Introduction to Hebrew Bible

Faculty Information:
Instructor: Rabbi Sandra Cohen
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Best time to contact: daytime

Course Description:
An introduction to the Hebrew Bible, this course will apply historical-critical methods of study to develop a framework for understanding the origins of the texts and the relationship of the texts to one another. Attention will be given to Jewish theories of biblical interpretation.

Course Objectives:

To analyze the difference between the Hebrew Bible as defined by the Jews and the Old Testament as used by Protestants and as used by Catholics, including the role of the Apocrypha, and intertestamental literature.

To learn and understand the basic genres of the Hebrew Bible, including narrative, law, prophecy, and wisdom literature.

To be able to articulate and analyze the important narratives, themes, and other aspects of the Hebrew Bible, and their role in the life of the formation and development of the Israelite nation and the Jewish people.

To be able to articulate, understand and apply the methods of both lower and higher Biblical criticism to the text of the Hebrew Bible.

To articulate and analyze ancient assumptions about the Hebrew Bible.

To utilize and be able to explain classic rabbinic methods of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

To analyze and discuss the role of the Hebrew Bible in Judaism today.
To analyze and synthesize the tension between the academic and religious approach to the Hebrew Bible and on how one might navigate the road between them

Required Texts:


Course Content Outline and Goals for each class:

First Class:
- Introductions; gathering preconceptions of the Hebrew Bible and its role in modern religious life, as well as its role in the development of and relationship to Christianity.
- Discussion of assumptions of ancient and traditional readers of the Bible
- Discussion of contents of Hebrew Bible
- Introduce terms: Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, Torah, Pentateuch, TaNaCH
- Introduction to Biblical criticism
- Close reading of the primordial stories in light of higher Biblical critiques.
- What is the nature of the world God created?
- What is the role of the human vs. the role of God?
- How do these stories serve as etiological tales? Are they meant to be taken literally? If yes, how so? If not, what are they meant to teach?

Second Class:
- Discuss the selection of Abraham and the narrowing of the story arc.
- Close examination of the models of God presented in the Bible so far? Why the changes? How can we explain them?
- Why is the theme of brothers such a theme in the early Bible narratives?
- Who are Jacob and Israel? Who do they stand for? What role might these narratives play in later Israelite self-understanding?
- Discuss the theme of name changing in Genesis.
- Discuss the theme of blessings in Genesis
- Introduction to rabbinic approach to Biblical interpretation

Third Class:
- Discuss role and person of Moses in the Exodus narrative
• Explore the theme of the Exodus in the Torah.
• Discuss the idea and role of covenant in the Torah.
• What happened at Sinai, and why does it matter?
• What was significant about the golden calf?
• Look at the importance of wandering in the redemption story.
• Why does the Torah end with Deuteronomy vs. Joshua? What implications does that have for future generations of Israelites and Jews?
• Discuss why Moses dies before entering the Promised Land.
• Discuss the role of law in Israelite religion.
• Explore the role of law in Judaism today, and how Christianity has understood law, early and modern day.
• Continue and conclude explanation of Documentary Hypothesis.
• Continue exploration of rabbinic commentary

Fourth Class:
• What happened in the conquest of the land? Joshua vs. Judges
• What was the role of a Judge?
• How did the nations already in the land influence the Israelite religion?
• Discuss the role of the priest, the prophet and the king
• Why David?
• Peoplehood vs. Religion: Ruth (and what about that prohibition against marrying Moabites?)
• Class presentations

Fifth Class:
• Discuss David the King: what did he accomplish; what were his flaws?
• Solomon
• Explore the building and role of the Temple in Jerusalem
• Why does the monarchy become divided?
• What about those golden calves?
• Explore Israelite vs. Judean religion.
• How does the text explain the fall of Israel? The demise of Judah?
• Class presentations

Sixth Class:
Cancelled because of Passover. Attend a Seder instead. Check with Regis for the dates for the one held on campus. Alternatively, call a local synagogue and arrange to attend a seder there.

Seventh Class:
• What is the role of the latter prophets (vs. the former prophets like Samuel?)?
• Context of Isaiah’s prophecy
• Explore Isaiah’s call.
• Is it hard to be a prophet? Are the prophets willing or unwilling?
• What role did Isaiah’s prophecy play in his day (days); what role did it play in later years?
• How many Isaiahs were there?
• Discuss Jeremiah, the reluctant prophet and the role of Baruch.
• Context of Jeremiah’s prophesy.
• Poetry vs. prose as prophecy.
• Context of Ezekiel’s prophecy.
• What makes Ezekiel different?
• The twelve “minor” prophets: who are they? Where are they from: Dating and locating.
• Hosea’s imagery
• Amos’ reluctance
• Jonah’s story
• Micah’s call to Justice
• Class presentations

Eighth Class:
• Explore the question of theodicy through Job.
• Rabbinic interpretation of Job.
• Wisdom literature—Proverbs
• A look at Daniel: apocalyptic literature.
• Class presentations
• Final messages: what has the Hebrew Bible come to be today?

Reading and written assignments for each class.
Before first meeting:
  1. Read pages 1-88 in Kugel, How to Read the Bible.
  2. Genesis chapters 1-11
  3. Write a 2-3-page paper on the four assumptions of ancient interpretation and how they affect how the Bible was read.
  4. Bring to class a list of the books (in order!) of: the Hebrew Bible, the Protestant New Testament (cf the New Revised Standard Version) and the Catholic New Testament (cf the American Bible)

Second class:
  Read pages 89-197 in Kugel and Genesis 12-50

Third Class:
  Read Kugel, pages 198-366
  Exodus 1-23, 32, Leviticus 10, 16, 19, 23
  Leviticus 16, 23; Numbers 11-17, 22-29; Deuteronomy 5-6; 27-8, 32-34
  Sanders, Torah and Cannon, Introductions and pages 1-53
Fourth Class:
Read: Kugel, pages 364-457
Joshua, 1-24, Judges 1-21; The Book of Ruth; 1 Samuel 1-3, 8-11, 15-17;

Fifth Class:
Read: Kugel, pages 458-537
Psalm 9, 22, 23, 29, 30, 102, 121, 137, 144-150; 1 Samuel 18-1 Kings 14; 1
Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 2-4, 17-25

Sixth Class:
Arrange to attend a 1st or 2nd night Jewish seder (the evenings of April 8th and 9th) either with at a Jewish home or at a synagogue or Hillel or at Regis University. Clear the location with the instructor before attending.

Seventh Class:
Read: Kugel, pages 538-634
Isaiah 1-66, Jeremiah 1-2, 7, 22, 25-26, 29, 31-32; 2 Kings 24-25, and
Lamentations 1-5; Ezekiel 1-3, 18, 22, 37-39; Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Micah

Eighth Class:
Read: Kugel, 635-689
Book of Job, Book of Daniel, Ezra 9, Nehemiah 8-9, Book or Proverbs

Course Assignments:
First night paper on the four assumptions of ancient interpreters of the Bible and the implications for how the Bible was read (2-3 pages long) 10% DUE: 3/5/09

Two additional short papers/presentations (3-4 pages long): one applying the techniques of Biblical criticism to a passage or set of passages; the other using rabbinic methods of midrash to interpret a passage either using and explaining the way the “rabbis” of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th century actually interpreted the passage (using rabbinic material, that is) or creating your own midrash using the tools of the rabbinic approach. You will then present your text(s) and interpretation(s) to the class. These papers may be turned in from the fourth week on and your presentation of it is welcome from the fourth week on. 20% of your grade each DUE: Between 3/29/09-4/30/09

Visit a synagogue and write a paper (3-4 pages) on the role of the Hebrew Bible in the Jewish Shabbat (Sabbath) service. This might include how the Torah is treated, the role of the reading of the Torah and the Haftarah (section from the prophets), the treatment of the Torah, any imagery you might see in the sanctuary, how people act during the reading of Torah, whether there are Bibles available for the congregation and if/how they are used, whether or not the reading(s) are translated, and whether or not someone gives an interpretation of the day’s assigned reading. BEFORE going to a service at any given synagogue, contact the rabbi or the office, to insure that the Torah will be being read during the service you attend. The Rabbi and/or Cantor is usually available after the
service during a social time to answer questions, or you might call him/her for discussion, if need be. The main service for many Reform congregations is on Friday night; most other congregations read Torah only on Saturday morning. **Note:** A Messianic Jewish congregation is not considered Jewish for the purposes of this class. **DUE:** by 4/23/09

15% of your grade

In lieu of the class we will miss due to Passover this spring, you should attend a Jewish seder on the first or second night of Passover, and write a (2-3 page) paper about the experience. Look first at the role of the Exodus story in the seder, and also at the use of other parts of the Bible in the seder (i.e. Psalms). Look through the Haggadah (the seder prayer book, meaning “story” or “telling”), and find those passages. Also, discuss with the seder participants how active they are in other Jewish activities. Do they regularly observe the Sabbath or other holidays? Why is Passover (Pesach) so important? 15% of your grade  **DUE:** by 4/23/09

**Percentage each assignment/deliverable counts in final grade**
Grading will be based on:

1st night paper: 10%
2 short papers with presentations: 20% each
Visit to a synagogue and follow-up paper: 15%
Attend a seder and follow-up paper: 15%
Class Participation: 20%

**Regis University Grading System**

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Outstanding Scholarship</td>
<td>(Undergraduate / Graduate)</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Superior work / Satisfactory</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>This is a failing grade in graduate level courses</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure (no Credit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I/F</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Incomplete--the grade accompanying the &quot;I&quot; becomes the permanent grade if additional work is not completed and a different grade is not submitted by the incomplete deadline for the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I/P</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>In progress--can be assigned only in selected graduate level courses in which course requirements cannot normally be completed within the associated academic period.</td>
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**Student Conduct**
SPS Graduate Programs’ students and faculty share responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. This includes using information technology responsibly in online and other courses. In order for faculty members to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, online courses, and other learning areas, the Graduate Programs and Faculty expect students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner and not engage in disruptive behavior, disorderly conduct or intentionally interfere in the freedom of expression of others.

“Disruptive Behavior” or “Disorderly Conduct” as applied to the academic setting, means behavior that a reasonable faculty member or student would view as intentionally or recklessly interfering with normal academic functions, University events or University sponsored activities. Examples include, but are not limited to: persistently speaking or commenting without being recognized or interrupting other speakers; behavior that distracts the class from the subject matter or discussion; or in extreme cases, physical threats, harassing behavior or personal insults; refusal to comply with faculty direction including refusal to work in a group, using a cell phone or pager during a classroom session; or behavior that has a negative impact in any learning environment. Disruptive behavior also includes any other behavior covered by the Regis University Student Code of Conduct.

Students who fail to adhere to acceptable behavioral standards will be counseled by the classroom faculty. Should the issue not be resolved, they will then be referred to the Program Chair and then, should it be necessary, to the Dean and may be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion from the program.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as presenting as one’s own, the ideas, words or product of another. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, this includes copying and pasting from online media or from any web-site. By placing one’s name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements.

Sanctions for plagiarism include: a failing grade on the assignment, failure of the course, or, expulsion from the course or department (program).

An instructor may, at their discretion, utilize the services of Turnitin.com to evaluate the student work product for plagiarism. Alternatively, an instructor may require students to submit the work product directly to Turnitin.com for evaluation prior to submission to the instructor. For more information on Turnitin.com, please go to www.turnitin.com.
Equal Access & Disability Services

Regis University, in compliance with federal guidelines, is committed to equal educational opportunity by assuring otherwise qualified students with disabilities equal access to Regis University programs and activities that are provided to students without disabilities. An otherwise qualified person with a disability is a student who meets the academic and technical standards required for admission or participation in Regis University’s educational programs and activities.

Eligibility

To ensure the provision of reasonable and appropriate services at Regis University, students with disabilities must identify themselves in a timely manner to the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Room 118B, Life Directions Center, 303-458-4941, disability@regis.edu, in order to receive the requested accommodation(s). Current and comprehensive documentation must be on file with ODS prior to approval of the accommodation.

Students may disclose their disabilities and request accommodations at any time during their academic career. However, it is strongly encouraged that students self-disclose their disabilities at the beginning of their academic experience because accommodations are not retroactive.

Accelerated courses that are offered in eight week terms are fast-paced and reading intensive. Incomplete grades are seldom granted and are not considered appropriate accommodations. All courses are expected to be completed during the term in which they occur.

Diversity

At Regis University, diversity is at the core of our faith-inspired commitment to build an inclusive community that values the dignity and contributions of all of our members. Our differences thrive in a learning environment characterized by the Jesuit traditions of mutual respect and the pursuit of justice, an environment in which our human differences, whether physical or philosophical, are respected.

Writing Assistance – Smarthinking

The School for Professional Studies will provide 10 hours of FREE tutoring or writing assistance for one year for all SPS students through ™SMARTTHINKING. The tutoring year begins on March 8 of the current year. To register for ™SMARTTHINKING, access INsite at https://insite.regis.edu, login using your RegisNet Username and Password. Select ™SMARTTHINKING.

RegisNet
A RegisNET Account allows students to use and access Regis University web-based resources. RegisNET provides access to SHAREPOINT,™SMART THINKING, free email, course modules and syllabi, Dayton Memorial Library Databases, computer labs, presentation equipment, etc. To register for a RegisNET account, go to INsite (http://insite.regis.edu/). Select “RegisNET Account”. You will be required to post either your social security number or student ID.

**Dayton Memorial Library**

The Dayton Memorial Library can be accessed [http://www.regis.edu/library.htm](http://www.regis.edu/library.htm) website The Jesuit University system provides 24 hour research support. The reference desk can be accessed by the link on the site or at 303-458-4031, 1-800-388-2366 Ext. 4031.

**Privacy Statement**

An integral component of MA courses is student and facilitator/instructor self-disclosure and the use of personal experiences for the purpose of facilitating coursework. Each student is expected to honor confidentiality as it pertains to student disclosure. No shared information, comments, or opinions expressed by another student or facilitator/instructor in the educational setting should ever be used in a manner which is intended to humiliate, embarrass, harass, damage, or otherwise injure the student in his/her personal, public or business life. In addition, confidentiality must be upheld by not disclosing any information that would identify a particular individual or organization.

**Style and format requirements**

Regis University SPS Graduate Programs requires students use the APA Style for written assignments. Information can be accessed through: [http://www.regis.edu/regis.asp?scrn=ars&p1=ws](http://www.regis.edu/regis.asp?scrn=ars&p1=ws)

**Mission of Regis University**

Regis University educates men and women of all ages to take leadership roles and to make a positive impact in a changing society. Standing within the Catholic and United States traditions, we are inspired by the particular Jesuit vision of Ignatius Loyola. This vision challenges us to attain the inner freedom to make intelligent choices. We seek to provide value-centered undergraduate and graduate education, as well as to strengthen commitment to community service. We nurture the life of the mind and the pursuit of truth within an environment conducive to effective teaching, learning and personal development.

Consistent with Judeo-Christian principles, we apply knowledge to human needs and seek to preserve the best of the human heritage. We encourage the continual search for
truth, values and a just existence. Throughout this process, we examine and attempt to answer the question: "How ought we to live?"

As a consequence of Ignatius Loyola's vision, particularly as reflected in his *Spiritual Exercises*, we encourage all members of the Regis community to learn proficiently, think logically and critically, identify and choose personal standards of values, and be socially responsible. We further encourage the development of the skills and leadership abilities necessary for distinguished professional work and contributions to the improvement and transformation of society.

For Additional Information go to