I. Introduction

A. Course Description
   This course explores the historical context, literary genres, composition, and canonization of the Old Testament. It will investigate the formation of Scripture from ancient traditions and introduce various hermeneutical approaches to biblical material, focusing on their potential contributions to Christian theological interpretation. We will focus more on how one approaches “Reading (and Teaching) the Old Testament” than on a comprehensive survey of its content. To do so, the course will explore diverse modes of inquiry, provide hands-on experience with resources related to the Bible, and introduce issues related to biblical study and interpretation.

B. Course Objectives
   This course will:
   • provide an overview of the content and diversity of material found within the OT;
   • examine the shape of individual biblical books to consider their interrelationship in Scripture and how this informs Christian theological interpretation;
   • introduce 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 students in theological reflection to consider the ongoing witness and function of the Old Testament as Scripture for Christian communities of faith; and
   • provide 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. Textbooks
   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’s reading 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:** Consider purchasing a different Bible version than that with which you are most familiar, since 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”/“deutero-canonical” books here, 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 Bible** (CB)
- **New Jerusalem Bible** (NJ B) 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. **Textbooks**

We will use two additional textbooks: the *Fortress Commentary of the Old Testament and Apocrypha* (hereafter *FCOT*)\(^1\) and Green.\(^2\) Other Introductions worth consulting include: Carvalho,\(^3\) Collins,\(^4\) Brueggemann,\(^5\) and Coogan.\(^6\)

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Harvey\textsuperscript{7} provides a helpful guide to writing, both re: general style and the specifics of academic writing (footnotes, bibliography). I strongly encourage you to purchase this or a similar resource early in your program; refer to it consistently.

3. **TS 610 Course Reader**
   
   This collection of essays and book chapters is available from the Courseware desk in the UW Bookstore. Secondary readings will be identified by author in the syllabus, and most along with a bibliography appears in the Course Reader (some may be posted on e-reserves or provided by email).

   *Auditors: please allow students taking the course for credit the first opportunity to purchase these readers.*

4. **Additional Recommended Books and Resources**

   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: for instance Logos (originally PC) or Accordance (originally Mac).

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

5. **Occasional Additional secondary material** as assigned.

   Additional material may be assigned in class (newspaper articles, online video, etc.) and will either be provided, placed on electronic course reserves (available on-line through the course LEARN site) or made available in the library.

B. **Evaluation Overview**

   Written assignments are due **at the beginning of class**, since they will provide the basis for class discussion on that day. All assignments will conform to the Chicago Manual of Style, with bottom-of-the-page footnotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modes of Inquiry Assignment (DUE: Oct. 20)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Word Assignment (DUE: Nov. 24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation and Handout</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Article Reviews (DUE: various)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outline (x2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integrative Paper</td>
<td>Milestone Requirement</td>
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C. **Description of Assignments**

1. **Weekly Reading / Reading Self-Evaluation**
   The most important assignment for this course will be to read a significant portion of the Old Testament along with selected secondary material. The Reading Self-Evaluation reflects the importance of this task. *Students will evaluate their own participation, by providing a mark for the degree to which they completed the assigned readings (1/5 for each of the Bible and 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 approach of several commentators to a single 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 (4-5 pp., 1200-1500 words), prepare a 1-p. handout (one-sided), and make a 6-7 min. in-class presentation of their findings. *The latter two elements will be peer-evaluated.*

4. **Article Review**
   Each student will choose two substantial articles (marked in **bold** in this syllabus) to review during the term. Each review will consist of a 1p., point-form outline of the article (DUE the day the reading is assigned). In addition, students will choose one of these to write a brief critical review DUE the following week (3-4 pp., 900-1200 words). Since the outline will reflect the piece’s structure and argument, most of the review should consist of your response/critique, in light of your own thoughts and class discussion. *Variable, but 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 in a small group to discuss their papers and their experience in the course.*
III. **Class Schedule**

*Names in BOLD* identify articles you may choose from for your article review. *[Brackets]* identify weekly workshop topics to be explored during class time. *FYI* identifies related resources that are *not required reading* but may be of interest.

**Also, since your uwaterloo email address will be our primary means of communication between classes, make sure to update this immediately.**

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**A. Introduction**

**Sept. 8 - Introduction** *(FCOT 5-21; Green, ch. 1; Freire)*

[dynamic translation vs. formal equivalence, “semantic range,” translations as interpretations]

- Introducing different Modes of Inquiry
- historical overview of OT; a brief history of the Bible
- Some Challenges for interpreting ancient documents (Gen. 1-5)

**B. Torah (Pentateuch)**

**Sept. 15 - Genesis** *(Meyers, skim; FCOT 89-98; Suderman)*

[Women in the OT; Introducing ‘Modes of Inquiry’ assignment.]

- FYI: for a classic comparison of Hebrew narrative with Greek mythology, see Auerbach (e-reserve); for an overview of feminist hermeneutics, see: Wacker.

- “In the beginning/When it all began...” (Genesis 1-11)
- Covenant, Naming, and Family Matters (Genesis 12-38)

**Sept. 22 - Exodus narratives** *(Lind; Suderman)*

['Source criticism’ and ‘Form Criticism’]

- Out of Egypt “with a mighty hand”
- “10 Words” and immediate problems

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Sept. 29- Law as “gospel” (Berlin; Klawans; FCOT 160-166, 179-181)
[‘Tradition/transmission history’ and ‘Redaction Criticism’]
• (How) Might an ‘eye for an eye’ make sense? (Exodus)
• “You shall be Holy” (Leviticus)

Oct. 6 - Deuteronomy and Scripture (How does this book reveal what Scripture is and how it should function?); Pentateuch Review (Childs, selection from “Introduction to the Pentateuch,” Suderman; FCOT 233-235, 272-75)
[‘Canonical Criticism’ and ‘(New) Literary Criticism’]
• Covenants and Deuteronomy
• Reading the Torah/Pentateuch as a Whole

**Oct. 13 --- BREAK

C. Prophets
“Former Prophets” / “Historical Books”

Oct. 20 - Life ‘in the Land;’ Kingship (Green, ch. 4; FCOT 329-33; 366-69)
[Discussion of Commentary Assignment]

**‘Modes of Inquiry’ Assignment Due
• Differing Views of Entering the ‘Promised Land’ (Joshua; Judges)
• From Judges to Kingship (I Samuel)

Oct. 27 - Violence in the Bible and Biblical Hermeneutics or Joshua, God as a Warrior and the “literal sense” of Scripture (“Moabite Stone,” “God ordained the military,” Yoder; Warrior; Direction journal; FCOT 301-304, 307-11; Green, ch. 2)
[Introduction to ‘Key Word Study’ Assignment.]

- FYI: For a classic Mennonite study on the topic, see chapter re: Joshua in Lind;\(^{24}\) a “revolutionary” reading of Joshua by a prominent OT scholar, see: Brueggemann.\(^{25}\)

- The Danger of Reading Joshua: Past and Contemporary Abuses
- The Danger of Not Reading Joshua...! Abdicating the Interpretation of Joshua
- Searching for the ‘Literal Sense’ of Scripture

**Nov. 3 - II Samuel, I-II Kings, Chronicles: The Rise and Fall (and Rise?) of the Monarchy (Green\(^{26}\); Alter\(^{27}\); FCOT 401-403)**

[The “End” of History: on Biblical history and historical reconstruction]

- FYI: For the contribution of archeology for studying the Bible, see: King, Stager.\(^{28}\)
- of Kings and Prophets (I Kings) and Bumbling towards exile (II Kings)
- ‘True’ and ‘False’ Prophecy (biography of Micaiah, Jeremiah)
- What’s different between Kings and Chronicles? (and why?)

**“Latter Prophets” / “Prophets”**

**Nov. 10 - Prophets and Prophecy: Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah (Gonzalez;\(^{29}\)**

John Howard Yoder: \(^{30}\) FCOT 649-69, 673-76, 699-700)

[Historical criticism, ‘liberal’/‘conservative’ debates, and the church (through time and space); Canonization and LXX]

- FYI: For: an excellent discussion of the merits and drawbacks of historical criticism see Williams;\(^{31}\) for an ‘evangelical’ attempt to tackle the problem of multiple Jeremiah texts and its implications, see: Hays.\(^{32}\)
- Prophetic Language: Amos
- Prophetic Messages: Differing perspectives of ‘Problems’ and ‘Solutions’
- From an 8th century historical prophet to a biblical prophetic book (Isaiah)
- Contrasting modern “critical” approaches with previous interpretation - Literary Criticism, authorship, and the broader History of Interpretation

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\(^{32}\) 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. Miguélez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 133–49.
D. Writings

Nov. 24 - Psalms and Tips and Implications for Bible Study (Gonzalez\(^{33}\) (e-reserves); Suderman;\(^{34}\) Green, ch. 3; FCOT 547-51)

[Syncretism/contextualization; distinguishing b/t ‘pre’-, ‘post’-, + ‘biblical’ material]

‘Key Word’ Assignment Due (Ruth 1-4; Jonah 1-4)

- Psalms and Prayer in the Bible
- From Psalm Types... to a book of (Jewish and Christian) Scripture

Dec. 1 - Wisdom Literature and Tips and Implications for Bible Study (Suderman;\(^{35}\) FCOT 495-507)

- FYI: For an articulate evangelical attempt to tackle the theological implications of ancient pre-cursors to biblical material, see: Enns.\(^{36}\)

- Optimistic Wisdom (Proverbs)
- the questioning of Wisdom (Job; Ecclesiastes)

E. Conclusion: the End of our course, and the Beginning of Scripture...

Dec. 6 - Reconstituting a People: Ezra-Nehemiah; Transition to NT (Janzen;\(^{37}\) Green, ch. 5; FCOT 43-63)

- Post-exilic Period
- Biblical discernment in light of (apparently) conflicting witnesses: inclusion/exclusion in Ez/Neh. and Ruth
- Christians and the Old Testament
- Scripture and/in the Church (Form and Function of the OT within Christian Scripture, with some comparison to Jewish Scripture in contemporary Judaism)

Coffee and Conversation (variable) - time and place to be scheduled/determined...

**‘Integrative Paper’ Due: Schedule “Coffee and Conversation”**


\(^{34}\) W. Derek Suderman, “Questioning Techniques for Bible Study” (*Work in progress*).

