HEBREW SCRIPTURES – STMM 526-02

Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry
Fall Quarter 2011 • Hunthausen 100 • Thursday 9:00-11:50 am

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to provide students with a historical, literary and theological introduction to the Hebrew Bible. We will read various biblical texts that have been selected as a sampling of its rich diversity of form, style, theological concern, historical background, etc., and we will ask questions of these texts. Some questions will arise from our use of standard methodologies in the field; others will arise from the unique experience each of us brings to this course. All of these questions are valuable and integral to the success of our class. I hope that by the end of the course you will be familiar with the basic shape of the Hebrew Bible, that you will be hungry for more Scripture courses, and that you will have found creative new ways to infuse your ministry with the Bible.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Ability to read scriptural texts critically (MDiv, MAPS, MATS).
- Ability to use biblical tools and resources as a way to inform their own exegesis for the purpose of doing their ministry (MDiv).
- Ability to be a responsive, discerning listener who can enter another's worldview [whether ancient or modern] (MDiv, MAPS, MATS).
- Awareness of their own social location/assumptions/hermeneutics as they engage the text in their own lives, their communities, and the larger world (MDiv).

III. TEXTBOOKS

A. Required

1. One of the following annotated Bibles: *The HarperCollins Study Bible*; *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (which I will use in class); *The Catholic Study Bible* (2d ed.); *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*; *The Jewish Study Bible*.
   - Avoid the following translations: *The King James Version*; *The Message*; *The Living Bible*; *The Way*.
2. Michael Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (**2d ed.**; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
3. Marvin Sweeney, *Reading the Hebrew Bible After the Shoah: Engaging Holocaust Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008).

B. Recommended (for personal enrichment)

1. C. DeYoung, W. Gafney, L. Guardiola-Sáenz, G. Tinker, F. Yamada, eds., *The Peoples' Companion to the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).
2. M. Gorman, ed., *Scripture: An Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005).
3. A. Rainey and R. Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2006).

IV. SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS AND DUE DATES

Thurs 9/22 *Ancient Israel, the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Canon*
Assignment: Coogan, pp. 3-27; Sweeney, pp. 1-22.

Thurs 9/29 *Genesis: Origins of the World (chs. 1-11) and Israel's Ancestors (chs. 12-50)*
Assignment: Genesis 1, 2-3, 12, 15, 17, 22; Coogan, pp. 31-56, 71-91; Sweeney, pp. 23-41.

Thurs 10/6 *Exodus: Formation of Israel, Law and Covenant*
Assignment: Exodus 1-3, 14-15, 17, 19-20, 32-34; Coogan, pp. 92-103, 112-25, 135-43; Sweeney, pp. 42-63.

Thurs 10/13 *Priestly Ritual and the Deuteronomic Code* **(First Paper Due)**
Assignment: Leviticus 1, 16, 19; Deuteronomy 12-26, 34; Coogan, pp. 144-45, 150-53, 177-93.

Thurs 10/20 *Conquest, Kingship and Royal Theology* **(Part 1 of Second Paper Due)**
Assignment: Joshua 1-6, 24; Judges 4-5, 13-16; 1 Samuel 1-2, 15-16; 2 Samuel 7; Psalms 2, 89; Coogan, pp. 194-96, 203-23, 233-41, 250-67, 279-87.

Thurs 10/27 *The Prophets* **(Part 2 of Second Paper Due)**
Assignment: 1 Kings 22; Isaiah 1-2, 6-9, 11, 36-39; Coogan, pp. 327-47; Sweeney, pp. 84-103.

Thurs 11/3 *Exile and Restoration* **(Part 3 of Second Paper Due)**
Assignment: Isaiah 40-42, 53, 55-56, 60, 65; Coogan, pp. 358-64, 404-12, 422-24.

Thurs 11/10 *The Psalms and Lamentations* **(Part 4 of Second Paper Due)**
Assignment: Psalms 7, 22, 44, 83, 94; Lamentations 1; Coogan, pp. 379-81, 448-59, Sweeney, pp. 167-87.

Thurs 11/17 *Wisdom Literature* **(Part 5 of Second Paper Due)**
Assignment: Proverbs 1-9; Job 1-3, 19, 28, 38-42; Ecclesiastes 1-3; Coogan, pp. 459-89; Sweeney, pp. 188-207.

Thurs 12/1 *Apocalyptic Literature* **(Part 6 of Second Paper Due)**
Assignment: Daniel 1-12; Coogan, pp. 430-32, 527-34; Sweeney, pp. 222-41.

V. REQUIREMENTS

A. *Completion of reading assignments*. They should be completed prior to the class on which they are assigned.

B. *Attendance and participation in class*. I expect you to arrive on time to each class. Since absence and tardiness, even when they are "excused," diminish your participation in class, they will likewise diminish your participation grade. Moreover, because your classmates and I deserve your full attention, I expect you to keep food and smart phones packed away during class time (not counting the fifteen-minute break). If you take notes on a laptop, I expect you to refrain from social networking during class time. Any of these activities will diminish your participation grade.

In addition, you are required to participate in a weekly on-line discussion board before each class. The purpose of the discussion board is for you to share with me and the class your response to the week's reading assignments. What did you find interesting, confusing, disturbing, exciting in the readings? What questions do you bring to that week's class? Your posts will be graded on a check-plus (95), check (85), check-minus (75) basis, unless you fail to post, in which case you will receive a zero.

C. *Completion of two papers*. They are described in detail below:

The **First Paper** should respond to the argument made by Marvin Sweeney in ch. 1 of his book, *Reading the Hebrew Bible After the Shoah*. There he argues that the narrative structure of Gen 11:27-25:11 raises doubts about the fidelity of Yahweh.

Your assignment in this paper is twofold. **First**, describe the main point(s) of his argument and evaluate its persuasiveness. To what extent are his interpretations of various episodes in Genesis convincing? How else might they be interpreted?

Secondly, examine another passage in the Pentateuch (one not addressed by Sweeney) where the fidelity of Yahweh is a central concern. After demonstrating that Yahweh's fidelity is at issue in your selected text, discuss how the text supports/qualifies/ counters Sweeney's argument?

The first paper is due at the beginning of class on October 13. Late papers will be docked ten points per day until it is turned in.

The **Second Paper** is an exegesis of a biblical text from a list that I will supply. (Students may propose to study a text not on the list. Such a proposal should be typed, double-spaced, about a page long, and it should persuade me that your proposed passage is the only biblical text that will enable you to write a successful paper. Proposals must be submitted to me no later than October 21. Unpersuasive proposals will not be approved.)

The term "exegesis" refers to "the process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of those passages…The goal of exegesis is to know neither less nor more than the information actually contained in the passage" (D. Stuart, "Exegesis," in *ABD* II, p. 682). This process will take place over the second half of the course. Each week will focus on a different part of the exegesis and will include written assignments (each about one page; no more than two pages) that you will discuss in your small group and turn in to me at the end of class. The assignments are as follows (see above for due dates):

Part 1 – Choose a passage from the list and write a paragraph explaining why you chose the passage. What about it caught your attention? Why do you want to study it further? What about your own background drew you to this passage? Lastly, write in one sentence what you take to be the primary message of the passage. I even encourage you to start the sentence in this way: "The primary message of this passage is…."

Part 2 – Compare three different translations of your passage by arranging them on a sheet in three columns. (One of the translations should be from the Jewish Study Bible.) Beneath these columns write a paragraph describing any significant differences you notice among the three. Finally, tell me which translation you will use in your paper and why.

Part 3 – Write an annotated bibliography of at least three scholarly and recent (post-1965) commentaries that you will use in writing your exegesis paper. (Note: the scholar who comments on your passage may not be the same as the scholar who has edited the commentary.) For each citation write the important points made by the commentator. Lastly, write a paragraph describing how the commentaries have affected your understanding of the passage. How has your understanding been modified/challenged/confirmed by consulting the commentaries?

Part 4 – Write about the genre of your passage. What is its genre (e.g., hymn, blessing, curse, oath, law, prayer, etiology, etc.)? What are some other biblical examples of the same genre? How is your passage similar to those other examples? How is it different? Finally, what biblical motifs and traditions are being reused and/or reinterpreted here?

Part 5 – Write about the historical context of your passage. To what time period do scholars date your passage? Do scholars agree on the date? Where do scholars think it was written? What was the situation in that time and place? How do you think someone living in that time and place would have received your passage?

Part 6 – Write about how later generations interpreted your passage. Is your passage quoted in the New Testament or in the Dead Sea Scrolls? Has it been used in Jewish or Christian liturgy? On what occasions? How did the meaning of your passage change for these later communities of faith? How would a contemporary audience receive this passage? How would a community you serve (be specific) be challenged by your reading of this passage?

The Second Paper ("Part 7") – Craft Parts 1-6 into an organized, well-structured and elegant exegesis paper. You already have the raw materials; all that remains is to integrate them into a final product that is built around a central thesis statement. Your thesis statement should be a single sentence in your first paragraph that explains, after all your research and reflection, what you think is the primary message of your passage. All the other parts of your paper should in some way support your thesis statement, so that by the last paragraph I am convinced by your paper that your interpretation really is a valid and meaningful way to understand the passage. This paper will be graded according to a rubric that you will receive near the end of the course. Additionally, it may be helpful to consult M. Gorman's *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (rev. and exp.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009).

Parts 1-6 are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day. Late papers will be docked ten points per day until it is turned in.

The Second Paper itself is due to me by email by 9:50 am on Thursday, December 8, which is the end of our assigned exam period. Late papers will be docked ten points per day until it is turned in.

VI. ASSESSMENT

Your final grade will be calculated thus:

First Paper	20%
Second Paper	
• Part 1	5%
• Part 2	5%
• Part 3	5%
• Part 4	5%
• Part 5	5%
• Part 6	5%
• Final Paper	20%
In-Class Participation	15%
On-Line Participation	15%
Final Grade	100%

Letter grades will be determined thus:

A	93 – 100
A-	90 – 92.99
B+	87 – 89.99
B	83 – 86.99
B-	80 – 82.99
C+	77 – 79.99
C	73 – 76.99
C-	70 – 72.99
D+	67 – 69.99
D	63 – 66.99
D-	60 – 62.99
F	< 60