

1-2013

## RLST 310.01: Topics in Biblical Studies - Prophets and Prophecy

Nathaniel B. Levtow

*University of Montana - Missoula*, [nathaniel.levtow@umontana.edu](mailto:nathaniel.levtow@umontana.edu)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

---

### Recommended Citation

Levtow, Nathaniel B., "RLST 310.01: Topics in Biblical Studies - Prophets and Prophecy" (2013). *Syllabi*. 1813.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/1813>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

Dr. Nathaniel Levtow  
Office: LA 156  
Office phone: 243-2845  
Email: nathaniel.levtow@umontana.edu

Office hours:  
Tu Th 11:30-1:00 pm  
& by appointment

## **RLST 310: Prophets and Prophecy**

Spring 2013 T Th 2:10 – 3:30 pm GBB 225 3 credits

### **Course Description**

This course explores the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient world, with special attention to the literature by and about prophets in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). We approach this topic from modern academic perspectives including history, comparative religion, anthropology, social theory, political science, and literary studies. We begin by asking what “prophecy” means to us today and what it may have meant to the ancients. We then turn to the biblical world, starting with ancient Near Eastern prophecies outside of the Bible and then focusing on Israelite prophecy in its historical and literary contexts. We conclude with a look at how prophecy was received and changed in ancient Judaism and early Christianity.

**Required Texts:** The following books are available for purchase in the UM Bookstore:

1. *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (HarperCollins: 2007) (any NRSV translation is OK)
  2. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Westminster: 1996)
  3. David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature* (Westminster John Knox: 2002)
  4. Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (SBL: 2003)
  5. Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Fortress: 1980)
- Additional readings will be available on *e-reserve* and/or handed out in class.
  - The *e-reserve* password for this course is: RLST310

**Recommended Texts:** The following books will be helpful for students without previous background in university biblical studies:

Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (HarperCollins: 1997)

### **Course Requirements:**

- 1. Attendance:** Regular attendance is required for this course. Preparation for and participation in class meetings is expected and essential.
- 2. Readings:** Plan to complete all readings before the class on which they are assigned. Bring the assigned readings to class with you.
- 3. Presentations:** Students will have several opportunities to present material in class.
- 4. Quizzes:** 4 quizzes will be given over the course of the semester:  
One quiz every three weeks: 2/14, 3/7, 3/28, 4/25.
- 5. Final essay-exam:** 7-10 pages, due at the end of the semester.

### **Grading:**

1. Attendance, preparation, participation: 15%
2. Presentations: 20%
4. Quizzes (4): 40%
3. Final Essay-Exam: 25%

### **Course Policies:**

- 1) There will be no make-up exams or extensions unless the student has made arrangements at least a week ahead of time. Except in the case of a documented emergency, late assignments will result in a decrease of one letter grade per day.
- 2) Attendance: Students are allowed two cuts with no penalties or questions asked. Each additional cut will reduce the attendance and participation grade by 10% (that is, 1.5% of your final grade). However, *more than 7 cuts will result in failure for the course*. Early departures from the classroom will be counted as absences. If you must miss a class meeting, it is then your responsibility to obtain from a classmate any class notes and other assignment and scheduling information discussed during your absence.
- 3) This is a course about religion as an academic subject and the development of the Bible in historical context. This is not a class that teaches religion or religious doctrine from a religious and/or devotional perspective. In this class, we will be examining biblical literature in an academic and secular setting, and treating the biblical text as an ancient document open to questioning, examination, criticism, and interpretation. An interest in exploring new ideas and new methods of examining the biblical text are essential. This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.
- 4) Plagiarism – the presentation of others’ work as your own – is an offense punishable by course failure and/or expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and all references to ideas from books, articles, or other sources must be cited correctly. If you do not know how to properly reference your work, or you are in doubt whether or not you should cite material, refer to the University guidelines, or make an appointment to see the instructor to discuss the problem. Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, falsification or any other form of academic dishonesty will fail this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean.

## Schedule

\*Note: Our schedule may change as our course develops. Regular attendance will ensure that you are informed of any changes.

\*Although there are no prerequisites for this course, students without prior background in the academic study of the Bible should read Richard E. Friedman, “Who Wrote the Bible?” over the first three weeks of the semester.

### **Weeks 1 – 2 (Jan 29, 31; Feb 5, 7)**

#### **Background, Definitions, Approaches**

#### **“Prophet,” “Prophecy”**

#### **The Bible and the Ancient Near East**

Wilson, 21-88 (optional: pp. 1-19)

Petersen, 1-45

Blenkinsopp, 1-6, 8-26 (skim), 27-39

*e-reserve*: “Historical and Geographical Background

*e-reserve*: Max Weber, “The Prophet”

### **Week 3 (Feb 12, \*14) \*Quiz: Feb 14**

#### **Prophecy in the Ancient Near East**

#### **Mari, Nineveh**

Wilson, 89-134

Blenkinsopp, 41-48

Marduk Prophecy (handout)

Nissinen, pp. 1-12 (“Introduction”) and selected inscriptions: the numbers below refer to selections in Nissinen (not page numbers):

Mari prophecies: #1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16-26, 31, 32, 36-48, 61, 63;

Eshnunna prophecy: #66;

Nineveh prophecies: #68-71, 74-77, 79-82, 85, 86, 88; 90, 91, 94;

Other Neo-Assyrian prophecies: #97-99, 101-103, 108-109, 111, 118;

misc. cuniefom prophecies: #120, 122-126; 128-131; 134; 135;

West Semitic prophecies: #137-141;

Egyptian prophecy: #142.

**Weeks 4 – 5 (Feb 19, 21, 26, 28) \*Student presentations begin at this point**

**\*Tuesday, February 19: Research Skills Workshop with Sue Samson, Humanities Librarian\***  
*Class meets on 2/19 at the Mansfield Library, Buckhouse Classroom (MLIB 239), 2:10-3:30pm*

## **Prophets and Prophecy in the Pentateuch**

### **The Pentateuch and Early Israel**

(Review: Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*)

Wilson, 135-66

Petersen, 215-26

*Deir Alla Inscriptions* (Nissinen #138)

#### Pentateuch:

Num 22-24; Josh 13:22 (**Balaam**); cf. Deir Alla Inscriptions;

Gen 37, 39-50; Cf Gen 37:19; 40, 41; 44:5, 15 (**Dreams of Joseph**);

Exod 28:30; Lev 8:7-8; Num 27:21; Deut 33:8 (**Urim and Thummim**) (cf. 1 Sam 14:38-42; 1 Sam 28:6);

Gen 20; 12:1; 15; 22 (**Abraham**);

Exod 3; 4:10-17; 7:1; Exod 18:15; 21:6; 22:7; 33:7-23 (**Moses**);

Exod 15:20-21; Num 11:16-30; 12:1-9 (**Miriam, Moses, Aaron**);

Deut 5:23-33; Ex 20:18-21 (**Moses' mandate**);

Deut 18:9-22; 2 Kgs 17:13; Jer 7:25-26 (**Prophets**);

Deut 13:2-8; 18:9-14 (**false prophets and other diviners**) (cf. 1 Kgs 22:1-28 [**True and False Prophets**]; 2Kgs 21 [**Menasseh**])

**Weeks 6 – 7 (March 5, \*7, 12, 14) \*Quiz: March 7**

## **Prophets and Prophecy in the Historical Books**

### **Kingship, Deuteronomistic History, Elijah & Elisha**

Petersen, 226-34

Wilson, 166-225; 253-266

Blenkinsopp, 49-64

#### Historical Books:

Selected readings in the books of Samuel and Kings (see handout)

**Weeks 8 – 9 (March 19, 21, 26, \*28) \*Quiz: March 28**

## **The 8<sup>th</sup> Century: Isaiah of Jerusalem, Amos, Hosea, Micah**

### **The Assyrian Crisis**

Blenkinsopp, 65-110

Wilson, 225-231; 266-276

Petersen: 47-96 (focus on his discussion of Isaiah chapters 1-39); 169-81; 184-89; 193-96  
2 kgs 14:23–20:19; Isa 36–39 // 2 kings 18:13–20:19

Isa 1; 5–11; 20;

Amos, 1–5; 7; 9:11–15; Hosea 1–4; 6; 11; Micah 1-6

## **Week 10 (April 2, 4): Spring Break**

## **Week 11 (April 9, [11])**

### **The 7<sup>th</sup> Century: Jeremiah**

#### **Josiah, Babylon, The Deuteronomists**

Wilson, 231-252

Blenkinsopp, 111-147

Petersen: 97-135

2 kings 22–25; Jeremiah 52 // 2 kings 24:18 - 25:30

Jer 1:1–3; 15:10–21; 17:14–18; 19:1–20:6; 20:7–12, 14–18; 36–45;

Jer 7:1–8:3; 11:1–5, 9–14; 18:1–12; 21:1–10;

Jer 2:2–6:30; 8:4–9:11; 9:17–22; 10:1–10; 12:7–13;

Jer 29:1–14; Jer 31:23–40

## **Weeks 12 – 13 (April 16, 18, 23, \*25) \*Quiz: April 25**

### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Century: Ezekiel, Second Isaiah**

#### **Babylon, Exile, Return**

Blenkinsopp, 148-193

Petersen: 137-67; 47-96 (focus on his discussion of Isaiah 40-55)

Isa 40:1–11

Isa 40: 18–20, 25–26; 42:17; 44:9–20; 45:1–7, 16, 20–21; 46:5–11

Isa 43:14–21

Isa 41:8–16; 42:1–4; 44:1–5; 45:1–7; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12

Ezek 1–3:15, 8–10

Ezek 3:16–5:17

Ezek 18; 20; 11:14–21; 36:22–32; 37:1–14, 15–28

## **Weeks 14 – 15 (April 30, May 2, [7], 9)**

### **Prophecy in Early Judaism and Christianity**

#### **Prophecy and Apocalypticism**

Blenkinsopp 226-39

Wilson, 297-308

*e-reserve*: Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: Expectation of the End”

Isa 24-27

Dead Sea Scrolls (selections)

New Testament (selections)