HEBREW SCRIPTURES

BIB-D575-01 [CGS-T505-11]

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Course Description:

The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is a complex compilation of material, reflecting a millennium of beliefs, desires, and norms from ancient Israel. In this course, we begin to understand this diversity of material and the various approaches that have been taken toward it in the scholarly world. We will accomplish this by reading a significant portion of the Hebrew Bible in English, along with representative selections from secondary literature. Since the Hebrew Bible is a fundamental text of Jewish self-understanding and was written within the context of a Jewish milieu, we will approach the text from a Jewish historical, intellectual, and faith perspective.

Aquinas Institute Practices:

The faculty and students of Aquinas Institute value and commit themselves to acquiring the following five practices in the course of their common theological endeavor:

- *written and oral communication
- *close reading of texts
- *analysis of social context
- *theological reflection
- *collaboration

Expectations:

- * Close reading of all materials assigned
- * Active participation in online discussions
- * Creative and respectful reflection on classmates' online comments
- * Open and forthcoming discussion in intensive classes
- * Deep examination into one Biblical passage for research paper
- * Thoughtful and well written research paper and reflection paper

Course Outcomes:

Learning Outcome	Means of Assessment	Practices Addressed	
1. Engage in close readings of	Online participation,	Excellent written and oral communication, close	
selected Biblical passages.	interaction during		
	intensive, and research	reading of texts, and analysis	
	paper.	of social context.	
2. Study Biblical commentaries to	Online participation,	Excellent written and oral	
understand traditional Jewish	interaction during	communication, close read-	
insights into the text.	intensive, and research	ing of texts, analysis of	
	paper.	social context, and	
		theological reflection.	
3. Read articles using modern	Online participation,	Excellent written and oral	
critical methods of understanding	interaction during	communication, close reading of texts, analysis of social context, and	
the Bible in its historical and social	intensive, and research		
setting.	paper.		
		theological reflection.	

Spring 2012 Page 1 of 4

Learning Outcome	Means of Assessment	Practices Addressed	
4. Examine one Biblical passage in	Research paper.	Excellent written and oral	
great depth.		communication, close read-	
		ing of texts, analysis of	
		social context, and	
		theological reflection.	
5. Personal intellectual and spiritual	Personal Reflection	Excellent written	
growth	paper.	communication and	
		theological reflection.	

Course Reading:

Required texts:

- 1. Berlin, Adele; Brettler, Marc Zvi; Fishbane, Michael (editors), The Jewish Study Bible: featuring The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation (Hardcover), Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0195297512. (In this class, we will use the abbreviation JSB to refer to this text.) Throughout this course, whenever we study Biblical texts in JSB and other editions of the Bible, the assignment includes reading all accompanying commentaries.
- 2. Brettler, Marc Zvi, How To Read The Jewish Bible (Paperback), Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN: 0195325222. (In this class, we will use the abbreviation HTRTJB to refer to this text.)
- 3. Other readings will be posted on the Web site.

Recommended texts:

- 4. Bialik, Hayim Nachman, and Ravnitzky, Yehoshua Hana, editors, <u>The Book of Legends</u>, <u>Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash</u>, Schocken, 1992.
- 5. Fox, Everett, The Five Books of Moses, Schocken Books, 2000.
- 6. Friedman, Richard Elliott, Commentary on the Torah, HarperOne, 2003.
- 7. Friedman, Richard Elliott, Who Wrote the Bible?, HarperOne, 1997.
- 8. Kaufmann, Yehezkel, <u>The Religion of Israel</u>, Schocken Books, 1960.
- 9. Lieber, David; Harlow, Jules, <u>Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary</u>, Jewish Publication Society of America, 2001.
- 10. Sarna, Nahum, Understanding Genesis, Schocken, 1970.
- 11. Sarna, Nahum, Exploring Exodus, Schocken, 1996.
- 12. Zornberg, Avivah Gottlieb, <u>The Beginning of Desire: Reflections on Genesis</u>, Image, 1996.

Additional Resources:

Video: The PBS program "The Bible's Buried Secrets: An Archeological Detective Story Traces the Origins of the Hebrew Bible," available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/bible/

I would also recommend the following Web sites:

Internet Jewish History Sourcebook,

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishsbook.html, an excellent resource for Jewish history, including the Biblical period.

Spring 2012 Page 2 of 4

The Jewish Virtual Library, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/index.html, a comprehensive online Jewish encyclopedia that has over 6,000 articles and 2,000 maps and photographs. It includes material on Jewish history, women, the Holocaust, travel, Israel-U.S. relations, politics, religion, and biographies. There is a bibliography of over 1,000 books and 1,000 Web sites as well as a glossary of over 1,000 words. A timeline of Jewish history is available also. Among the highlights are a virtual tour of Israel, the Judaic treasures at the Library of Congress, and the complete text of the Hebrew Bible in English. For the purposes of this course, there is a vast amount of information available in the tab marked "history," with much more information in the tabs marked "maps" and "religion."

A note of caution: the resources for Biblical and Jewish studies available on the Internet are vast and deep. Many are highly credible and valuable. Some, however, are shallow and misleading. (This might be said of ALL resources on the Web!) When using a Web page as a resource, if you are not sure of the validity of the information on that page, use appropriate prudence and carefulness. If you would like me to check out a particular Web site, I will be happy to do so and to give you my recommendation as to its validity and soundness or its inappropriateness and unacceptability as a valid academic resource.

Research Paper (8-10 pages plus bibliography): Each student in the cohort will choose a different Biblical story to study in great depth. The story will be chosen from the standard stories used in the work of the student—teaching, counseling, etc. The student will look at the Biblical narrative from a cultural-historical perspective, cross mythical perspective (if appropriate), using traditional commentaries, modern analysis, and exegetical interpretations legitimate to Jewish scriptural analysis and explanation. In the last page of this paper, the student will discuss how the insights gained from the research in this particular story will inform and benefit the work being done in teaching, counseling, etc. The Research Paper is due by e-mail April 6 by 5:00 PM Central Time US—this is a FIRM date.

Preview Paper:

I invite and encourage the students to submit a *preview paper* for me to review, comment on, and make suggestions for improvement. While submitting the preview paper is optional, I *strongly* recommend that students take advantage of this opportunity for feedback and direction. I would like to remind the students that spelling, grammar, and syntax are important. At the master's level, good grammar, spelling, and syntax are expected. I encourage you to use all available tools, including spell check and grammar check. **The preview paper is due by e-mail to me by 5:00 PM Central Time US March 23.**

Style Guide:

The official Aquinas Institute style guide to use for writing is the most recent edition of the Turabian manual, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Seventh Edition.* Kate L. Turabian (Author), Wayne C. Booth (Editor), Gregory G. Colomb (Editor), Joseph M. Williams (Editor), Chicago: University of Chicago Press Staff (Editor). Papers in this class will follow the format style of this manual.

A good Web site for helping you to cite sources appropriately is http://citationmachine.net/

Spring 2012 Page 3 of 4

Reflection Paper (2-3 pages): At the very end of the course, each student will write a paper reflecting on the work of this course and the personal insights gained through the study and interaction in the course. I am especially interested in hearing how the study of well known Biblical stories from a new perspective will be impacting the use of the stories in the student's work. The Reflection Paper is due by e-mail April 13 by 5:00 PM Central Time US—this is a FIRM date.

Course Evaluation:

•	Quality of online participation	25%
•	Quality of intensive participation	25%
•	Research paper of 8-10 pages (plus bibliography)	40%
•	Reflection paper of 2-3 pages	10%

Spring 2012 Page 4 of 4