



Course Syllabus - DRAFT

## KNB 1006HF – Reading the Old Testament - Online

Knox College, Toronto School of Theology

Fall 2025

**Course Format Notice:** *This course is offered using a synchronous, online delivery method. This remote format will require a computer with a webcam and microphone as well as access to high-speed internet. If you have questions about what remote delivery might mean for you, please feel free to contact the course instructor, the Knox College registrar, or visit: <https://tinyurl.com/yc8m3ccr>.*

### Instructor Information

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Brian P. Irwin, Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Scripture
<b>Office Location:</b>	Chapel Wing, Upper Level, Knox College
<b>Telephone:</b>	(416) 978-2789
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:brian.irwin@utoronto.ca">brian.irwin@utoronto.ca</a>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	By appointment via email, Zoom or in person
<b>Teaching Assistant:</b>	N/A

### Course Identification

<b>Course Number:</b>	KNB1006HF
<b>Course Format:</b>	Lectures and discussion
<b>Course Name:</b>	Reading the Old Testament
<b>Course Location:</b>	Online Synchronous via Zoom
<b>Class Times:</b>	Mondays, 2:00–4:00pm via Zoom
<b>Prerequisites:</b>	None

### A. Course Description and Student Learning Goals

This course on the Old Testament presents an overview of the Hebrew canon and explores the content, theological themes, and canonical shaping of selected books. Students will be introduced to the history of interpretation, including dominant critical issues relating to the Old Testament. Additional emphasis will be on interpreting this material as Scripture of the Church.

The Learning Goals listed below relate to the following areas:

- a) Understanding of Area Content (**UAC**)
- b) General Academic Skills (**GAS**)
- c) Ministerial and Public Leadership (**MPL**)
- d) Personal and Spiritual Formation (**PSF**)

Upon successfully completing this course, the student will be able to:

- 1) demonstrate an introductory knowledge of the Old Testament and its canonical units (**UAC**)
- 2) identify the major periods of Israelite history and the theological issues associated with them (**UAC**)
- 3) identify the major powers in the ancient Near East and their influence on ancient Israel (**UAC**)
- 4) exercise the basic exegetical skills necessary for interpreting the Old Testament effectively and faithfully for today (**GAS, MPL**)

- 5) identify the major eras and movements in the history of interpretation and reflect on his/her own interpretative location (**UAC, PSF**)
- 6) demonstrate the research and writing skills necessary for graduate-level Old Testament study (**GAS, PSF**)
- 7) demonstrate ethical behaviour, taking responsibility for the expectations of course and showing respect and willingness to listen in the learning atmosphere including class discussions and small groups (**PSF, MPL**)

## B. Course Resources

### Required Texts

Required texts are available online at competitive prices from the University of Toronto Bookstore (<https://uoftbookstore.com/textbooks/>) or at their St. George campus location.

- A modern translation of the Bible (e.g., NRSV, RSV, NAB, TNIV, NIV, NJPS, NET, or NASB). The NET Bible offers extensive textual notes and is available for use online or as a free download from [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org). The NJPS (Tanakh) is a translation of the Hebrew Bible by the best in Jewish Biblical scholarship. As such, it provides a helpful complement to any of the standard Christian translations.
- Hess, Richard S. *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016.
- Rasmussen, Carl G. *Zondervan Essential Atlas of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.
- Wald, Oletta. *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. Revised ed. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2002.

### Recommended Texts

These texts are not required but may be of interest to students given their specific circumstances and goals. No course readings will be assigned from them.

- Badke, William. *Beyond the Answer Sheet: Academic Success for International Students*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2003.  
This valuable work explains how the approach to education in North America differs from that common in many other countries. Includes helpful advice on academic expectations, studying, research, writing, avoiding plagiarism, and dealing with professors. This work is highly recommended for all ESL and International students.
- Collins, Billie Jean, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014.  
An academic style guide based generally on Turabian and used by the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Includes extensive lists of abbreviations related to biblical studies. A recommended purchase for those who plan to continue to do advanced work in biblical studies.
- Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing, ed. John Grossman and Alice Bennett. 9th ed. Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 2018.  
This paperback volume has much in common with the larger *Chicago Manual of Style*, which may be consulted for items that Turabian omits. A recommended purchase for students entering a degree programme. (The full text of the *Chicago Manual of Style* 17<sup>th</sup> edition is available for online use through the Roberts Library website.)

### Course Website

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged into Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>. For help with Quercus, visit: <https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/46670/pages/support>. Students who continue to experience difficulty after consulting online support should contact Knox's head librarian, Joan Pries (joan.pries@utoronto.ca), for further help.

The professor's college webpage can be found at: <https://knox.utoronto.ca/dr-brian-irwin/>

### C. Evaluation

Students are expected to read through the Old Testament at least once during the semester and to cover faithfully the other assigned readings.

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluation in five areas:

- **Reflection Paper on Inspiration and Interpretation (UAC, GAS, PSF) (5%).** Students shall briefly address the following questions: How have you read and interpreted the Bible in the past? What has been your greatest challenge in reading and interpreting Scripture?

*Only once you have completed this question should you go on to read the PDF, *Alive and Powerful: Understanding the Bible*, by Matthew Ruttan. Is there anything in, *Alive and Powerful* that has addressed your concerns? What concerns remain? What do you hope to get out of this course? (maximum two pages, double spaced). Due session 3.*

- **Quizzes (UAC, GAS) (15%).** Three quizzes (identification of Israelite tribal territories, the geography of Israel and its neighbours, and the broader ancient world), each conducted online. Places to be identified will be chosen from a list provided on Quercus at the start of the semester. At the time of each quiz, you will be presented with a link to download a copy of each map which you may either view on the screen or print out. The maps will have locations identified by letters. Each question on the online quiz will present you with a drop-down list of place names from which you must select the correct location name.

The best way to prepare for the quizzes will be to review the relevant maps in your textbook, *The Essential Atlas of the Bible* in relation to the list of placenames provided on Quercus. Held sessions 5, 7, and 10.

- **Online Discussion (UAC, GAS, MPL) (20%).** Students shall be responsible for engaging in a regular online discussion related to a given question, topic, or task. The grade for your online participation will reflect the extent to which you make relevant, informed, thoughtful, and clear contributions to the discussions. While the online discussion will be monitored, students should not expect the Instructor to contribute directly to an open discussion. In the interest of allowing discussion to develop unimpeded any Instructor comments will be offered in class or online after the discussion is closed. Your participation will be evaluated according to the attached rubric, as appropriate.

**Note:** For the online discussion to be helpful and relevant, it must be a place where all students feel safe to ask questions and explore new ideas without fear that their views will be repeated in other contexts. For this reason, views expressed by other students should not be shared outside of this space without their consent.

Discussion Rubric (SUBJECT TO REVISION)					
Criteria	Ratings				Pts
Content, Knowledge	<b>3 pts Excellent</b> Discussion promotes sophisticated use of content and/or demonstrates participants' mastery of content knowledge. This is evidenced by extensive use of concepts and terminology across most or all posts/threads. Examples depict understanding of concepts and are	<b>2 pts Good</b> Discussion promotes basic use of content and/or demonstrate participants' adequate understanding of content knowledge. This is evidenced by use of concepts and terminology across some posts/threads. Examples depict understanding of concepts and are clear and accurate.	<b>1 pts Fair</b> Discussion promotes uncertain or misguided use of concepts and/or demonstrates participants have not fully grasped content knowledge. This is evidenced with little or no use of concepts and terminology across threads. Examples are correct with some details.	<b>0 pts No Marks</b> Did not post.	3 pts

	clear and accurate. Posts engage concepts critically.				
Contribution to the Learning Community	<b>3 pts Excellent</b> Discussion postings actively stimulate and sustain further discussion by building on peers' responses including — building a focused argument around a specific issue or — asking a new related question or — raising an alternate view supported by personal experience or related research. Discussion postings are distributed throughout the module (not posted all on one day or only at the beginning or only on the last day of the module).	<b>2 pts Good</b> Discussion postings contribute to the class's ongoing conversations as evidenced by — affirming statements or references to relevant research or, — asking related questions or, — making an oppositional statement supported by any personal experience or related research. Discussion postings respond to most postings of peers within a 48-hour period.	<b>1 pts Fair</b> Discussion postings sometimes contribute to ongoing conversations as evidenced by — affirming statements or references to relevant research or, — asking related questions or, — making an oppositional statement supported by any personal experience or related research. Discussion postings respond to most postings of peers several days after the initial discussion.	<b>0 pts No Marks</b> Did not post.	3 pts
Writing & Communication	<b>3 pts Excellent</b> Written responses are free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. The style of writing facilitates communication.	<b>2 pts Good</b> Written responses are largely free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. The style of writing generally facilitates communication.	<b>1 pts Fair</b> Written responses include some grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors that distract the reader.	<b>0 pts No Marks</b> Did not post or written responses contain numerous grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. The style of writing does not facilitate effective communication.	3 pts
Total Points: 9					

- Inductive Study (UAC, GAS, MPL, PSF) (50%).** Students shall write a 10–12-page inductive study on one of the following Old Testament books: Ruth, Jonah, or Esther. *Since this assignment evaluates your ability to read and interpret a biblical text, no secondary sources (including artificial intelligence tools) may be used in the preparation or writing of this assignment.* Instructions and sample studies will be available on Quercus. Evaluation will be based on written clarity, degree of insight, literary awareness and understanding of the text, effective use of primary sources, and ability to follow assignment instructions. *Students who want feedback on a draft of their work should submit a draft (in any stage of completion) to the instructor by session 8.* The instructor is willing to provide comments on drafts of this

assignment A completed Assignment Checklist (available on Quercus) must accompany your final paper. **Due session 12.**

- **Readings & Participation (UAC, PSF) (10%).** By the final class meeting, students shall be required to submit a declaration via a document uploaded to Quercus indicating what percentage of the required readings they have completed. This element will also take into account factors such as attendance and participation in class discussions. **Due session 12.**

#### Toronto School of Theology Grading Scale and Standards

The following chart presents the standard used for assessment in this course. It is included in the interests of transparency and to assist students in self-appraisal. If you wish to discuss an assignment to be submitted or a grade that has been received, please feel free to make an appointment with the instructor.

Letter Grade	Numerical Value	GPA	Grasp of Subject Matter	Explanation
<b>"A" range: Excellent: Student shows original thinking, analytic and synthetic ability, critical evaluations, broad knowledge base.</b>				
A+	90–100	4.0	Profound and creative	Strong evidence of original thought, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound and penetrating critical evaluations which identify assumptions of those they study as well as their own; mastery of an extensive knowledge base.
A	85–89	4.0	Outstanding	
A-	80–84	3.7	Excellent	Clear evidence of original thinking, of analytic and synthetic ability; sound critical evaluations; broad knowledge base.
<b>"B" range: Good: Student shows critical capacity and analytic ability, understanding of relevant issues, familiarity with the literature.</b>				
B+	77–79	3.3	Very Good	Good critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; good familiarity with the literature.
B	73–76	3.0	Good	
B-	70–72	2.7	Satisfactory at a post-baccalaureate level	Adequate critical capacity and analytic ability; some understanding of relevant issues; some familiarity with the literature.
FZ	0–69	0	Failure	Failure to meet the above criteria.

**Late work (BD).** Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. The penalty for late work is 4% deducted per week late (2% off per half week). *This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty advisor or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor.* The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course (or the last day of exam week). Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = "standing deferred") beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar's office in the student's college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

**Course grades.** Consistent with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<https://tinyurl.com/yav2hkqm>) or college grading policy.

**Use of Turnitin Plagiarism Detection Tool.** Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their written work to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>) (Links to an external site).

Students who have principled objections to the use of this service should see the course instructor during the first two weeks of the course to arrange an alternative. Typically, this will involve submitting drafts of the assignment at regular intervals throughout the semester. Further information on Turnitin and Quercus may be found at: <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/resources/student-support/>.

## D. Course Policies & Information

Policies for courses are contained in the TST Basic Degree Handbook and the Knox Student Handbook. See further, the Syllabus Supplement available from the class Quercus page. In particular, please note the following:

**Accessibility.** Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

**Plagiarism Policy.** Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to the Academic Dean of the college. For details, see the *TST Basic Degree Handbook* and the *Graduate program Handbooks* (linked from <https://tinyurl.com/y47hv9ne>) and the *University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<https://tinyurl.com/y7vrsrhu>). A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (<https://tinyurl.com/ydbcge4g>).

**Use of Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude).** You may use generative artificial intelligence tools for learning and practicing the concepts in this course, but these tools may not be used for completing assignments in this course. That is, you may use these tools in the same ways you might discuss course content and assignments with your peers, but just as you may not collaborate with your peers to complete assignments, you may not use these tools to complete any assignment or exercise. If you use a GenAI tool, you should use the version of Microsoft Copilot licensed to the University of Toronto, which doesn't retain data for training purposes. Other tools may and do use data entered by users to train the AI, and unless you hold the rights to the prompts you use, you may be entering copyrighted material without the rights-holder's permission.

All of this said, I encourage you to think about the moral, ethical, and pedagogical implications of using GenAI. A first step is to complete the University of Toronto's "[Coursework and GenAI: A Practical Guide for Students](#)" in Quercus. Another step is to read the University of Alberta Library's "[Ethical Considerations for Using Generative AI](#)." You might also read this research paper, "[Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task](#)," which reports on experiments showing that using GenAI literally makes students stupider.

This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to ensure that evaluations are a fair and accurate assessment of your learning. Though it may be tempting to use generative AI to assist you when

completing your assignments, this will simply inhibit your learning. If the work you submit is essentially the output of generative AI, then what have you learned and what value are you adding? Think of it this way: if a potential employer or supervisor can get as much from an AI tool as what you're able to do yourself, then why should they hire you at all? You should aim to understand course content at a level that far exceeds what an automated tool can achieve. This course—and in particular, each assignment—is designed to help you attain true mastery of the course content. If you have questions or are stuck, please come to office hours, where I'll be happy to help.

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the *University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

**Inclusive Language.** Knox College has a policy that inclusive language be used in teaching, public worship, class presentations, written assignments, and official communications. This policy may be found at: [https://knox.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Knox-College-Policy\\_Use-of-Language-Policy-and-Glossary\\_221003.pdf](https://knox.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Knox-College-Policy_Use-of-Language-Policy-and-Glossary_221003.pdf).

**Back-up copies.** Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

**Obligation to check email.** At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at <http://www.utorid.utoronto.ca/>. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. For help with your UTORid and password or other technological issues the following options are available: email [help.desk@utoronto.ca](mailto:help.desk@utoronto.ca); phone 416-978-HELP; or visit the Help Desk at the Information Commons at Robarts Library.

Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. Forwarding your utoronto email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

**Email communication with the course instructor.** The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. All email communications from students in conjoint programs should be sent from a utoronto email address. Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

**Attendance.** Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner congruent with the vocation they are seeking to enter and in which they desire to give leadership. To that end, it is a regulation of the College that a minimum of approximately 80% attendance at courses (10 of 12 weeks) is required for credit; 100% attendance is expected at seminar courses. Habitual lateness for class will be counted as absence.

**Use of Technology in Class.** Laptops and other computing devices may be used in the classroom for note-taking purposes only. The use of the internet is not permitted while class is in session unless it is part of a specific class activity. Students wishing to text message, search for images, fact check etc. should do so during the break or outside of class.

Much of the learning that goes on in the virtual or in-person classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between instructor and student, and between students. Parties outside of this learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. A student without an approved accommodation who wishes to make an audio recording of an in-person class must secure the agreement of the instructor and all classmates; livestreaming and video recordings are not permitted. Online video-streamed classes may be recorded at the discretion of the instructor. Personal recordings may be used only by the student who made the recording; no recording may be reproduced, posted, or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.

## E. Weekly Schedule of Classes, Readings & Assignments

Session 1      Sept. 8      Course Introduction • Orientation to Quercus • Meet your Classmates • The Old Testament: God's Big Blunder? • Canon • The History, Geology, and Geography of Ancient Israel



**Online Discussion for this week (ungraded):** Take time this week to introduce yourself to your classmates. Where are you from? Why are you taking this course? Is there a fascinating fact about yourself that others might want to know?

Session 2      Sept. 15      Textual Witnesses • Genesis



**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Syllabus

Citing Sources handout

*How Not to Plagiarize* (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>)

Hess, pp. 1–54 (Introduction and chapter 1)

Rasmussen, pp. 8–17

Wald, finish reading by session 5

*Alive and Powerful: Understanding the Bible*, Rev. Matthew Ruttan [as PDF on Quercus]



**Online Discussion for this week (ungraded):** If you wish, feel free to carry on with any introductions or conversations begun last week.

Session 3      Sept. 22      Creation Stories in the Ancient Near East and the Bible • Bible Translations



**Due:** Reflection Paper on Inspiration and Interpretation (5%)



**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 55–78 (chapter 2)

Rasmussen, pp. 18–43

Holladay, Carl R. "Contemporary Methods of Reading the Bible." Pages 140–49 in *New Interpreter's Bible. Vol. I: General Articles on the Bible. General articles on the Old Testament. Genesis. Exodus. Leviticus*. Edited by Leander E. Keck. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994. [as PDF on Quercus]



**Online Discussion (1) for this week:** In a single phrase or sentence, state what you believe to be the core message of Genesis 1? How would you preach or teach that idea to children? How would you preach or teach the same message to adults? Where relevant, illustrate your ideas using the biblical text.

Session 4      Sept. 29      Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers: An Executive Summary • Covenant • A Short History of Pentateuchal Criticism





**Yeshiva topic for this week:** *Reading Biblical Texts: Genesis 38 in context*



**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 79–122 (chapters 3–4)

Rasmussen, pp. 44–63



**Online Discussion (2) for this week:** The Old Testament law forbids working on Saturdays, eating lobster, wearing composite fabrics, and a host of other things. Should Christians pay any attention to the Old Testament covenant law? Does it apply today? If so, then how?

**Session 5**

**Oct. 6**

**Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History • An Overview of the History of Ancient Israel**



**Quiz 1: Israelite Tribal Territories (online, in-class)**



**Yeshiva topic for this week:** *Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–8 and Original Sin*



**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 123–53 (chapter 5)

Robinson, Haddon W. “What’s the Big Idea?” Chap. 2 In *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001. [as PDF on Quercus]

Robinson, Haddon W. “The Heresy of Application.” *Leadership* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 21–27. [as PDF on Quercus]

**Session 6**

**Oct. 13**

**History Writing in the Ancient World • The Emergence of Israel • Judges**



**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 155–235 (Part 2: Historical Books: chapters 6–8)

Rasmussen, pp. 64–84



**Online Discussion (3) for this week:** How are we to understand Jephthah’s vow and his daughter’s obedience (Judg 11:1–12:7)? What, if anything, does the passage teach?

**Session 7**

**Oct. 20**

**Introduction to the Prophets**



**Due: Quiz 2: Place Names in Israel (online, in-class)**



**Yeshiva topic for this week:** *Reading Biblical Texts: 2 Chronicles 26 in context*



**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 511–84 (Part 4: Prophetic Books: chapters 19–22)

Rasmussen, pp. 85–95

## Oct. 27 Basic Degree Reading Week ☉ No Class Meeting

## Session 8 Nov. 3 Prophetic Literature • Isaiah • Reading Scripture from Different Social Locations



Last day to submit draft of Inductive Study for review and comments.

Commented [BI1]: Make deadline for draft earlier?

**Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 599–675 (chapters 24–31)

Phiri, Isabel Apawo. "Ruth." In *Africa Bible Commentary*, ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo, 319–324 Nairobi; Grand Rapids, MI: WordAlive; Zondervan, 2006. [as PDF on Quercus]"Ruth," in *Women's Bible Commentary*"Ruth," in *Global Bible Commentary*

**For Discussion in Class this week:** Thinking about this week's readings on Ruth, briefly identify the social location or ideological perspective of each author. How does each differ from your own? In what ways might thinking from varying perspectives *assist* you in understanding the meaning of the text? How might varying ideological perspectives *create barriers* to understanding the meaning of the text?

## Session 9 Nov. 10 Apocalyptic Literature • Ezekiel • Daniel

**Yeshiva topic for this week:** *Reading Biblical Texts: Isaiah 40 in context***Readings in Preparation for Today:**

Hess, pp. 585–98 (chapter 23)

Irwin, Brian P. "The Book of Daniel and the Roots of New Testament Mission." In *Christian Mission: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Developments*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall, 42–63. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010. [as PDF on Quercus]

## Session 10 Nov. 17 Poetry • Psalms



All students should review assignment late policy this week

**Quiz 3: Places and Regions in the Eastern Mediterranean (online, in-class)****Yeshiva topic for this week:** *Reading Biblical Texts: Psalms 1***Readings in Preparation for Today:**



Hess, pp. 389–91, 417–51, 494–510 (chapters Part 3: Poetic Books [short introduction only], chapters 15, 18)

**Online Discussion (4) for this week:** Should we preach, teach, or read the imprecatory psalms (ones in which a worshipper curses or wishes bad things for their enemy) (e.g., Psalm 137). Why or why not? If we should engage with them, then how might this be done?

## Session 11    Nov. 24    Wisdom Literature • Job • Ecclesiastes



### Readings in Preparation for Today:

Hess, pp. 393–416, 452–93 (chapters 14, 16–17)



**Online Discussion (5) for this week:** Read Nehemiah chapter 13. Is Nehemiah right or wrong in his response to the issue of intermarriage with non-Judeans? Why does he behave in the way he does? Explain your answer.

## Session 12    Dec. 1    Ezra • Nehemiah • Chronicles • Post-exilic Theological Reflection



**Due:** Statement of Required Reading Completed due (10%); Inductive Study due (50%)



### Reading:

Hess, pp. 317–69, 682–713 (chapters 11–12, 33–Transition)

## F. Select Bibliography (for your interest and edification)

### 1) Style and Writing Guides

Collins, Billie Jean, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*. 2nd ed. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014.

An academic style guide based generally on Turabian and used by the Journal of Biblical Literature. Includes extensive lists of abbreviations related to biblical studies. A recommended purchase for those who plan to continue to do advanced work in biblical studies.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing, ed. John Grossman and Alice Bennett. 6th ed. Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

This paperback volume has much in common with the larger Chicago Manual of Style, which may be consulted for items that Turabian omits. A recommended purchase for students entering a degree programme.

Vyhmeister, Nancy J. *Quality Research Papers for Students of Religion and Theology: Your Indispensable Guide to Writing*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

A guide to research and writing geared specifically to Biblical studies. The work includes a step-by-step guide to writing a research paper as well as a helpful distillation of the main points of Turabian's style manual. A good choice for those who have not had previous experience in research and writing.

### 2) General Works on the Old Testament

Baker, David W., and Bill T. Arnold. *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester: Baker; Apollos, 1999.

This volume offers an extremely valuable examination of the state of research on a wide variety of topics related to the Old Testament. Detailed notes provide excellent opportunities for further reading. Although the contributors all possess a confessional and generally conservative perspective, their discussion covers the complete range of critical and interpretative perspectives. A helpful supplement to a traditional introduction.

Matthews, Victor H., and Don C. Benjamin, eds. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Orient*. 2nd ed. New York, NY; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1997.

Features over sixty translated texts from the ancient Near East that are relevant to understanding the Old Testament text. Minimal introductory material. Texts are given without section and line numbers. The dynamically equivalent approach to translation makes this a good choice for classroom use.

Soulén, Richard N., and R. Kendall Soulén. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. 4th ed. Louisville, KY; London; Leiden: Westminster/John Knox, 2011.

This handy resource brings together in one place, definitions for terms related to Old and New Testament criticism. Coverage is very good for a book of this size. A recommended purchase for students.

Walton, John H. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

This helpful volume brings together a wealth of historical and cultural data relating to the Old Testament. A well-conceived and valuable aid to Bible study.

### 3) Introductions

Anderson, Bernhard W., and Kathryn Pfisterer Darr. *Understanding the Old Testament*. Abridged and updated ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998.

Archer, Gleason L., Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Revised and Expanded ed. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1994.

First appearing in 1964, this oft-reprinted and now-revised work has been a mainstay in conservative undergraduate classrooms. A full quarter of the book is given over to introductory material, much of which is devoted to refutation of the documentary theory of Pentateuchal composition. Much of the treatment of individual books is also preoccupied with polemical interests. Despite the work of revision, many of the references are to older sources. In general, the book shows little interaction with the latest developments in Old Testament interpretation and scant interest in theological reflection. Archer's comments are often well-informed, but sometimes marred by an unflattering air of superiority. Helpful as an example of well-informed, mid-twentieth century fundamentalist thinking.

Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan E. Beyer. *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*. Encountering the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999.

A well-illustrated and visually appealing survey of the Old Testament aimed at an undergraduate audience. Sidebars contain materials such as excerpts of extra-biblical texts, or syntheses of scholarly arguments. Each chapter ends with boxed text devoted to Summary, Key Terms, Study Questions, and Further Reading. The authors' comments are well informed. Critical views are presented fairly, but with a brevity expected in a volume of this kind. The authors' own views on critical issues tend to be conservative in nature. Bibliographies include a wide range of material with the emphasis on more conservative works. End matter includes a glossary, notes, and indices. Includes a CD-ROM (Windows and Macintosh readable) containing the full text as well as handouts.

Bandstra, Barry L. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1999.

This undergraduate-level introduction is written in a clear and direct style. The emphasis is on learning to read Biblical texts. To this end, the format of the book includes extracts from the Old Testament itself followed by comments and observations by the author. The presentation of materials in the Pentateuch follows the documentary approach. Here and elsewhere, critical issues are addressed obliquely, in a manner that does not detract from the primary focus of the book. Bandstra is concerned to treat the overall literary and theological shape of the books under discussion. Timelines provide a context for understanding various books. Chapters conclude with review and discussion questions and

suggestions for further reading. End matter includes an extensive glossary and bibliography as well as the expected indices.

**Brueggemann, Walter. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster/John Knox, 2003.**

Brueggemann's work owes much to the canonical approach of Brevard Childs. Even so, he does not go so far as does Childs in the role he affords the community of faith. Consequently, Brueggemann tends to make more of those passages that he feels have not been completely brought into the mindset of the community. These provide him with opportunity to reflect "imaginatively" and so avoid what he regards as the danger of theological "repression". Critical issues such as dating and composition receive little attention, as do also issues of literary structure. Instead, Brueggemann focuses on the theological dimensions of the text. The volume is almost entirely devoid of the tables, charts, or other illustrations that might be expected in a work of this kind. End matter includes an extensive bibliography, as well as scripture and name indices.

**Ceresko, Anthony R. *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Liberation Perspective*. Revised and expanded ed. Maryknoll, NY; London: Orbis; Geoffrey Chapman, 2001.**

Ceresko's work is influenced by the sociological and liberationist approach of Norman Gottwald. The treatment of the Pentateuch uses the documentary theory as a starting point. Subsequent chapters are less occupied with historical-critical concerns. This introduction is organised chronologically, with biblical books, or portions thereof, discussed according to their date of composition. Some non-canonical books are treated (e.g. Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon), while some biblical books (e.g. Ruth) are not. Each chapter ends with thought-provoking review questions. A clearly-written and accessible entry into liberationist interpretation from the pen of a careful scholar who has taught in both the industrialised and developing worlds.

**Childs, Brevard S. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979.**

Fully aware of critical issues and the history of interpretation, Childs focuses on the final form of the text and emphasizes theological matters.

**Collins, John J. *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004.**

It is the ambitious goal of this volume to assist both undergraduates and graduates, as well as those in confessional and non-confessional settings. The Biblical material is discussed in the Hebrew canonical order. Footnotes are absent, but each chapter concludes with a select bibliography of resources for further research. Collins' method is historical-critical, with the documentary approach being the primary means by which he examines the Pentateuch. Discussion is often punctuated by reference to relevant ancient Near Eastern texts. While he often treats themes, Collins' interest is not literary or canonical, as the absence of book outlines attests. Only occasionally is reference made to contemporary relevance. Unlike most works of its kind, this volume includes discussion of the books of the Apocrypha. End matter includes a glossary, but no index. Includes Windows-compatible CD-ROM. An accessible and thorough treatment of the Old Testament and Apocrypha from a seasoned practitioner of the historical-critical method.

**Craigie, Peter C. *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1986.**

A basic introduction by a highly regarded evangelical scholar with interests in Ugaritic and ancient Near Eastern backgrounds to the Old Testament. Lacking the detail and footnotes found elsewhere in Craigie's work. Completed after the author's death.

**Dillard, Raymond B., and Tremper Longman III. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.**

A medium-length introduction from an evangelical perspective. Biblical books are treated under the headings, historical background, literary analysis, theological message, and relation to the NT. The authors present critical issues thoroughly and fairly and show good judgement when deciding among various positions.

**Driver, S. R. *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. International Theological Library. Eighth ed. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898.**

An excellent source of 19th-century interpretation from a British scholar and churchman who did much to introduce German critical scholarship to the English-speaking world.

Gottwald, Norman K. *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985.

A well-illustrated, sizeable, and non-traditional introduction. Gottwald emphasises literary and social-scientific approaches as a means to move beyond the limitations of the historical-critical method. Excellent treatment of the formation of the canon and textual history leading to contemporary English translations. Superb discussions of source and form criticism. The work is arranged according to blocks of tradition, so does not stress interpretative issues relating to individual books. Many helpful maps and charts. A valuable resource.

Harrison, Roland K. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969.

A dated, but significant, work from a prominent conservative evangelical scholar. An excellent source for material on the history of critical interpretation, Harrison's work has a strong conservative apologetic interest.

Hill, Andrew E., and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.

A survey of the Old Testament from an evangelical perspective and one well suited to undergraduates. Critical views are presented clearly and fairly.

LaSor, William Sanford et al. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996.

An excellent evangelical introduction written at a seminary level. The authors present critical issues well, but sometimes revert to a more conservative position than their own presentation would allow. A revision of the highly successful 1982 edition.

McConville, J. Gordon. *A Guide to the Prophets*. Exploring the Old Testament, 4. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002.

An introduction to the Prophets by a well-known British evangelical. Each book is examined under the headings, date and destination, critical interpretation, theological themes, rhetorical intention, and place in the canon. Each chapter concludes with suggestions for further reading. Text boxes offer questions for further investigation or reflection. A sophisticated text for undergraduates or those new to biblical studies.

McKenzie, Steven L., and M. Patrick Graham, eds. *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1998.

Pfeiffer, Robert H. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Revised ed. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1948.

Written from a mainline critical perspective and reflecting the state of the discipline at the midpoint of the 20th century.

Pleins, John David. *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001.

In this non-traditional introduction, the author offers an "integrated social reading" of the various books of the Old Testament. The standard questions regarding date, composition, structure, theme, critical issues etc. are generally overlooked in favour of an emphasis on the moral, social, and ethical aspects of the texts under discussion. Critical views do, however, occasionally come into play. Discussing Genesis to Deuteronomy, for example, Plein attempts to sketch a social ethic for each of the traditional Pentateuchal sources. Attention is given to the sensitivity necessary in order to read texts that are often theologically divergent. Treatment of some books (e.g. Ruth) is unusually brief. As a themed work it is instructive, but not to be used in place of a comprehensive and traditional introduction.

Rendtorff, Rolf. *The Old Testament: An Introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986.

A concise introduction by a respected German scholar who combines critical awareness with canonical interests. Includes sections on the history of ancient Israel, its institutions, and the books of the canon. Helpful discussion of the intersection between literary forms and Israelite social life. Treatment of individual books is brief. Section bibliographies understandably emphasise German sources.

Schmidt, Werner H. *Old Testament Introduction*. New York, NY; Louisville, KY: de Gruyter; Westminster/John Knox, 1999.

This volume represents the second English edition, but the ninth of the German original. The book opens with a brief survey of Israelite history, including key social developments. Discussion of the Pentateuch is from the perspective of the traditional sources with attention given to the theological intentions of each. The section dealing with the

prophetic books is preceded by a concise, but helpful treatment of the genre. Treatment of individual prophetic and poetic books is similarly concise, with most chapters providing an outline of the book and some reference to major interpretative issues. Emphasis, however, is on noting theological highlights and the message for the original audience. The volume closes with a series of short essays under the heading, "Theology and Hermeneutics". The body of the work employs neither references nor footnotes. Instead, the concluding bibliography is presented in sections that generally correspond to the chapter divisions of the book. Helpful as an overview of the scholarly consensus with an emphasis on European scholarship.

Steussy, Marti J., ed. *Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2003.

Wenham, Gordon J. *A Guide to the Pentateuch*. Exploring the Old Testament, 1. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003.

A well-illustrated introduction to the Pentateuch by a prominent British evangelical who has written extensively on the subject. Emphasis is on structure and theme. The author also discusses relevance for understanding the New Testament. Concluding chapters discuss theme, composition, and rhetorical intent. Each chapter ends with a brief annotated bibliography. Text boxes address specific critical or interpretative issues. End matter includes glossary and index. A sophisticated text for undergraduates or those new to biblical studies.

#### 4) Commentary Guides

Childs, Brevard S. *Old Testament Books for Pastor and Teacher*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977.

Dated, but still valuable, this handy volume evaluates Old Testament commentaries. Child's superior grasp of the history of interpretation is evident in the range of works (which include many by European scholars) that he discusses. Child's highest evaluation is reserved for works that show good scholarship combined with theological interest. Conservative evangelical readers will at times be more comfortable with the recommendations offered by Longman. A wise purchase for serious students of the Old Testament.

Glynn, John. *Commentary & Reference Survey: A Comprehensive Guide to Biblical and Theological Resources*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2003.

This survey covers the Old and New Testaments, systematic theology, and church history. Annotations are spare and sparse. The author uses a coding system to rate commentaries on a scale reflecting their theological stance—Evangelical through Liberal/Critical. The criterion on which this assessment is made is the commentator's commitment to inerrancy. Commentaries are grouped according to type—technical, semi-technical, expository etc. The section on building a theological library is helpfully geared toward the needs of various groups, including lay people, students, and pastors. Covers Bible study software. The theological perspective of the author is conservative, but the works listed cover the entire theological spectrum.

Goldingay, John. *Old Testament Commentary Survey, 1991 Edition*. RTSF Booklets, 12. Leicester: Religious & Theological Studies Fellowship, 1991.

A commentary survey produced for the UK equivalent of the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Goldingay represents the best in British evangelical scholarship and is not averse to recommending works from a critical perspective if they are characterised by careful scholarship. Comments are briefer than those found in Longman. The emphasis on works from European authors makes it a good complement to Longman.

Longman, Tremper, III. *Old Testament Commentary Survey*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995.

A guide to selecting Old Testament commentaries and reference works. Section on reference works is thin. Longman takes pains to identify commentaries according to their stance on critical issues—critical, moderately critical or conservative. Now available in a newer edition.

Stuart, Douglas. *A Guide to Selecting and Using Biblical Commentaries*. Dallas, TX: Word, 1990.

A guide that provides basic orientation to the world of commentaries, explaining what a commentary is, and what separates the good ones from the poor ones. Stuart provides a book-by-book listing of available commentaries on Old and New Testament books and an annotated list of what he considers to be the best commentaries. He also offers

remarks on one-volume commentaries and commentary series. An excellent guide for someone who is entirely new to biblical studies and academics.