

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament

Wheeling Jesuit University
Department of Theology
THEO 226W-01
Spring 2019

T R 9:30-10:45
Donahue 336

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Professor's Office # 127-D Donahue

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Office Hours: MWF 8:00-8:50 AM; R 12:00-1:00 PM; or by appointment

Catalog Course Description:

A survey of the literature represented in the Hebrew Bible and Christian Old Testament, with emphasis on their diverse theologies, literary features, cultural and historical contexts and features, ethical concerns, and continued relevance.

This class fulfills the second-level religion requirement (old core) or the third-level writing-intensive requirement (new core).

Textbooks:

1. Pleins, J. David. *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001. ISBN: 0-664-22175-0 (Required)
2. *Tanakh: A New Translation of The Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Philadelphia/ Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985. ISBN: 0-8276-0366-5 (Recommended)

Alternatively, you can access recommended translations (NRSV and NAB) of the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament online.

NRSV: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

NAB: <http://uscgb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm>

The first several weeks from Pleins's book will be made available on Blackboard to allow you time to purchase your books.

Student Learning Objectives:

Upon their successful completion of this course, students will have met the following goals competently, in writing.

1. In consultation with the instructor, the student will identify appropriate resources for interpreting a selected passage in the Hebrew Bible (Information Literacy, medium). This is measured by the pre-writing for the Interpretation Paper.
2. Build skills in exegesis by completing study packets on significant texts describing social justice (critical thinking, medium; effective communication, medium). This is measured by completion of the Study Packets.
3. Demonstrate appropriate understanding into how selected texts from the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament and class reading provide insight into contemporary questions about social justice (critical thinking, medium; effective communication; medium). This is measured by the in-class writing assignments.
4. Evaluate a selected passage from the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament by explaining relevant literary, theological, and historical issues raised by the passage. Students will also reflect critically on the relevance of the passage for contemporary people (or the challenges to its relevance; Effective Communication, High; Critical Thinking, high). This will be measured by the Interpretation Paper.
5. The student will reflect on how the semester's engagement with the diverse and conflictual literature of the Hebrew Bible might be meaningful for their intellectual, personal, or spiritual development going forward (ethical decision making, medium). This is measured by the final paper.

Evaluation Methods

In-Class Writing Assignments.

Two in-class writing assignments will be given according to the schedule below. Prompts will be given a week in advance (also according to the schedule below) and will generally involve tying together major ideas from passages encountered in class and through the readings. In addition, they will require the student to defend a particular ethical position as being valid in her/ his judgment. Relevant Scripture texts will be distributed alongside the prompts in order to encourage close attention to the text.

Study Packets

Three study packets (one on slavery texts in biblical law codes, and two on passages from Isaiah) are required for this class. These study packets provide you an opportunity to hone skills in literary, theological, and historical interpretation. A rubric for my scoring of these Study Packets follows.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
A	Thoughtful interaction with the biblical text and documentation of specific verses in the passage that prove one's point Demonstrated awareness of how contextual factors shape the meaning of the passage Attention to literary and historical factors that shape interpretation Reflects use of ideas from the larger course Reflects critical and thoughtful interaction with course textbooks and their take on the passage Gives evidence of independent observations that prove helpful for understanding the passage

Connects this passage to the larger context of Scripture

- B Reflects an awareness of the biblical text with sporadic references to Scripture
Attention is paid to contextual factors, but not consistently
Demonstrates awareness of literary and historical factors that are crucial to understanding the passage
Sporadic integration of the passage studied into the meaning of the larger book
Attention is paid to textbooks, but the view of the author may be accepted uncritically
A few independent observations, of varying significance
Little or no attention to how this passage reflects the larger context of Scripture
- C No attempt to document one's view from the biblical text
Literary or historical issues to the text are misunderstood or not taken into consideration sufficiently
Inadequate attention paid to textbooks
Few independent observations about the biblical text, of trivial significance
Inadequate attention to how the passage fits into the larger context of Scripture and to the context of a particular passage
Student seems not to have read or understood the information in the study packet
One or two questions left incomplete
- D- F Appears to have been completed quickly to make a deadline
Inadequate references to Scripture, either in the passages or otherwise
Little or no interaction with course textbooks or the larger ideas of the course
No independent observations about the passage in question
No attention to the major historical, theological, or literary issues in question
Does not answer the questions posed by the study packet
Study packet is not complete

Interpretation Paper.

Students will write a 7 to 9-page double-spaced paper that explains a 5-7 verse passage from the Hebrew Bible in terms of the literary, theological, and historical questions the passage raises. Passages chosen should bear on some aspect of justice or ethics. Examples of the kinds of questions raised by each of these types of interpretation are given below.

Historical

What historical setting is this passage likely to reflect?

Who was the first audience of this text, and how did this passage speak to their concerns?

What social institutions does this passage assume or want to institute? How are they pictured or critiqued?

Literary

Is there a larger source or corpus into which this passage fits (E, a prophetic book, etc.)? How does this passage reflect the overall concerns of this source or book?

What kind of writing is this (narrative, psalm, prophetic poetry)? How does the genre of the passage affect its meaning?

What figures of speech or rhetorical techniques does this passage demonstrate?

Theological

What distinctive ideas or arguments does this passage reflect?

How does this text build on or advance the ideas or arguments of earlier texts?

What view of God does this text represent?

How does this text contribute to contemporary thinking about social justice?

What theological shortcomings does this text demonstrate?

Does this text contribute to how the community desires to see itself?

The paper will be due in stages according to the schedule below. Students are encouraged to come see me for help throughout this process.

February 26: Passage, 5 Potential Sources Due

March 19: Passage, 8 Vetted Sources Due

April 4: First Draft Due

April 23: Second Draft Due

Final Paper.

Students will write a reflection paper of at least three double-spaced pages that explains how they personally understand the significance of social justice in the Hebrew Bible, and how this has affected their intellectual, personal, and/ or spiritual growth and development. It is meant to provide an opportunity for students to articulate how the academic concepts encountered in class will prove meaningful for them as they move forward. This reflection paper will be due **Tuesday, April 30 at 10:30 AM.**

The grading scale and weight of grades are below.

		B+	88-90	C+	78-80	D+	68-70
A	93-100	B	83-87	C	73-77	D	61-67
A-	91-92	B-	81-82	C-	71-72	F	0-60

In-Class Essays (2)	30%	Interpretation Paper	34%
Final Essay	15%	Study Packets (3)	21%

Attendance Policy

Attendance at each class session is recommended. For first-year students and those on academic probation, six hours of class (i.e. **four classes**) may be missed without penalty. No distinction is made between unexcused and excused absences for the purpose of this class. Absences beyond this point without a valid excuse (death in the family; serious injury) will result in a grade of FA at the sole discretion of the instructor. All late work will lose five points per day late, including weekends.

Last Date to Drop the Course

The last day of the Add/Drop Period for this semester is Friday, January 11, 2019. The last day to withdraw from this course with a grade of a W is Tuesday, March 26, 2019.

Disability Statement

Wheeling Jesuit University offers students with documented disabilities individual accommodations on a case-by case basis with confidentiality in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In order to receive academic or physical accommodations, students with disabilities must provide current (within three years) and comprehensive documentation concerning the nature and extent of the disability and communicate their needs to the Disability Services Director, located in Ignatius Hall Room G 24 or call 304-243-4484. Students are required to meet with the director to develop accommodation plans that they will present to their course instructors at the beginning of each semester. Students with disabilities that require specific housing accommodations must contact both the Director of Residence Life and the Disability Services Director.

Ultimately, all students with disabilities are responsible for their own academic achievement. They must attend classes, complete course assignments, and fulfill all university requirements for their chosen field of study. It is up to students with disabilities to seek out available assistance on campus and to utilize individualized accommodations that promote academic success.

Academic Integrity Statement

Students are advised that WJU's Academic Integrity Policy will strictly be enforced in this course (see www.wju.edu/studenthandbook). Questions regarding the policy may be directed to the Office of the Academic Vice-President

Official E-mail

An official WJU e-mail is established for each registered student, each faculty member, and each staff member. All university communications sent via e-mail will be sent to this WJU e-mail address.

The Academic Resource Center

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) is a totally free academic-support service available to all enrolled Wheeling Jesuit University students and staffed almost exclusively by WJU students recommended for employment by WJU faculty. The ARC is located in Bishop Hodges Library and is open five days a week:

Sundays 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Mondays-Thursdays 1:00-9:00 p.m.

Please visit the ARC's website (readily accessible on the Cardinal homepage under "Quick Links" or as the first listing under "Student Services") to learn about the ARC's services (emphasizing writing, math, and the sciences) and to schedule appointments.

Title IX Statement

Wheeling Jesuit University seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual harassment, misconduct, or assault we encourage you to report this. If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify our college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about your options at WJU, please go to <http://wju.edu/titleix/>.

Class Etiquette

Do not disturb class with any electronic device. Put electronic devices away immediately when class begins. Laptops may be used in class only with the permission of the instructor.

Course Schedule

- 1-8 Introduction to the Class
- 1-10 Strategies for Interpreting the Hebrew Bible
Read: Pleins, 3-8, 16-24
- 1-11 ADD/ DROP PERIOD ENDS
- 1-15 Diversity and Source Criticism
Read: Pleins, 24-30; Revelation at Sinai (BB)
- 1-17 The Ten Commandments
Read: Pleins, 41-50; Revelation at Sinai (BB)
- 1-22 The Covenant Code and Slavery
Read: Pleins, 50-54; read "Slavery in the Biblical Law Codes" pp. 1-3 and complete the questions on pp. 2-3
- 1-24 The Deuteronomical Law Code and Slavery
Read: Pleins, 54-61; read "Slavery in the Biblical Law Codes" pp. 3-5 and complete the questions on pp. 4-5
- 1-29 The Holiness Code and Slavery
Read: Pleins, 61-74; read "Slavery in the Biblical Law Codes" pp. 5-6 and complete the questions on pp. 5-6
Slavery in the Biblical Law Codes Study Packet Due
- 1-31 Kingship and Power
Read: Pleins, 95-111; 1 Samuel 8-12; 2 Samuel 7 (Tanakh 427-435, 479-481); Mari A 1121 (BB); "Ordained by God" (BB)
- 2-5 Shamans, Women, and Prophets
Read: Pleins, 111-119; 1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 2-4 (Tanakh 551-557, Tanakh 566-572); "Raising the Dead" (BB)

- 2-7 J: Return of the Monarchy
Read: Pleins, 119-126; Genesis 2-4; 12.1-20; 26.8-18 (Tanakh 4-9, 18-19, 38-39); “The Endangered Matriarch (J and E)” (BB)
- 2-11 ADVISORY GRADES DUE
- 2-12 E: Return to the Tribal System
Read: Pleins, 126-134; Genesis 15; 28.10-21; Exodus 3-4 (Tanakh 21-22, 43-44, 87-90); “The Ancestors” (BB)
Prompt for In-Class Writing #1 Distributed
- 2-14 P: A Priestly Commonwealth
Read: Pleins, 134-143; Genesis 17; 35.9-14; Exodus 6.2-9; 40 (Tanakh 23-24, 55-56, 92, 149-151); God’s Self-Revelation in E and P (BB)
- 2-19 **In-Class Writing #1**
- 2-21 Prophets and Prophecy
Read: Pleins, 213-223; “What is Biblical Prophecy?” (BB)
- 2-26 Isaiah 1-39 and Destruction
Read: Pleins, 223-240
Passage, 5 Potential Sources Due
- 2-28 Isaiah 1-39 and Hope
Read: Pleins, 240-260
- 3-5 SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS
- 3-7 SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS
- 3-12 Isaiah 2.1-5
Read: Isaiah 2-5 Study Packet pp. 1-7 and answer the questions on pp. 3-7
- 3-14 Isaiah 5.1-7
Read: Isaiah 2-5 Study Packet pp. 8-11 and answer the questions on pp. 9-10
Isaiah 2-5 Study Packet Due
- 3-19 Isaiah 35, 36-39, 40-66
Read: Pleins, 260-270; Isaiah 40-48, 60-62 (Tanakh 698-722, 746-751)
Passage, 8 Vetted Sources, and Thesis Statement Due

- 3-21 Isaiah 61.1-7
Read: Isaiah 61.1-7 Study Packet; complete questions on pp. 2-6
Isaiah 61 Study Packet Due
- 3-26 Proverbs and Poverty (1)
Read: Pleins, 452-465; Proverbs 1-9 (Tanakh 1285-1300)
 LAST DAY FOR COURSE WITHDRAWAL WITH GRADE OF “W”
- 3-28 Proverbs and Poverty (2)
Read: Pleins, 465-474; Proverbs 10-22 (Tanakh 1300-1321)
- 4-2 RESEARCH DAY; NO CLASS
- 4-4 Job and Poverty (1)
Read: Pleins, 484-500; Job 1-7 (Tanakh 1339-1348)
First Draft of Interpretation Paper Due by 11:59 PM
- 4-9 Job and Poverty (2)
Read: Pleins, 500-508; Job 28, 38-42 (Tanakh 1377-1378, 1394-1403)
Prompt for In-Class Writing #2 distributed
- 4-13 Ecclesiastes/ Qoheleth
Read: Pleins, 508-510; Ecclesiastes (all; Tanakh 1441-1456)
- 4-16 **In-Class Writing #2**
- 4-18 EASTER BREAK; NO CLASS
- 4-23 NO CLASS; WORK ON DRAFT 2 OF INTERPRETATION PAPER
Second Draft of Interpretation Paper Due By 11:59 PM
- 4-25 Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible
Read; Pleins, 517-532

Final Paper Due **Tuesday, April 30 at 10:30 AM.**