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INTRODUCTION TO THE HEBREW BIBLE HB500 **Fall 2016**

PURPOSE: This first half of the full-year Foundational Core Course will be based in a serious and scholarly engagement with the literature of the Hebrew Bible. Several lines of approach and areas of knowledge will be developed through the year. First, the study of the history of ancient Israel in its ancient Near East context will help us focus on how that history interacts with the literature of the HB. Second, in a series of graduated exercises, we will build skills in the critical methods used to study the HB, become familiar with the resources for that study, and develop the ability to do basic interpretation of a HB text. Finally; through readings, discussion and reflection we will develop an understanding of the theologies of the HB as expressed in its texts; and also develop the ability to reflect critically on the use and interpretation of the HB in the church, in religious settings, and in contemporary culture. The fall semester addresses introductory matters of background and method and covers the Biblical books of Genesis through 2 Samuel (beginnings to the emergence of the monarchy). The spring semester builds competence in background and method and covers 1 Kings through Malachi (United Monarchy to early Judaism). No prerequisites.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES: : In successfully completing this course, a student will be able to:

- ***Demonstrate an introductory knowledge of the Hebrew Bible:***
 - Identify major time periods, events and peoples in the history of ancient Israel and the ancient Near East
 - Identify major locations and interactions in the geography of ancient Israel and the ancient Near East
 - Identify and discuss the narrative/poetic artistry, content, and theological issues of Hebrew Bible texts, particularly those assigned in the course
 - Discuss the interactions of the historical and geographical context of ancient Israel with the content and theological issues in Hebrew Bible texts, particularly those assigned in the course
- ***Demonstrate an introductory knowledge of the methods used in Hebrew Bible:***
 - Demonstrate familiarity with the major resources for critical study of the Hebrew Bible
 - Define and identify and describe the use of the major critical methods
 - Apply critical methods to the interpretation of texts following models demonstrated in class
- ***Demonstrate at an introductory level a willingness and ability to discuss interpretive issues arising from contemporary readings of the Hebrew Bible:***
 - Identify one's own social location, starting assumptions and interpretive principles in reading Hebrew Bible texts
 - Summarize the interpretive principles of interpreters from social locations other than one's own

- Identify the complexities involved in interpretive questions and discuss how such complexities may change one's own interpretive position
- **Demonstrate the skills and attitudes necessary for graduate level Hebrew Bible study:**
 - Gather and select information from reading appropriate to task assigned
 - Communicate clearly in both oral and written forms, using good organizational formats and proper research formats
 - Show a willingness to assess ones' own work
 - Demonstrate ethical behaviour, taking responsibility for the expectations of the course and showing respect and willingness to listen in the learning atmosphere of the class room or online learning, including class discussions and small groups

FORMAT AND CONTENT: For on-campus students, work in the course consists of weekly classes including lectures, discussions, and small group exercises. For distance students, work consists of synchronous participation in class through Adobe Connect, including lectures, synchronous discussion and small group exercises. All students also accomplish assigned readings, exercises both handed-in and for discussion, a journal, and a final exam.

TEXTS: —available at UBC Bookstore

Bible (modern critical translation required; Oxford Annotated or HarperCollins New Revised Standard Version suggested)

Michael Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). [“Text” in calendar]

Patricia Dutcher-Walls, *Reading the Historical Books: A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Attendance** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For on-campus students, this means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason. For distance students, this means attending class through Adobe Connect synchronously with class with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason.
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation**
 - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is “Not Approved”) including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
 - Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that

is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.

- For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

6. Late assignments

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course. Five written assignments are due this term (two written exercises and three journal batches) on the dates specified. If two or more assignments for the course are submitted late, the final grade will be reduced by one mark (a B+ becomes a B) with further reductions possible for very late assignments.

7. Limitation on use of social media

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.

8. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

1. Class participation: Students are expected to participate in class discussions, and do adequate preparation of in-class discussion exercises. Evaluative criteria: comments and questions show adequate preparation, an understanding of the assigned readings and exercises, and a readiness to apply readings to interpretive questions and insights.
2. Short papers: these assignments will help students gain specific skills and learn critical Biblical study methods. Evaluative criteria: concise and clear writing, and completeness and accuracy in carrying out tasks assigned.
3. Journal as described below in more detail. Due as specified in calendar. Evaluative criteria: completeness, depth of reflection and insight, ability to explore complexity in interpretation. (Further instructions for the journal given on a separate page.)
4. Final exam: identification, short answer essays, long essay. Evaluative criteria: answers are correct, comprehensive, insightful and clear. (Further instructions for the exam to be distributed in writing later in the course.)
5. Audit students are required to do all the reading and participate in the class discussions and exercises.
6. Certificate students are required to do all the reading, participate in the class discussions and exercises, and do the journal, handing in the sections of the journal as listed in the calendar.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

Bible Dictionaries

Anchor Bible Dictionary. Vol. 1-6. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Eerdmans' Dictionary of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 2000.

HarperCollins Bible Dictionary. San Francisco: HarperCollins. 1996.

Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. 1-5. Nashville: Abingdon. 1962.

Ancient Context of Scripture

Hallo, William and Younger, K. Lawson, eds. *The Context of Scripture*. Vols. 1-3. Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002.

Pritchard, James B, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Pritchard, James B, ed. *The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Commentary Series [# of volumes vary; some are older; not every series complete for OT]

Anchor Bible Commentary. Doubleday Press.

Feminist Companion Series. Sheffield Academic Press.

Forms of Old Testament Literature. Eerdmans.

Hermeneia Commentary. Fortress Press.

Interpretation Commentary. Westminster/John Knox.

Interpreter's Bible Commentary. Abingdon.

New Century Bible Commentary. Eerdmans.

Old Testament Library Commentary. Westminster/John Knox

The Women's Bible Commentary. Westminster/John Knox Press.

Word Biblical Commentary. Word Books.

Methods and Interpretation

Coggins, R.J. and J.L. Houlden. *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. London: SCM Press, 1990.

Hayes, John H. and Holladay, Carl R., eds. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. 3rd edition. Atlanta: John Knox, 2007.

NOTE: This third edition contains a terrific appendix, "Using Electronic Technologies in Exegesis" which includes reviews of Bible software and a selected bibliography of Bible study web sites.

McKenzie, Steven and Haynes, Stephen, eds. *To Each Their Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999.

Guides to Biblical Scholarship Series. Fortress Press. [short volumes giving brief intros to methods]

General Sources and Background

Carter, Charles E. and Meyers, Carol L. (eds.) *Community, Identity, and Ideology: Social Science Approaches to the Hebrew Bible*. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996.

Dutcher-Walls, Patricia. *Reading the Historical Books: A Student's Guide to Engaging the Biblical Text*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Gottwald, Norman. *The Hebrew Bible--A Socio-Literary Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

King, Philip J. and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Knoppers, Gary N. and J. Gordon McConville. *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000.

- Long, V. Philips, ed. *Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography*. Sources for Biblical and Theological Study. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999.
- McNutt, Paula. *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel*. Library of Ancient Israel. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Miller, J. Maxwell and Hayes, John H. *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2nd edition, 2006.
- Miller, Patrick D. *The Religion of Ancient Israel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000.