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. (UQ or VP)

Textbooks:


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.

Taskstream is Linfield’s ePortfolio system. Students must demonstrate meeting the learning objectives of each of the Linfield Curriculum Modes of Inquiry or designation by posting exemplars of their work. Exemplars can be uploaded directly to Taskstream from within a BlackBoard course.

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.

Identity Verification: Students enrolled in Online and Continuing Education courses and
Reading Assignments

UNIT ONE: 1) Friedman: “Who Wrote the Bible?”
2) 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 Friedman, and Van Der Toorn. 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.

This Unit addresses both Vital Past and Ultimate Questions course objectives.

1) Friedman: “Who Wrote the Bible?”

Week One
Sep 06  Richard Elliott Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?, Chaps, 1-2

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

Sep 08  Friedman, Chaps. 3-4

Two Kingdoms, Two Writers
The World That Produced the Bible: 722-587 B.C.
Week Two
Sep 11  Friedman, Chaps. 5-6

In the Court of Josiah

Sep 13  Friedman, Chaps. 7-8

A Priest in Exile
The World That Produced the Bible: 587-400 B.C.

Sep 15  Friedman, Chaps. 9-10

A Brilliant Mistake
The Sacred Tent

Week Three
Sep 18  Friedman, Chaps. 11-12

P
In the Court of King Hezekiah

Sep 20  Friedman, Chaps. 13-14

The Great Irony
The World That the Bible Produced

Sep 22  Set Topics for Response Paper #1 on the Documentary Hypothesis
Due midnight Sunday September 24

Sep 24  Response Paper #1 on the Documentary Hypothesis Due midnight (11:59 pm) Sunday, September 24

Week Four
2) Van Der Toorn: “When a Book is Not a Book”

Sep 25  Van Der Toorn, “Introduction” and “Books that are not Books: Writing in the World of the Bible” pp. 1-8; 9-26

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

Sep 29  Van Der Toorn, “In Search of the Scribes I: Comparative Evidence” pp. 51-73

Week Five
Oct 02  Van Der Toorn, “In Search of the Scribes II: Biblical Evidence” pp. 75-108
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 (about which we learned from Friedman) 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. We will be reading the Chronicler first, which is chronologically later in time than Samuel/Kings.

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

Primary texts for this unit:

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

A) The Priestly/Chronicler Stream of Tradition


Week Nine


Nov 01  The Chronicler on Solomon (563, Dedication of the Temple), *Synoptic Parallels*, pp. 176-182

B) The Deuteronomistic Stream of Tradition

Nov 03  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 06  Jeroboam I (570, 571, 572, 573) in *Synoptic Parallels*; Millar, pp. 63-66. Nadab (580), Baasha (579, 581), Elah (582), Zimri (583), Omri (584) in *Synoptic Parallels*.


Nov 10  Joahaz (626), Joash (627), Jeroboam II (630) Zechariah (632), Shallum (633), Menahem (634), Pekahiah (635), Pekah (636), Hoshea (639, 640) in *Synoptic Parallels*.

Week Eleven

Nov 13  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.

Nov 15  Set Topics for the Rise and Fall of Ancient Israel

Nov 17  Response Paper #3 on the Rise and Fall of Ancient Israel due Sunday midnight (11:59 pm), November 19.

Week Twelve
Nov 20 - 24  Thanksgiving Break

Week Thirteen
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.


Nov 29  Eighth-Century Isaiah (1-23; 28-33; 36-39)

Dec 01  Eighth-Century Isaiah (1-23; 28-33; 36-39)

Week Fourteen
Dec 04  Sixth-Century Isaiah (34-35; 40-55)

Dec 06  Sixth-Century Isaiah (34-35; 40-55)

Dec 08  Sixth-Century Isaiah (34-35; 40-55)

Week Fifteen
Response Paper #4 on Isaiah due midnight Friday, December 15.
PHASE 1: WHAT IS THE AUTHOR TRYING TO SAY? (BEFORE CLASS)

1. **Definitions:** List key new terms and concepts in this reading. Define those you do not already know. Circle those that you feel need clarification or discussion.

2. **Thesis Position:** Express in the affirmative, the bottom-line one idea you see the author is seeking to persuade you to believe: one sentence (no conjunctions, no dependent clauses, no prepositional phrases, no internal punctuation)—whether or not you agree with the author.

3. **Author's Defense:** What has the author offered as evidence which supports your choice of this thesis? At this stage, do not evaluate what you think of the thesis or the evidence offered. It is important simply to identify what you think the thesis and the evidence offered is.

PHASE 2: WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S POSITION? (BEFORE)

4. **Take a Stand:** If everyone in the world believed the thesis position you have identified in #2, would the world be a better or worse place to live in? Why? Why not? Try not to sit on a fence.

5. **Critique the Author's Defense:** Go back over the list of evidence you identified in #3. Has the author overlooked relevant evidence to the discussion? Are there other possible conclusions one could draw from the evidence? Relate this discussion to the ongoing discussion of the course. What inter-connections do you see?

PHASE 3: WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT THIS? (IN-CLASS)

6. **Definitions:** Identify new words and make sure all in the group are clear as to the definitions. You do not need to discuss words everyone understands.

7. **Thesis Position:** Give everyone in the group an opportunity to present in one sentence what they think this reading's thesis is. That is your thesis #2. Discuss the various options until the group comes to a consensus. Add to your worksheet what the group has decided the thesis is (#7). This may or may not agree with your initial suggestion. I will want to see both in your worksheet.

8. **Author's Evidence:** Give everyone in the group an opportunity to present what they see as the evidence the author offered for the thesis position. Discuss the various options until the group comes to a consensus. Don't give up your own voice unless you are convinced by arguments offered by others in the group.

9. **Group Stand:** Take a group stand with respect to the thesis and defense you have identified. If everyone in the world believed the thesis position identified, would the world be a better or worse place to live in? Why? Why not?
PHASE 4: EVALUATING THE DISCUSSION  (Do this the last ten minutes of group meeting.)

10. A. Overall Reactions:
   - I learned: ___  ___  ___
   - I participated: ___  ___  ___
   - I enjoyed: ___  ___  ___

B. Group Completion of Steps:
   - Definitions: ___  ___  ___
   - Thesis: ___  ___  ___
   - Defense: ___  ___  ___
   - Group Stand: ___  ___  ___

C. General Dynamics
   - Warm, non-threatening group climate: Yes  ?  No
   - Everyone participated: ___  ___  ___
   - Leadership functions were distributed: ___  ___  ___
   - Overall focus on resolving uncertainties and comparing insights: ___  ___  ___
   - Evaluation is accepted as an integral part of the group process: ___  ___  ___

D. Roles: Check (x) your own. Circle those you observed in others.
   Positive Roles
   - Initiating
   - Asked for information
   - Gave Information
   - Asked for Reactions
   - Gave Reactions
   - Restated Point
   - Gave examples/Asked for examples
   - Asked for Summary
   - Summarized Discussion

   Dysfunctional Roles
   - Sidetrack to Own Area
   - Interrupted Others
   - Monopolized Discussion
   - Put-down
   - Irrelevant stories, etc.
   - Apologizing
   - Withdrawal
   - Premature Evaluation
   - Failure to Listen

E. Instructor Input: I would like to have the instructor comment on the following, relevant to the reading:

F. Parting Comments: Any thoughts you may have about the group process, the reading, the class, suggestions for improvement, etc.

This form is adopted from a handout at a workshop on the topic of process and content in learning led by Professor Craig Nelson of Indiana University. The form is modified from W. F. Hill, Learning Through Discussion (Sage Publication, 1969).