

Mari Joerstad
Vancouver School of Theology
Office 407
mjoerstad@vst.edu

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW BIBLE II (HB600) Spring 2022

PURPOSE:

This course is Part Two of a year-long sequence in interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. In the Fall semester we read the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and Psalms. In the Spring semester we focus on Prophets and the remaining books of the Writings.

Class periods will be divided into three sections: lecture, discussion and skills workshops. In lectures, I will talk about each book of the Hebrew Bible, focusing on its theological witness and literary art, and its historical, cultural, and canonical contexts. In the discussion period of class, we will read and talk about articles that treat more specific topics connected with each book. Finally, the skills workshops are designed to train you in the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, be it for pastoral ministry and preaching, academic work, or other interests.

The larger goal of the class is to develop a friendship with the Hebrew Bible, in the context of and together with a community of people who turn to its text for comfort, direction, challenge, and insight. A friendship strong enough to see the beauty and wisdom in the text, while also being able to ask difficult, critical questions of it. We will by no means exhaust the text. This class is intended as the beginning of a relationship, or a deepening of an existing relationship. My hope is that you will come out with more paths into the text that you had before we started, and that this will fuel a life-long relationship with the many books of the Hebrew Bible.

PREREQUISITES: HB500

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this class, you will be able to:

- Read and discussed the books in the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and the Psalms
- Write an exegesis paper interpreting a biblical passage and applying methods and tools of critical study to the Hebrew Bible
- Reflect on biblical passages and connect them to contemporary issues in sermons or other creative formats
- Integrate research skills into your reading and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible
- Discuss and evaluate with peers academic articles on topics related to the Hebrew Bible

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

The class will meet weekly on Tuesdays at 2pm, for three hours. Evaluation will be based on an exegesis paper and a creative paper (either a sermon or an artistic intertext paper).

Credit Hours: 3

Available by distance, synchronous and asynchronous. Students taking the course at distance will join lectures and discussions via zoom. Asynchronous students will do additional short papers each week, to demonstrate engagement with the class material.

TEXTS:

The only required textbook for the course is a copy of the Bible. Each week you are expected to read the entirety of the book covered that class at least once, though multiple times is preferred. Reading the Bible is the most important part of preparing for each class. If you must skip readings, it should never be the Bible readings.

I would like you to use one of the following translations:

- The New Revised Standard Version
- The Jewish Publication Society of America Version (also known as Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures)
- The Schocken Bible: Everett Fox's translation of the Hebrew Bible
 - Fox's translation is unusual for its method. Fox tries to make English as transparent to the Hebrew language as possible. I would suggest looking at a library copy before you decide if this is for you.
 - Volume I and II are available. You will need a second Bible for the remaining books
- The Hebrew Bible by Robert Alter - three volumes

In addition to a Bible, I would suggest bringing to class a collection of pencils and colored pens/highlighters. This will make the workshop exercises easier.

Other readings will be posted on canvas.

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

Assignments and Expectations:

Certificate Students:

- Participation: At the end of each class, students will submit an exit question related to the day's materials and lecture. We will discuss some of these questions at the beginning of each class.
- Exegesis paper: 5 pages. You will write an interpretation of a biblical passage based on your own reading of the text and articles assigned in class.
- Sermon or Artistic Intertext: 3 pages. Your final assignment will be a sermon or artistic intertext paper (the latter uses a piece of art as a conversation partner with a biblical passage).

Degree Students:

- Participation: At the end of each class, students will submit an exit question related to the day's materials and lecture. We will discuss some of these questions at the beginning of each class.
- Exegesis paper: 10-12 pages. You will write an interpretation of a biblical passage based on your own reading of the text, articles assigned in class, and library research
- Sermon or Artistic Intertext: 3-5 pages. Your final assignment will be a sermon or artistic intertext paper (the latter uses a piece of art as a conversation partner with a biblical passage).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Borowski, Oded. *Daily Life in Biblical Times*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

Brown, William P. *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Chapman, Stephen. B. and Marvin A. Sweeney (eds). *The Cambridge Companion to The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*. Cambridge, Cambridge University, 2016.

Childs, Brevard S. *Isaiah*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Davis, Ellen. *Opening Israel's Scriptures*. Oxford: Oxford University, 2019

Habel, Norman C. *The Book of Job: A Commentary*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985.

James, Elaine T. *Landscapes of the Song of Songs: Poetry and Place*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Lundbom, Jack R. *The Hebrew Prophets: An Introduction*. Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2010.

Marlow, Hilary. *The Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics: Re-Reading Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah*

Matthews, Victor. *A Brief History of Ancient Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.

O'Connor, Kathleen M. *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise*. Minneapolis, MI: Fortress press, 2011.

Page, Hugh R et al (eds.). *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009.

Pritchard, James B. *HarperCollins Atlas of Biblical History*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010.

Rutledge, Fleming. *And God Spoke to Abraham: Preaching from the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011.

Schiffedercker, Kathryn. *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Wright, Christopher. *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*. Second Edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.

