

Tuesday 1:30–4:20 Hunthausen 100

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:30–11:30 And by appointment

COMMUNICATING WITH ME

Coming to my office: My office is in the Theology and Religious Studies Department on the second floor of Casey. It is always best to make a prior appointment to see me, even during my scheduled office hours, so that I can make plans to accommodate all the students in both my classes. But feel free to drop by, to see whether I am free.

Leaving written messages: Please put written messages for me in the fireworks box just outside my office door, or write a note on the memo board there.

Submitting papers: If for any reason you are submitting a paper other than at class time, please put it in the fireworks box just outside my office door. If there are any exceptional circumstances or if there is any information that would be helpful to me, please write that note as a reminder to me at the beginning of the paper.

Voice mail: You may leave a voice message on my office phone at any time, day or night. I check it frequently even when I am not in my office. Since I seldom allow the phone to interrupt a conversation someone is having with me in my office, you will usually hear the recording even when I am in my office. Don't be discouraged. I'll get your message as soon as I'm free.

E-mail: Please put "STMA 526" in the subject title. Please use only your SU email address. I may want to communicate with the entire class between classes, so please check your SU email several times between Tuesdays.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will read portions of each of the five books of the Torah/Pentateuch, beginning with Genesis 25:19–50:26, the story of Jacob and his twelve sons and one named daughter. We will follow with Exodus 1–24 and excerpts from the rest of the book. For Genesis and Exodus, our major secondary resources will be Terence E. Fretheim and Walter Brueggemann, both published in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. For Numbers, it will be Katharine Doob Sakenfeld's *Journeying with God*. For Leviticus and Deuteronomy, I will choose sections of the biblical text and articles to accompany them.

Students will write a ten-page paper interpreting a short text within the assigned sections of Genesis and Exodus. Please begin the process of choosing your text right away. It should be one episode, no more than ten verses, and preferably shorter. I plan to guide you through each step. I will ask for a two-page excerpt so that I can give feedback before you write the entire paper.

COURSE OBJECTIVES / STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students can expect to gain information and to develop skills in the following areas:

1. Familiarity with the story of the Torah, the foundational section of the Hebrew Bible.
2. Understanding several major themes in the Torah, such as God's choice of a people, promise and covenant, faithful and unfaithful responses, liberation, God's presence and absence, and the conditions of the covenant.
3. Learning how to do close study of biblical texts.
4. Understanding biblical texts in their own social, economic, political, and religious context.
5. Interpreting biblical texts and using them in pastoral ministries.
6. A greater awareness of the difficulties involved in understanding and interpreting the Bible and, paradoxically, a greater confidence in their own ability to do so.
7. Reflecting, in the light of the experience in the course, on the importance of inductive study of texts, of becoming more aware of one's own experience and the questions one brings to the text, of broadening the community to which one listens, and of various factors impinging on the interpretive process, such as the life

experience and social context of both the individual interpreter and of the interpreting community, and of notions of authority in its various manifestations.

TEXTS

Required texts available at SU's Bookstore:

The New Interpreter's Bible, volume 1. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994. (Referred to as *NIB*.)

Katharine Doob Sakenfeld. *Journeying with God: A Commentary on the Book of Numbers*. International Theological Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

Other required readings:

I will announce the required readings for Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

Recommended volumes:

Michael Joseph Brown. *What They Don't Tell You: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

Thomas W. Mann. *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988.

Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992; expanded edition 1998. (Referred to as *WBC*.)

Alice Ogden Bellis. *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994.

Anita Diamant. *The Red Tent*. New York: Picador USA, 1997.

Joel Cohen. *Moses: A Memoir*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Behavior Appropriate to an Advanced Graduate Seminar

Prompt and regular attendance; preparation for each seminar by reading carefully and critically, reflecting and integrating beforehand, and knowing what you most need to discuss; active and enthusiastic participation in each day's discussion; respectful listening to and learning from each other; prompt communication with me about any problems that arise; in general, taking responsibility for our communal learning.

If I am ever unexpectedly absent due to an emergency, I will expect you to follow these procedures: Elect a moderator who is willing to spend twenty extra minutes (and gain extra credit). Follow the moderator's directions for the full three hours. (These will probably include breaking up into small groups, then reporting to the whole class.) During the last fifteen minutes each student will write me a one-page response: (1) What were the most important things you learned from the combination of the readings and the class discussion? Be very specific. (2) What questions puzzle you still? This response will count as your class participation for the day. The moderator will write a personal response too, and also a separate one-page report on what the class did, how the discussion went, what problems arose, what good things happened.

2. Interpretation of a Short Text in Genesis or Exodus: Excerpt and Paper

1. Please email me by Friday, January 18, with your choice of a brief text in Genesis or Exodus, no more than ten verses, and preferably shorter. As soon as possible, I will respond with feedback about your choice.

2. Begin with an in-depth study of the text by yourself. This independent study should constitute about 80% of your preparation for writing the paper. I will be showing you how to conduct this study. It will include:

- typing the text of NRSV in "thought lines" for careful study on several identical sheets.
- typing the text in four columns, showing four translations (NRSV, NIV, NJPS or Everett Fox, and REB) in thought lines side by side for comparison.
- reading the text aloud often, in all four translations

- taking special note of all significant differences in translation.
- making a list of everything that you notice and that puzzles you
- thinking through the meaning, structure, words, and themes of the text

3. After an extended period — 80% of your work! — of “living with” the text completely on your own, read *NIB* and then several full-volume commentaries (many will be on reserve) and two or more articles in biblical journals, to see how the other experts interpret the text. Come to your own conclusions about the meaning of the text and how it should be interpreted.

Do not use the internet unless you show me specifically a printed version of what you want to use and get my approval. My experience with students’ using the internet for biblical study has suggested that most of what’s on line is—at best—not very helpful, and often harmful.

4. By Friday, February 22, at the latest, email me the Mini-Paper: two pages of the paper, dealing with one or two verses, plus your complete and beautifully typed bibliography. The Mini-Paper is to be in what you intend to be its final form: in content, style, and typing.

5. On the basis of my comments, revise those two pages and then continue writing the rest of the paper. The finished paper is due — in paper form — at the latest by Wednesday, March 12, at 3:30, in the box on the counter just outside my office.

Nine pages should be devoted to one paragraph of introduction and another of summary/conclusion, and — mostly — interpretation of each verse of your text. The tenth page is to be more personal: report briefly on what you have learned through this process of study, or suggest hermeneutical or pastoral directions (perhaps similar to the “Reflections” sections in *NIB*).

Length: 10 pages. *Audience:* me. For instance, don’t introduce the book of Genesis, or JEDP, or the like. Start right in with your text. *Format:* STM’s guide for writing papers. You are encouraged to use the Writing Center to discuss your paper at each stage of preparation and writing. If you have any questions I will be happy to talk or email with you.

EXTRA CREDIT

You are each invited to bring something of beauty — art works? music? — that relates to the text assigned for the week. If you want to do this, please tell me in advance.

EVALUATION

While it is neither possible nor desirable to determine a grade solely on the basis of numbers, the following percentages indicate the relative importance of each component of your activities in the final evaluation:

Class Participation	40%
Mini-Paper	20%
Finished Paper	40%

Some of the factors relativizing the above percentages are:

1. To succeed in this course each student must complete **each portion** of the course.
2. No student will earn an A without **regular attendance** and **active participation** in class discussions.
3. **Late papers** will be penalized.

SCHEDULE

Please read the assignments in the order they are presented below. The rationale for the order given is as follows:

1. For Genesis and Exodus, always **begin** with the primary readings as they are printed in *NIB*. Compare the NRSV and NIV and note significant differences. Read both aloud, slowly and carefully. Jot down your own thoughts and questions about the text. Be prepared to discuss what you learn from this all-important stage of your study, when it is still limited to two: you alone with the biblical text — before you branch out to read someone's else's interpretation.
2. **Then** be guided by — but not restricted by! — the secondary reading: the “commentary” in *NIB*.
3. **Finally**, enjoy the tertiary readings, the “reflections” in *NIB*.
4. I will often recommend other readings for those who want more.

January 8**INTRODUCTIONS TO EACH OTHER AND THE COURSE****January 15****JACOB AND HIS FAMILY**

Fretheim, “Introduction,” 321-334

Genesis 25:19–36:43

Keep the “Ancestral Genealogy” handy to understand the relationships among the characters.

Fretheim, 516-591

Recommended readings:

NIB: Carolyn Osiek, “Reading the Bible as Women”

Women's Bible Commentary:

Carol A. Newsom and Sharon A. Ringe: “Introduction”

Sharon A. Ringe: “When Women Interpret the Bible”

Standing recommendations throughout Genesis:

Anita Diamant, *The Red Tent*

WBC: Susan Niditch, “Genesis”

Genesis: A Living Conversation with Bill Moyers. Ten episodes in videos and book.

Standing recommendations throughout the course:

General Articles in volume 1 of *The New Interpreter's Bible*

Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Introduction to the Pentateuch” in *The New Interpreter's Bible* I:305-318.

Alice Ogden Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible*

WBC: Carol L. Meyers, “Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible”

Thursday, January 18

Please email me your choice of text for your interpretation paper. I will respond as soon as possible.

January 22**JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS**

Genesis 37–50

Fretheim, 592-674

January 29

Review Genesis 25–50

Review Fretheim

As you review, watch for the oldest four sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah) and the youngest two sons (Joseph and Benjamin). Take notes (which chapter and verse) that trace the actions and experiences of each. Study Jacob's blessing of each of the six in Genesis 49 in light of the actions.

Begin your 80% for the paper.

Friday, January 25

Please email me your text typed in thought lines so that I can give feedback. Send it as soon as possible, but not later than Friday.

February 5**LET MY PEOPLE GO**

Brueggemann, "Introduction," 677-689

Exodus 1–6

Brueggemann, 690-737

Continue your 80%.

Friday, February 1

Please email me your text typed in the four translations (NRSV, NIV, NJPS or Everett Fox, and REB) so that I can give feedback. Send it as soon as possible, but not later than Friday.

Standing recommendations through Exodus:

WBC: Drorah O'Donnell Setel, "Exodus"

Joel Cohen. *Moses: A Memoir*

R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed. <i>Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World</i> . Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991:			
George V. Pixley	A Latin American Perspective	The Option for the Poor in the Old Testament	229-240
Cyris H. S. Moon	A Korean Minjung Perspective	The Hebrews and the Exodus	241-255
Jean-Marc Ela	A Black African Perspective	An African Reading of Exodus	256-266
An Asian Group Work	An Asian Feminist Perspective	The Exodus Story (Exodus 1.8-22, 2:1-10)	267-279
Naim Stifan Ateek	A Palestinian Perspective	The Bible and Liberation	280-286
Robert Allen Warrior	A Native American Perspective	Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians	287-295

February 12**YAHWEH: WARRIOR-KING**

Exodus 7:1—15:21

Brueggemann, 737-804

Finish your 80% this week.

February 19**JOURNEY TO SINAI AND COVENANT**

Exodus 15:22—20:21; 24; 40

Brueggemann, 805-855, 879-883; 974-981

Create your bibliography and begin studying commentaries and articles.

February 26**JOURNEY FROM SINAI**

Numbers 10:11—14:45

Sakenfeld, xiii-xiv, 1-20, 63-92

Write and revise the two-page excerpt dealing with one or two verses. Type the excerpt and complete bibliography beautifully, in final form.

Friday, February 22

By today at the latest, please email me your beautiful excerpt and bibliography. Send it as soon as possible, but not later than Friday.

March 4**JOURNEY TO MOAB**

Numbers 15–21

Sakenfeld, 93-120

March 11**END OF THE FIRST GENERATION OPPOSITE JERICHO**

Numbers 22–25, 27, 36

Sakenfeld, 123-139, 149-154, 185-188

Deuteronomy 34

Notes on Deuteronomy 34 in an Annotated Bible

Wednesday, March 12 3:30***LAST CALL FOR FINAL PAPER***

Please bring your paper to the fireworks box just outside my office door. This is the final deadline for the paper. All of you are encouraged to submit your papers well before this deadline.