

Religious Studies 2HB3

Introduction to Hebrew Bible

McMaster University
Term 1, 2016



Class Time and Location: 8:30a - 9:20a Tu/Th in KTH 109

Tutorial Time and Location: 4:30p - 5:20p Wed UH 112

Instructor: Michael Johnson (johnsomb@mcmaster.ca)

Instructor's Office Hours: TBA

Instructor's Office: University Hall B107

***This is a preliminary course outline. The official course outline will be on Avenue.**

Course Description

This course is a basic introduction to the Hebrew Bible that will provide an understanding of critical scholarly frameworks for studying biblical texts and explore where the Hebrew Bible fits into the ancient world and how it became an authoritative body of literature for the Jewish and Christian traditions. We will read representative selections from the Hebrew Bible, become familiar with the basic geography of Israel, and learn about some of the material culture and archaeological finds that shed additional light the texts.

Each week there will be two lectures (Tu/Th) that will provide a broad overview of the readings for the week. During these lectures we will discuss scholarly approaches to studying the Bible as well as historical, geographic, and archaeological issues that are relevant to our texts. On the intervening day (Wed), we will do a close reading and discussion of selected biblical passages that you are required to read for the week.

These readings will be posted on the Avenue with reading questions, which you will use as a guide to prepare for the tutorial. Tutorials and the readings for tutorial are mandatory.

This year we are focusing on the theme of the land of Israel in the Hebrew Bible. We will set out to explore the following questions:

- 1) Why was the land of Israel so important to the Israelites and early Jewish communities?
- 2) How does the view of the land change from one book to another and why?
- 3) How does the land continue to play a role our modern political and religious context?

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- navigate the contents of the Hebrew Bible and its traditional divisions;
- situate the Hebrew Bible in the ancient Near Eastern and ancient Mediterranean world;
- recognize the critical frameworks that modern scholars have used to interpret the Hebrew Bible;
- understand the role of scripture in the Jewish and Christian traditions, past and present.

Texts

1. **Bible:** Any NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) translation of the Bible, digital or in print.

Recommended: HarperCollins Study Bible: Fully Revised and Updated (NRSV Translation), with Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, HarperCollins: 2006. This edition includes notes and introductions that will be most helpful in your preparations, but are not required reading. It is available in Campus Bookstore.

2. **Textbook:** John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. 2nd edition.

Fortress Press, 2014. ISBN: 9781451472943.

If you are on a budget and prefer to buy used books, the 1st edition will work too. First and second edition page numbers are listed in the weekly assigned readings. You may use an ebook version of the textbook if you wish.

3. Other Readings: Any supplemental readings, maps, and images will be posted on Avenue.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

1. Attendance and participation 10%

This mark will be allotted on basis of attendance and participation. Attendance is expected for all lectures and tutorials. Attendance will be taken during tutorials. The attendance and participation grade will be a combination of your tutorial attendance and the quality of your participation in the tutorial and lectures.

2. Midterm Test (Oct 18th during class) 20%

This test will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions on course content from the beginning of class until October 6th.

3. Final Exam (to be scheduled by the Registrar) 35%

This exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions on course content, similar to the midterm. It will cover material from October 19th-December 7th.

4. Essay: The theme of “the land” in the Hebrew Bible 35%

You will submit a 1200-1500 word (which is roughly 4-5 pages, double-spaced) essay on the theme of “the land” in the Hebrew Bible. We will be discussing this theme throughout the semester, and you will be able to use your notes, the textbook, the Bible, and any other assigned readings to write this essay. No additional sources are required. More details will be provided on Avenue, and we will discuss how to write the essay throughout the semester.

Submit to the Avenue dropbox as a .doc, .docx or .pdf by 11:59 pm on Tuesday,

November 22nd. Your document should be double-spaced in 12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1 inch margins. Citations and a bibliography are required for any source you use – format according to the style of your choice. No cover page is necessary, but do include your name on the document. Deviating from these formatting guidelines will result in a 5% reduction of your mark for the essay.

Course Outline

Each week, I will post on Avenue the specific readings for the coming week from the Bible, readings from the *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Collins) or another source, and some questions for you to think about as you read. These readings will be discussed in the mandatory tutorial on Wednesday.

The assigned readings are to be done BEFORE the lecture.

All page numbers in brackets are for the older, first edition of Collins

September 6: Introduction to the course

September 7: **No tutorial**

September 8: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible and the discipline of biblical studies

- Read: New, 2nd Edition of Collins {2014}: 1–13 [Old, 1st Edition of Collins {2007}: 1–14]

September 13: Introduction to the Near Eastern context

- Read: Collins 17–29 [15–27]

September 14: Tutorial [4:30p - 5:20p UH 112]

September 15: Nature of the Pentateuchal Narrative

- Read: Collins 31–40 [28–35]

September 20: The Primeval History; Method: Source Criticism

- Read: Collins 41–49 [36–43]

September 21: Tutorial

September 22: The Patriarchs

- Read: Collins 51 62 [44 54]

September 27: The Exodus from Egypt

- Read: Collins 63 72 [55 63]

September 28: Tutorial

September 29: The Revelation at Sinai

- Read: Collins 73 83 [64 73]

October 4: The Priestly Theology

- Read: Collins 85 96 [74 83]

October 5: Tutorial

October 6: Deuteronomy; Method: Redaction Criticism

- Read: Collins 97 108 [84 93]

Mid-term Recess - No class or tutorial October 11 13

October 18: Mid-term Test (covers content through the October 6th lecture, i.e. until the Mid-term Recess)

October 19: Tutorial

October 20: Introduction to the Deuteronomistic History; The Book of Joshua

- Read: Collins 111 127 [94 107 + Avenue supplement]

October 25: Judges

- Read: Collins 129 138 [108 115]

October 26: Tutorial

October 27: First and Second Samuel; Method: Textual Criticism

- Read: Collins 139 157 [116 130]

November 1: First and Second Kings

- Read: Collins 159 184 [131 152]

November 2: Tutorial

November 3: Introduction to the Prophets; 8th and 7th century prophets

- Read: Collins 187 212 [153 173]

November 8: Prophetic responses to the Babylonian imperialism

- Read: Collins 213 237 [174 196]

November 9: Tutorial

November 10: Additions to Isaiah and postexilic prophecy

- Read: Collins 239 267 [197 219]

November 15: Introduction to the Writings; Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah

- Read: Collins 271 291 [220 235]

November 16: Tutorial

November 17: The Psalms and Song of Songs; Method: Form Criticism

- Read: Collins 293 305 [236 247]

November 22: Class Cancelled; “The Land” Essay Due at 11:59 pm

November 23: Tutorial Cancelled

November 24: Wisdom Literature: Proverbs, Job, and Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)

- Read: Collins 307 328 [248 267]

November 29: Hebrew short stories, Daniel, and 1-2 Maccabees

- Read: Collins 329 354 [268 292]

November 30: Tutorial

December 1: Reception of the Hebrew Bible in early Judaism and Christianity

- Readings will be posted on Avenue or on reserve in the library.

December 6: Reception of the Hebrew Bible in modern culture; Overview of biblical criticism

- Readings will be posted on Avenue or on reserve in the library.

December 7: Tutorial [Review]

Final Exam: To be set by the Office of the Registrar

Academy Honesty (Senate-approved language)

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>. The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

TURNITIN.COM

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com speak with me immediately. No penalty will

be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Spring/Summer 2015. The timeframe within which the MSAF is valid has been reduced from 5 days to 3 days. The upper limit for which an MSAF can be submitted has been reduced from ‘less than 30%’ to ‘less than 25%’ of the course weight. As per the policy, students must immediately follow up with their instructors to request accommodation for any missed academic work. Failure to do so may negate their relief. If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean’s office. MSAF is now available in MOSAIC Student Center (in the drop down menu under Academics).

- Privacy Disclaimer: By using this tool you understand that some personal information will be submitted to your Faculty Office.
- If you find it necessary to submit the MSAF during this course you must arrange for an extension for any work missed. I do not redistribute grades for missed assignments.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue. This will be the only acceptable means for submitting any written work. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Special Notices

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course

during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.