Syllabus

Course Description: An introduction to the literature, history, religion and society of Ancient Israel. Our primary access to that data will be through the literature of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: its form, content, historical development and interpretation.

Textbooks:

William R. Millar, Priesthood in Ancient Israel (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001)


Karel Van Der Toorn, Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007)

Peter Enns, The Bible Tells Me So…:Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It (New York: Harper One, 2014)

Any translation of the Bible

Course Requirements:

1. Regular preparation and participation in class discussion measured by four postings per week on the Discussion Board (20%).

2. Four Response Papers (20% each).

3. The readings are considered the lectures when compared with a face-to-face class. Attendance and participation are the Discussion Board postings. A lack of Discussion Board postings is akin to not attending class.

Learning Objectives for all students taking RELS 120: Old Testament:

1. To write and discuss intelligibly about the origins of the Bible and the documentary hypothesis;

2. To differentiate between and apply insights from literary criticism, historical
criticism, and social-science criticism to the interpretation of biblical texts;

3. To be introduced to the biblical histories, legal, prophetic, apocalyptic, and wisdom literature of Ancient Israel.

For those taking RELS 120 Old Testament for Ultimate Questions credit for the Linfield Curriculum, the learning objectives are to learn and demonstrate growth in the following:

1. To articulate and evaluate unexamined assumptions and paradigmatic ways of acquiring knowledge.

2. To analyze critically fundamental beliefs, cultural practices, and competing truth claims.

For those taking RELS 120: Old Testament for Living Past credit for the Linfield Curriculum, the learning objectives are:

1. To learn how to identify, analyze, and contextualize primary sources.

2. To learn how to identify and critique secondary, scholarly arguments about the past.

3. To learn how to develop and defend an analytical or interpretive argument about the past.

4. To recognize that differences separate people past and present, though all people share a common humanity.

5. To evaluate the reliability of evidence about the past.

Students with disabilities are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you are a student with a disability and feel you may require academic accommodations contact Cheri White, Program Director of Learning Support Services (LSS), as early as possible to request accommodation for your disability. The timeliness of your request will allow LSS to promptly arrange the details of your support. LSS is located in Loveridge Hall, Room 24, (503-413-8219), or chwhite@linfield.edu. We also encourage students to communicate with faculty about their accommodations.

Reading Assignments
UNIT ONE: How are we to read the Bible? Three Theories:
1) Enns: “When the Bible Doesn’t Behave”
2) Friedman: “Who Wrote the Bible?”
3) Van Der Toorn: “When a Book is not a Book”

We live in a reading and writing culture. Indeed, part of the educational process is to equip students with reading and writing tools to function in such a culture. Our first task, then, is to become aware of the assumptions that govern our cultural context and then make an effort to set these assumptions aside in order to imagine the ancient world which was dominated by an oral mode of communication. For instance, we now package the Bible in the form of a book because we have the technology to do so. But that was not how the Bible came to be. So our first task is to try to imagine what the Bible was like before it became a book. Otherwise we run the risk of asking the wrong questions of the text. To help us enter the mindset of the ancient world, the first half of the course will engage some of the reading-theory issues raised by Enns, Friedman, and Van Der Toorn. Enns comes at the Bible as a conservative Christian; Friedman comes as a Jewish scholar who presents us with the documentary hypothesis; Van Der Toorn comes at the question from a thorough training in the wider world of ancient Near Eastern Studies. All are fully trained academic scholars.

This Unit addresses the Ultimate Questions course objectives.

Week One

1) Enns: “When the Bible Doesn’t Behave”

Aug 31 Peter Enns, “I’ll Take Door Number Three,” Chapter One, pp. 1-26

Sep 02 Peter Enns, “God Did What?!“ Chapter Two, pp. 27-70

Sep 04 Peter Enns, “God Likes Stories,” Chapter Three, pp. 71-130

Week Two

Sep 07 Peter Enns, “Why Doesn’t God Make Up His Mind?” Chapter Four, pp. 131-64

2) Friedman: “Who Wrote the Bible?”

Sep 09 Richard Elliott Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?, Chaps, 1-2

The World That Produced the Bible 1200-722 B.C.
J and E

Sep 11 Friedman, Chaps. 3-4

Two Kingdoms, Two Writers
The World That Produced the Bible: 722-587 B.C.
Week Three

Sep 14  Friedman, Chaps. 5-6

_In the Court of Josiah_

Sep 16  Friedman, Chaps. 7-8

_A Priest in Exile_
_The World That Produced the Bible: 587-400 B.C._

Sep 18  Friedman, Chaps. 9-10

_A Brilliant Mistake_
_The Sacred Tent_

Week Four

Sep 21  Friedman, Chaps. 11-12

_P_
_In the Court of King Hezekiah_

Sep 23  Friedman, Chaps. 13-14

_The Great Irony_
_The World That the Bible Produced_

Sep 25  Set Topics for Response Paper #1 on the Documentary Hypothesis
Due midnight Sunday September 27

Week Five

3) Van Der Toorn: “When a Book is Not a Book”

Sep 28  Van Der Toorn, _“Introduction”_ and _“Books that are not Books: Writing in the World of the Bible”_ pp. 1-8; 9-26

Sep 30  Van Der Toorn, _“Authorship in Antiquity: Practice and Perception”_ pp. 27-49

Oct 02  Van Der Toorn, _“In Search of the Scribes I: Comparative Evidence”_ pp. 51-73

Week Six

Oct 05  Van Der Toorn, _“In Search of the Scribes II: Biblical Evidence”_ pp. 75-108
Week Seven


Week Eight

Oct 19 Van Der Toorn, “Constructing the Canon: The Closure of the Hebrew Bible” pp. 233-264

Oct 21 Set Topics for Response Paper #2 on Van Der Toorn

Oct 23 Response Paper #2 on Van Der Toorn Due midnight Sunday Oct 25.

Week Nine

UNIT TWO: The Rise and Fall of Ancient Israel

There are two major streams of tradition in the Hebrew Bible: 1) the so-called Deuteronomistic History which extends from Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings; and 2) the Chronicler’s History which extends from 1 and 2 Chronicles. Our task is to discern the respective perspectives each scribal community brings to those streams of tradition as we now have them. The beginning of modern critical study of the Bible began with the proposal of the documentary hypothesis put forward at the end of the nineteenth century by Julius Wellhausen with important revisions such as that proposed by Martin Noth. And we also now have the perspective brought to us by scholars such as Van Der Toorn.

This Unit and the next address the Living Past course objectives.

Primary texts for this unit:

William R. Millar, Priesthood in Ancient Israel (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001)

John C. Endres, William R. Millar, John Barclay Burns, eds., Chronicles and
Its Synoptic Parallels in Samuel, Kings, and Related Biblical Texts
(Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998)

A) The Deuteronomistic Stream of Tradition

Oct 26  Abiathar (547, 548, 549, 550, 552) in Synoptic Parallels; Millar, Chap. 1, pp. 9-31; David (Just Samuel/Kings portions), Synoptic Parallels, pp. 50-151; Millar, pp. 80-81. Solomon (Just Samuel/Kings portions), Synoptic Parallels, pp. 155-192; Millar, pp. 81-83


Week Ten

Nov 02  Joahaz (626), Joash (627), Jeroboam II (630) Zechariah (632), Shallum (633), Menahem (634), Pekahiah (635), Pekah (636), Hoshea (639, 640) in Synoptic Parallels.

Nov 04  Hezekiah and the Fall of Israel (641, 642, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650) in Synoptic Parallels; Millar, pp. 74-77. From Josiah to the Fall of Judah (651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666) in Synoptic Parallels; Millar, pp. 77-80.

B) The Priestly/Chronicler Stream of Tradition


Week Eleven


Nov 13  The Chronicler on David, Synoptic Parallels (just the Chronicler’s portions), pp. 61-151.

Week Twelve
Nov 16  The Chronicler on **Solomon** (563, Dedication of the Temple), *Synoptic Parallels*, pp. 176-182

Nov 18  Set Topics for Response Paper #3 on the Comparative Histories of Israel and Judah

**Nov 20**  Response Paper #3 due midnight Sunday November 22

**Week Thirteen**

Nov 23 – 27  Thanksgiving Break

**Week Fourteen**

**UNIT THREE: Prophets and Prophecy in Ancient Israel**

Tradition suggests the School of Isaiah spans a period of 200 years during the turbulent period of the fall of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah. By focusing on Isaiah it allows us to address the topic of what was the role of prophets in ancient Israel and Judah and their efforts to make sense of why God would allow such events to happen to God’s chosen people. This also lays the groundwork for an exploration for what resources are available from the Isaiah tradition to deal with wilderness experiences.


Dec 02  Selections from Isaiah

Dec 04  Selections from Isaiah

**Week Fifteen**

Dec 07  Selections from Isaiah

Dec 09  Selections from Isaiah

**Response Paper #4 on Isaiah due midnight Thursday, December 17.**