Kings)</td>
<td>The ‘End’ of History: Biblical history and historical reconstruction ‘True’ and ‘False’ Prophecy (bio of Micah, Jeremiah)</td>
<td>Green, “Rethinking ‘History’ for Theological Interpretation”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s different b/t Kings and Chronicles? (and why?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>BFNP podcast: Ep. 87, Robert Alter: “The Art of Translating the Bible”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“(Latter) Prophets”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 15 - Prophets and Prophecy: Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah</td>
<td>Prophetic Language: Amos</td>
<td>Hays, “Jeremiah, the LXX, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Inerrancy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

20 For another good resource on this topic, see “Being Honest about Violence in the Bible,” an interview with Stephen Chapman (OT Professor at Duke Divinity School), found here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdDB9TvYPY&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdDB9TvYPY&feature=youtu.be).
22 For an excellent and accessible study, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). Alter has also completed his own translation of the entire Hebrew Bible, attuned to these dynamics and with explanatory footnotes.
23 J. Daniel Hays, “Jeremiah, the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Inerrancy: Just What Exactly Do We Mean by the ‘Original Autographs’?” in *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguelez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 133–49.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Prophetic Messages: Perspectives of ‘Problems’ and ‘Solutions’  
From an 8th century prophet to a biblical book (Isaiah) | Historical criticism, ‘liberal’/‘conservative’ debates, and the church; Canonization and LXX | Brueggemann, “Where is the Scribe?”24 – Keynote presentation video  
BFNP 164: Enns, “Where Did Our Bible Come From?” | FYI: For a recent ‘one Isaiah’ perspective (that strongly critiques other evangelical scholars for modifying this perspective) see: Schultz.  
For a discussion of the merits and drawbacks of historical criticism, see: Williams.26 |

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writings to NT</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mar. 22 - Psalms  
Psalms and Prayer in the Bible  
Syncretism / contextualization  
From Psalm Types... to a book of (Jewish and Christian) Scripture | Tips and Implications for Bible Study | Gonzalez, “Authority and Perspective”27  
Berry, “Christianity and the Survival of Creation”28  
Suderman, “Psalms”29 | ‘Key Word’ Assignment DUE  
Jonah discussion |

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mar. 29 - Wisdom Literature</strong>&lt;br&gt;Optimistic Wisdom (Proverbs)&lt;br&gt;the questioning of Wisdom (Ecclesiastes; Job)</td>
<td>Tips and Implications for Bible Study, con.</td>
<td><strong>Tamez,</strong> “Ecclesiastes: a Reading from the Periphery”&lt;sup&gt;31&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td><em>Ruth discussion</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Suderman,</strong> “In Search of Divine Wisdom”&lt;sup&gt;32&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Suderman, “‘Weep with Those who Weep’: Suffering, Empathy, and the Function of Lament”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Also, <strong>See:</strong> Enns, “The OT and Ancient Near Eastern Literature” (pp. 23-45)&lt;sup&gt;33&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apr. 5 - Reconstituting a People: Ezra-Neh. to NT</strong>&lt;br&gt;Post-exilic Period&lt;br&gt;Biblical discernment in light of (apparently) conflicting witnesses: inclusion/exclusion in Ez/Neh. and Ruth</td>
<td>NT “use” of OT Christians and the OT; Scripture and the Church</td>
<td><strong>Janzen,</strong> “A Canonical Rethinking of the Anabaptist-Mennonite New Testament Orientation”&lt;sup&gt;34&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brueggemann, “Biblical Authority: A Personal Reflection”&lt;sup&gt;35&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<sup>30</sup> W. Derek Suderman, “Questioning Techniques for Bible Study” (*Work in progress*).

<sup>31</sup> Elsa Tamez, “Ecclesiastes: a Reading from the Periphery,” *Interpretation* 55, no. 3, 250-59.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Special Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enns, “The OT and</td>
<td>‘Integrative Paper’ DUE”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ancient Near</td>
<td>– 24 hrs. prior to conv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Literature” (pp. 45-70)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coffee and Conversation
TBD - time and place to be scheduled

The Bible for Normal People podcasts [https://peteenss.com/podcast/](https://peteenss.com/podcast/) (a suggested, curated list).

As always, these podcasts are not recommended because I espouse or agree with each interviewer or speaker, or everything they say. Rather, these long-form interviews provide a great opportunity to hear from and better understand the approaches of various top-notch scholars on significant topics and issues, both historical and contemporary.

General Topics
- Ep. 2, Richard Rohr: “a Contemplative Look at the Bible”
- Ep. 4, Walter Brueggemann: “Resurrecting the Bible in the Mainline Church”
- Ep. 16, Ellen Davis: “What is the Practical Value of the OT?”
- Ep. 21, Jon D. Levenson (Jewish): “Resurrection in the Hebrew Bible”
- Ep. 26, Drew Hart: “The Bible, Race, and White Supremacy”
- Ep. 32, Carolyn Custis James: “Moving Beyond Patriarchy”

Week 2: Genesis
- Ep. 46, Wil Gafney, “Womanist Midrash”

Week 3: Exodus Narratives
- Ep. 10, Pete Enns: “Monolatry: The Israelites Believed in Many Gods”

Week 4: Law

Week 5: Deuteronomy

Week 6: Judges/Samuel and History
- Ep. 8, Kent Sparks: “Where did the Israelites Come From?”

Week 7: Joshua and Violence

Week 8: Monarchy (I-II Kings)

Week 9: Prophets

Week 10: Psalms

Week 11: Wisdom
- Ep. 56, Peter Enns: Evangelicals and the Problem of the OT (the subtitle of his book *Inspiration and Incarnation*)

Week 12: Restoration and New Testament
- Ep. 6, Amy Jill Levine (Jewish): “Jesus, Judaism, and Christianity”
- Ep. 237, James Kugel (Jewish): “Challenging Our Assumptions About the Bible”