Fall 9-1-2005

RELS 106H.01: Introduction to the Old Testament

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INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

RELS 106-01 Fall 2005
11:10 am - 12:30 pm TR Natural Science 307
Instructor: Prof. Megan Williams
Contact: megan.williams@mso.umt.edu
Office hours: Tuesday 3-4 pm, Wednesday 12-1 pm, Liberal Arts 155

Course description:
This course offers an introduction to the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and to the history and religion of Ancient Israel. It presumes no prior knowledge of the Bible, Christianity, or Judaism. Our goal is to illuminate the origins and significance of the biblical texts, and the ancient world they reveal to us. We will explore the Hebrew Bible from literary, historical, sociological, and archeological perspectives, with emphasis on its ancient religious contexts.

Books ordered:
The following books are required reading, and have been ordered at the Campus Bookstore:
   All written assignments must cite the Bible after the NRSV translation. Using any other Bible translation will lower your grade. If you own an NRSV study Bible, you need not purchase this one, but its notes can be useful.

Course information, requirements and policies:

Course communication (web page and e-mail):
The course web page is http://www.umt.edu/liberal/WilliamsM/rels106fa05/. You are advised to check the course web page at least twice a week, and before doing any assignment. Students are required to receive e-mail at their University of Montana-assigned e-mail address.
All information on this printed syllabus is subject to change at any time. Changes will be announced by e-mail to University e-mail addresses ONLY, and will be posted on the course web page.

Getting help and answers to questions:
Come to my office hours before you have a crisis. Contact me by e-mail with any questions or to make an appointment to see me (in office hours or at another time). I seldom check my voicemail and may not answer my phone. E-mail is much more reliable. During the week, I usually answer e-mail messages within a few hours.
Readings:
Readings are either in the Bible, other books ordered for the course, or on e-reserve. E-reserve readings are available on the U-M library website. Do reading assignments before the lecture for which they are assigned. If you have not done the reading, you may not understand the lecture. Read the Bible readings, and anything else you find difficult, two or three times: once quickly, then again taking notes, looking up words, and studying the notes in your Study Bible.

Lectures and note-taking:
Questions are encouraged, please feel free to raise your hand at any time. Bring your Bible to every class. Regular attendance is advised. Much material on the exams will be presented only in lecture. Failure to attend lecture and take careful notes will likely result in a poor grade. Do not disrupt lectures by arriving late, leaving early, or chatting during lecture. Students who are consistently disruptive may fail the course. PowerPoint lecture outlines will be available 48 hours before each lecture on the course web page. You may wish to print them and bring them to class to aid in your note-taking. You are very unlikely to pass the course by studying the PowerPoint outlines alone.

Assignments, grading, and deadlines:
All assignments (exams and one paper) must be completed to pass the course, regardless of your cumulative grade. Assignments will contribute to the final grade as follows:

- Background quiz (25 minutes, in class 9/8/05)   10%
- Midterm examination (75 minutes, in class 10/20/05)  25%
- Paper (5 pages, due in class 11:10 am 11/29/05)   25%
- Final examination (120 minutes, 10:10 am 12/12/05)  40%

If you have a conflict with a scheduled exam, please contact me in writing during the first two weeks of the semester to arrange an alternative time. No pre-arranged make-up exams will be scheduled after 9/9/05.

Make-up examinations will be permitted after the fact only if you have a documented excuse (e.g., you were unexpectedly hospitalized at the time of the examination and can show a letter from the physician in charge). Exams missed due to the death of a relative must be documented with an original death certificate or notarized copy. Anyone missing an exam without a valid excuse or prior arrangement will receive an automatic grade of F in the course.

The paper will be due in class at 11:10 am on November 29th 2005. Late papers will be graded down one full grade for each 24 hours or fraction thereof past the deadline. For example, a B+ paper turned in at 11:15 am on 11/29/05 would receive a grade of C+. By 11:15 am on 11/30, the grade for the same paper would be D+.

Extensions must be requested in writing at least 72 hours before the due date, and will be granted at my discretion. No extensions not granted in writing will be honored.
Syllabus of readings and assignments:

Part I: introduction to the historical study of the Hebrew Bible

Week 1 (8/30-9/1)

Class 1 (Tuesday 8/30)
Introduction to the historical study of the Bible
No reading

Class 2 (Thursday 9/1)
The ancient Near East and Palestine: geography and climate
Reading: Gottwald 36-49 (handout); study maps 1-3, 5-8 in HCSB

Week 2 (9/6-8)

Class 3 (Tuesday 9/6)
Overview of ancient Near Eastern history
Reading: Gottwald 64-70 (e-reserve); Collins 25-29

Class 4 (Thursday 9/8)
**Background quiz** (first 25 minutes of class)
History of the study of the Hebrew Bible
Reading: Collins 1-20

Part II: the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israelite history

Week 3 (9/13-15)

Class 5 (Tuesday 9/13)
Video: “The Essence of Amos”
Reading: Amos

Class 6 (Thursday 9/15)
Introduction to historical reading: the book of Amos
Reading: OTP 312-317; Collins 283-304

Week 4 (9/20-22)

Class 7 (Tuesday 9/20)
Deuteronomy
Reading: narrative portions of Deuteronomy (Deut. 1-13, 17.8-20, 18.9-22, 26.16-27.26, 29.1-31.29, 32.48-52, 34); Collins 47-64

Class 8 (Thursday 9/22)
Covenant and Treaty
Reading: Deut. 28; Vassal Treaty of Esarhaddon (e-reserve); Collins 121-124, 159-173

**Week 5 (9/27-29)**

Class 9 (9/27)
The problem of Israelite origins
Reading: OTP 91-93; Finkelstein and Silberman 27-71 (e-reserve)

Class 10 (9/29)
The Deuteronomistic historian; Joshua and the conquest model
Reading: Joshua; Collins 183-200

**Week 6 (10/4-6)**

Class 11 (10/4)
Judges and the settlement model
Reading: Judges; Collins 203-214

Class 12 (10/6)
Origins of the monarchy and rise of David
Reading: 1 Samuel; Collins 217-230

**Week 7 (10/11-13)**

Class 13 (10/11)
Kingdom of David and Solomon
Reading: 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11; Collins 231-243, 245-253

Class 14 (10/13)
Israel and Judah to the Assyrian invasion
Reading: 1 Kings 12-1 Kings 17; OTP 157-161, 166-176, 318-322; Collins 254-258, 261-272

**Week 8 (10/18-20)**

Class 15 (10/18)
Judah’s reform and fall
Reading: 2 Kings 18-25; Collins 273-278; OTP 177-184, 188-190

Class 16 (10/20)
Midterm examination

Part III: themes in the Hebrew Bible and the religion of ancient Israel

A. Narrative, ritual and identity
Week 9 (10/25-27)

Class 17 (10/25)
Creation
Reading: Genesis 1-3; OTP 9-18; Collins 25-45, 67-81

Class 18 (10/27)
Primeval history
Genesis 4-11; OTP 25-40; Collins 78-81

Week 10 (11/1-3)

Class 19 (11/1)
Family history
Genesis 12-50; Collins 83-104

Class 20 (11/3)
Birth of a nation
Exodus 1-24, 31.18-34.35; Numbers 11-14, 20-25; Collins 107-119, 124-136, 153-156

Week 10 (11/8-10)

Class 21 (11/8)
Temple, sacrifice, purity
Exodus 25-31.17, 35.1-3, 40; Leviticus 1-16; Collins 139-152

Class 22 (11/10)
Video: “Israel and its Foreign Others”
Reading: Leviticus 17-26; Collins 148-152

B. God and the world

Week 12 (11/15-17)

Class 23 (11/15)
Topic and readings TBA

Class 24 (11/17)
Topic and readings TBA

Week 13 (11/22-24)

No class (Thanksgiving)
Week 14 (11/29-12/1)

Class 25 (Tuesday, 11/29)
Proverbs and ancient near eastern wisdom

**Paper due**
Proverbs 10-29; OTP 265-294; Collins 487-495

Class 26 (12/1)
Job and divine justice
Job; OTP 223-228; Collins 505-517

Week 15 (12/6-8)

Class 27 (12/6)
Wisdom theologies
Proverbs 1-9; Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth); OTP 208-214; Collins 495-502, 518-526

Class 28 (12/8)
Video: “The Battles of Armageddon”
Reading: Zechariah, esp. 9-14; Collins 401-423

**Final examination:**
Monday, December 12, 10:10 AM