

TS 610: Studying the Old Testament

Syllabus: Fall, 2017

Instructor: Derek Suderman
 Class: Thurs., 1-4 PM, Room 4224
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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. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the cultural and historical contexts, 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 studies 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

In this course students will:

- explore the content and diversity of material found within the OT;
- examine the shape of individual biblical books and their interrelationship in Scripture;
- experience differences in approach and translation among multiple Bible versions, and reflect on how this may be helpful;
- investigate various scholarly approaches to the OT, including issues related to the genre, origin, composition, transmission, and canonization of this material;
- discover 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 regarding 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.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. READING MATERIALS

The following materials are required.

1. THE BIBLE

This is the most important textbook in the course. *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 using a different 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”/“deuterocanonical” 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* (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* (free on-line at <http://www.bible.org>). While useful for comparison, students will be expected to bring physical Bibles to class so this will suffice on its own.

2. TEXTBOOK

Joel B. Green, *Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture.*¹

Students will be responsible to purchase this book on their own. Readings will be listed by chapter in the Class Schedule (ie: Green, ch. 3).

3. TS 610 COURSE READER

This collection of articles and book chapters is available for purchase from Courseware at the UW Bookstore. Secondary readings will be identified by author and abbreviated title in the course schedule, with full bibliography details at the end of the of syllabus.

4. 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)
- 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)

Michael Harvey's *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing* 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.

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. **Bible software programs** can be very helpful, particularly for those entering church ministry or further study. Three excellent resources: BibleWorks, Logos (originally PC) and Accordance (originally Mac).

Note: While these programs are helpful, *be(a)ware (beware?) of the material that comes 'bundled' with them*. Not all of this is either current or helpful.

B. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

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

Reading Self-Evaluation		10%
Modes of Inquiry Assignment	(DUE: Oct. 19)	30%

Key Word Assignment	(DUE: Nov. 23)	
Presentation and Handout		5%
Paper		30%

Critical Article Reviews	(DUE: various)	
Presentation and Handout		5%
Paper		20%

Integrative Paper	Milestone Requirement
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1. **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 readings in preparation for each class session along with the secondary readings identified in the syllabus. *Students will evaluate their own participation by submitting a mark for the degree to which they completed the assigned readings (/5 for both Bible and secondary readings).*

2. **Modes of Inquiry Assignment**

This assignment introduces students to a variety of methods employed in biblical commentaries. Students will write a short paper (5-6 pp., 1500-1800 words) that compares and contrasts the approach of several commentators *on the same biblical book*.

3. **Key Word Assignment**

Students will explore the ‘semantic range’ and use of a specific term in the Old Testament to gain first-hand experience with Bible dictionaries and concordances. They will write a short paper (4-5 pp., 1200-1500 words), prepare a 1-p. handout (one-sided), and make a 6-8 min. in-class presentation of their findings. **The latter two elements will be peer-evaluated.*

4. **Critical Article Review**

Each student will choose one substantial article from among those listed in **bold** in the Class Schedule to introduce during the term. They will provide a 1p. outline (one-sided) and 5-8 minute oral overview to initiate and facilitate class discussion. *These presentations will be peer-evaluated.*

In the following week students will then **write a brief critical review** of their article (3-4 pp., 900-1200 words). Since the handout will outline the article’s structure and argument, the review should concentrate on your own response/critique. Students will choose articles early in the term, which will then be discussed on the corresponding day listed in the syllabus. *Variable, but assigned on specific dates.*

5. **Integrative Paper and “Coffee and Conversation”**

For this assignment students will write a brief reflection paper (3-4 pp., 900-1200 words) that identifies some of the challenges you encountered and insights you had in the course. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on your own goals and how this course may inform your future interaction with OT (and the Bible more generally) 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 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 experience in the course.

C. FACULTY OF ARTS INFORMATION

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage and the Arts Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Note for students with disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

III. CLASS SCHEDULE

Following the main topic for the week, [brackets] identify weekly workshop topics to be explored during class time, while (parentheses) indicate required secondary readings. Authors in **BOLD** identify articles you may choose for your review; lettered footnotes identify related resources that are *not required reading* but are worth considering.

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

A. INTRODUCTION

Sept. 7 - Introduction [Language issues: dynamic translation vs. formal equivalence, “semantic range,” translations as interpretations]
(Green, ch. 1)

- Introducing different Modes of Inquiry
- historical overview of OT; a brief history of the Bible
- Some Challenges for interpreting ancient documents (Beginning of Genesis)

B. TORAH (PENTATEUCH)

Sept. 14 - Genesis [Women in the OT; Introducing ‘Modes of Inquiry’ assignment]^a
(Meyers, “Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible”;² Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?”³ (skim); Suderman, “Created as Male and Female”⁴ (skim))

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

Sept. 21 - Exodus narratives [‘Source criticism’ and ‘Form Criticism’]
(Lind, “Warfare and the Exodus”;⁵ Suderman, “The Gospel of the Exodus”⁶)

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

Sept. 28- Law as “gospel” [‘Tradition history’ and ‘Redaction Criticism’]
(Berlin, “Numinous *Nomos*”;⁷ Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible”⁸)

- (How) Might an ‘eye for an eye’ make sense? (Exodus)
- “You shall be Holy” (Leviticus)

Oct. 5 - Deuteronomy and Scripture: How does this book reveal what Scripture is and how it should function? [‘Canonical Criticism’ and ‘Literary Criticism’]

(Childs, “the Canonical Shape of the Pentateuch;”⁹ Suderman, “Who’ll Be a Witness for My Lord?”¹⁰)

- Covenants and Deuteronomy
- Reading the Torah/Pentateuch as a Whole

****Oct. 12 --- FALL BREAK**

^a For a classic comparison of ancient Hebrew narrative with Greek mythology, see Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar,” in *MIMESIS: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 3–23. For an overview of feminist hermeneutics see Marie-Theres Wacker, “Feminist Exegetical Hermeneutics,” in *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women’s Perspective*, trans. Martin and Barbara Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 36–62.

C. PROPHETS

“FORMER PROPHETS” / “HISTORICAL BOOKS”

Oct. 19 - Life ‘in the Land’ and Kingship [Commentary Assign. Discussion]****‘Modes of Inquiry’ Assignment Due**

(Green, ch. 4)

- Differing Views of Entering the ‘Promised Land’ (Joshua; Judges)
- From Judges to Kingship (I Samuel)

Oct. 26 - Violence in the Bible and Biblical Hermeneutics or Joshua, God as a Warrior and the “literal sense” of Scripture [Introduction to ‘Key Word Study’]^b

(“the Moabite Stone;”¹¹ “God ordained the military;” **Warrior**, “Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians”;¹² **Yoder**, “If Abraham is Our Father”;¹³ *Direction* journal;¹⁴ Green, ch. 2)

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

Nov. 2 - II Samuel, I-II Kings, Chronicles: The Rise and Fall (and Rise?) of the Monarchy [The ‘End’ of History: Biblical history and historical reconstruction]^c

(**Green**, “Rethinking ‘History’ for Theological Interpretation”¹⁵; **Alter**, “Between Narration and Dialogue”¹⁶)

- 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?*)

^b For a classic Mennonite reading on this issue refer to the chapter re: Joshua in Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel*, foreword by David Noel Freedman, A Christian Peace Shelf Selection (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980). For a “revolutionary” reading of Joshua, see: Walter Brueggemann, *Revelation and Violence: A Study in Contextualization* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1986).

^c For the contribution of archeology in studying the Bible, see: Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

“LATTER PROPHETS” / “PROPHETS”

Nov. 9 - **Prophets and Prophecy: Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah** [Historical criticism, ‘liberal’/‘conservative’ debates, and the church); Canonization and LXX]^d

(**Gonzalez**, “Authority and Perspective”;¹⁷ **John Howard Yoder**, “See How They Go With Their Face to the Sun”¹⁸)

- 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

****NOV 16: No Class (BCBC/SBL meetings)****

D. WRITINGS

Nov. 23 - **Psalms and Syncretism / Contextualization** [Tips and Implications for Bible Study]

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

(Suderman, “Psalms: Introduction”;¹⁹ **Gonzalez**, “Anabaptist Hermeneutics and Theological Education”²⁰; Green, ch. 3)

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

Nov. 30 - **Wisdom Literature** [Tips and Implications for Bible Study, con.]^e

(**Suderman**, “In Search of Divine Wisdom”²¹)

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

^d For an excellent discussion of the merits and drawbacks of historical criticism, see Rowan Williams, “Historical Criticism and Sacred Text,” in *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*, ed. Graham and David F. Ford Stanton (London: SCM Press, 2003), 217–28. For an ‘evangelical’ attempt to tackle the problem of multiple Jeremiah texts and its implications, see 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. Miguez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 133–49.

^e For an evangelical attempt to tackle the theological implications of ancient pre-cursors to OT material, see: Peter Enns, “The Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Literature,” in *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 23–70. Enns’ book also illustrates that these remain contentious issues, since he lost his position at Westminster Theological after writing it.

E. CONCLUSION: THE END OF THE COURSE, THE BEGINNING OF SCRIPTURE

Tues, Dec. 5?? - Reconstituting a People: Ezra-Nehemiah; Transition to NT

[Christians and the OT, Scripture and the Church]

(Janzen, "A Canonical Rethinking of the Anabaptist-Mennonite New Testament Orientation";²² Green, ch. 5)

- Post-exilic Period
- Biblical discernment in light of (apparently) conflicting witnesses: inclusion/exclusion in Ez/Neh. and Ruth
- NT 'use' of OT

TBA - *Coffee and Conversation* (variable, TBA)(Fellow student 'Integrative Papers'; Enns, "When the Bible Doesn't Behave"²³)

**'Integrative Paper' Due: Schedule "Coffee and Conversation"

Notes

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

²Carol L. Meyers, "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 244–51.

³Carol L. Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?" *JBL* 133, no. 1 (2014): 8–27.

⁴W. Derek Suderman, "Created as Male and Female: 'adam, Gender, and the Legacy of Disobedience,'" in *On Being Human: Essays from the Fifth Shi'i Muslim Mennonite Christian Dialogue*, ed. Harry Huebner and Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2013), 211–30.

⁵Millard C. Lind, "Warfare and the Exodus," in *Yahweh is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel*, foreword by David Noel Freedman, A Christian Peace Shelf Selection (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980), 46–64.

⁶Derek Suderman, "Remembering the Gospel of the Exodus (a Sermon)" (Wanner Mennonite Church, 2007).

⁷Adele Berlin, "Numinous *Nomos*: On the Relationship Between Narrative and Law," in "*A Wise and Discerning Mind*": *Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, ed. Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley, Brown Judaic Studies, no. 325 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 25–31.

⁸Jonathan Klawans, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Marc Zvi Brettler and Adele Berlin, Michael Fishbane, consulting editor (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2041–47.

⁹Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 127–35.

¹⁰W. Derek Suderman, "Who'll Be a Witness? Testimony in the Old Testament," *Vision*, Fall 2009, 5–12.

¹¹James Bennett Pritchard, "The Moabite Stone," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

- ¹²Robert Allan Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today,” in *Voices Of The Religious Left: A Contemporary Sourcebook*, ed. Rebecca Trachtenberg Alpert (Temple University Press, 2000), 51–57.
- ¹³John Howard Yoder, “If Abraham is Our Father,” in *The Original Revolution: Essays on Christian Pacifism*, Christian Peace Shelf Series (Scottsdale: Pa., Herald Press, 1971), 85–104.
- ¹⁴Vic Froese, ed., “Does God Behave Badly? Answers and Questions” (2011).
- ¹⁵Joel Green, “Rethinking ‘History’ for Theological Interpretation,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5, no. 2 (2011): 159–73.
- ¹⁶Robert Alter, “Between Narration and Dialogue,” in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 63–87.
- ¹⁷Justo L. Gonzalez, “Introduction: Authority and Perspective,” in *Santa Biblia: The Bible Through Hispanic Eyes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 11–30.
- ¹⁸John Howard Yoder, “‘See How They Go with Their Face to the Sun’,” in *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 51–78.
- ¹⁹W. Derek Suderman, “Questioning Techniques for Bible Study” (*Work in progress*).
- ²⁰Antonio González and Joseph Owens, trans., “Anabaptist Hermeneutics and Theological Education,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 84, no. 2 (April 2010): 207–28.
- ²¹W. Derek Suderman, “In Search of Divine Wisdom: Perspectives on the Church and MCC from Old Testament Wisdom,” *Conrad Grebel Review* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 71–89.
- ²²Waldemar Janzen, “A Canonical Rethinking of the Anabaptist-Mennonite New Testament Orientation,” in *Reclaiming the Old Testament: Essays in Honour of Waldemar Janzen*, ed. Gordon Zerbe (Winnipeg, MB: CMBC Publications, 2001), 3–21.
- ²³Peter Enns, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2014), 3–26.

