

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL LITERATURE

**Classics 227/Jewish Studies 227/
Religious Studies 227/Literature in Translation 227**

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UW-Madison
Department of Classics and Ancient Near Eastern Studies
Fall 2016

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Office: 960 Van Hise Hall
Office Hours: M 10:00–10:50, Th 9:00–10:00
or by appointment

Place and Time:

Lecture meeting time: TTh 1:00–2:15pm
Lecture meeting place: Van Vleck B239
Section time and place as assigned.
Section 301: M 11:00–11:50; VH 494 (email: classics227-301-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Section 302: M 12:05–12:55; VH 223 (email: classics227-302-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Section 303: M 1:20–2:10; VH 207 (email: classics227-303-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Section 304: M 2:30–3:20; VH 586 (email: classics227-304-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Section 305: F 9:55–10:45; VH 123 (email: classics227-305-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Section 306: F 11:00–11:50; VH 123 (email: classics227-306-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Section 307: T 11:00–11:50; SocSci 6113 (email: classics227-307-f16@lists.wisc.edu)
Final exam date: December 22, 2016 (10:05 am–12:05 pm)

Course Description:

The Hebrew Bible comprises one of the foundational literary corpora of Western Civilization, regardless of whether we treat it in our personal lives devotionally as holy scripture or mundanely as “mere” literature. Its stories have exerted an immeasurable influence on our own modern literary genres; its bodies of legal material persist as a primary cultural background and a significant touchstone of our own legal system (with the commensurate disagreements as to *what role* they should play in our system); and its turns of phrase have been immortalized in countless allusions found in subsequent literature. The Hebrew Bible continues to make truth claims in religious communities; even if we are not members of these communities, it is worth our time to become familiar with the dominant strains of ethical thought permeating the biblical text. This course will probe the full corpus of the Hebrew Bible, introducing students to the historical context of the book’s development, the process of its formation, and the very human production

of a text considered sacred by both Christians and Jews alike, and acknowledged worldwide as a literary masterpiece.

Catalogue Description:

Introduction to the literature and literary history of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

Student Achievement Goals:

Students will:

1. demonstrate familiarity with the basic methodological approaches to and problems with the text of the Hebrew Bible as a literary corpus, historical artifact, product of a long process of composition, and a text considered authoritative by two of the world's major religious traditions.
2. develop a deeper understanding of the multitude of philosophical and theological positions taken by the authors of the biblical text, and exhibit a more self-critical understanding of their own personal approach to the biblical text.
3. hone their close reading skills so as to be able to read a literary text with deeper attention to detail and sharper interpretive instincts, as well as increase their ability to articulate their observations.

Course Requirements:

As part of the work contributing to their successful completion of this class, students *must* (a) read the assigned readings *before* attending class (completion of the readings will provide a solid background for the lectures and discussion sections); (b) attend both lectures and discussion sections diligently, so as to integrate the readings with the lectures; (c) participate actively in a “Reacting to the Past”-style role-playing game, including participating in in-class debates and completing writing assignments; (d) take two examinations asking them to analyze, synthesize, and interpret the biblical texts and secondary readings (no postponements of any exam without extreme extenuating circumstances; *the second exam will be cumulative only from the material handled in the third segment of the semester*).

The grade will be calculated with the following values:

1. 15% — Course Participation (see section on **Participation** below)
2. 5% — Two 2-page Reflection Essays (2.5% each, except in cases of late adding; see Sept. 6 and Dec. 15 assignments)
3. 30% — Two 5-page Reaction Papers (15% each, due during the course of the semester, as assigned below in connection with the role-playing game)
4. 20% — Exam #1
5. 30% — Exam #2

Grading Scale:

100–93%	A
92.99–89	AB
88.99–83	B
82.99–79	BC
78.99–70	C
69.99–60	D
59.99–	F

Please Note: There will be no curve in this course. If anybody asks me whether there will be a curve, I will tell them to “Look in the Syllabus”.

Please contact me early in the semester if you are registered for honors credit (most honors credit students will take the 307 Section, and/or will be assigned more prominent roles in the role-playing game).

Additional Policies:

Policy on Diversity of Thought:

We all come to this course with different presuppositions and different opinions on the sanctity or profanity of the biblical text. I encourage disagreement and debate within the context of discussion sections, but I ask that you disagree with one another in a respectful manner. I disagree with many of my colleagues on a regular basis—and then we go out for dinner together and argue some more. Diversity of opinion is **not** tantamount to disrespect. However, precisely *because* of the diversity of opinions represented in this class, we must seek a common ground from which to discuss the Bible; that common ground is found in our *humanity*, and it is for this reason that we will discuss the Bible primarily as a *human-produced text*. That assertion does not preclude the possibility that it is also a *divinely-produced text*; but it does circumscribe the evidentiary basis upon which we will base our arguments. Our arguments must be based on *what is in the text, or what we can know through reasoned scientific approaches* (e.g., archaeology, epigraphy, historical reconstruction, etc.).

Additionally, students will be shocked and appalled at the content of the biblical text. Or, at least, they should be. Some portions of the biblical text can be difficult, and often painful text to read. This difficulty arises from the fact that the book contains controversial material—including sexual and military violence. We will do our best to treat with respect the potentially troublesome issues arising from reading this literature and the associated secondary readings. The professor assumes that students have enrolled in college in order to acquire an education that deepens their intellect and challenges them to engage with materials and viewpoints that do not always necessarily coincide with their own. *Be prepared to be offended in this class—the challenge you face is to grapple with the nature of the offense, and to form productive strategies for understanding the root of your own and others’ discomfort and for engaging critically with the materials and conversations you have.*

Policy on Participation:

This is YOUR education. PARTICIPATE! (It’s also your job—at least one of them—so please treat it the way you would treat any other job: seriously).

Students are expected to:

- Arrive to class and section on time.
- Complete the readings and assignments *before* class. **Late Work will be deducted at the rate of 50% per day late.**
- Consider the suggested study/discussion questions distributed over Learn@UW (discussion board) *before* lecture classes.
- Not pack up until after the professor has finished talking. Seriously. Just don’t do it.**

Policy on Absences:

- We will be taking attendance in lectures. Students are asked to sign in before or after

lecture.

• **JUSTIFIABLE ABSENCES** (events such as military training exercises, funerals, weddings, religious holidays not provided for by the syllabus in accordance with the University's academic calendar, and other special occasions subject to the approval of the instructor) must be excused by the professor or the section leader prior to their occurrence. If these absences occur on exam days, exams will be made up on the **first day** the student is back from the absence. **NO EXCEPTIONS**. Other absences ("I don't feel like coming in today", "I really needed that day off after my mongo trip to Barbados over the week-end," and other such nincompoopery) will not be accepted.

Policy on Contesting Grades:

We will do our best to grade your work fairly, honestly, and clearly. Nonetheless, we recognize that occasionally there will (valid) differences of opinion concerning an appropriate grade. We ask that you follow the following procedure to contest a grade:

- **WAIT** 24 hours from the time it was handed back. The grade's not going anywhere, and you need to take some time to internalize why you received the grade you did.
- **TYPE** up the reason you believe the grade does not accurately reflect your performance in the class, and bring a hard-copy of this document, along with the original work itself to the section leader during office hours (or by appointment). Be prepared for a discussion; grades may be raised, sustained, or lowered.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated. You will find the University's statement on Academic Dishonesty here: <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrit.html>
Please familiarize yourself with definitions of plagiarism; any instances will receive a failing grade (0) on the assignment, and will be reported to the Dean of Student Life.

Policy on E-mail:

I have set up an e-mail list for this class, which I will use to disseminate announcements. Students are welcome to post questions or comments for discussion outside of class, provided that appropriate courtesy is shown and the conversation does not move beyond what is *relevant to the course*. Posts are sent to students' wisc.edu account, and it is the student's responsibility to have email forwarded to any alternate addresses they might use.

Policy on Electronics in Class:

Unlike many of my peers, I am not experiencing the form of hysteria that holds that electronics are inherently distracting in class. Studies *do* suggest, however, that even when students are fully engaged, they do not learn as well when a screen intervenes between them and their instructor. I *humbly suggest*, therefore, that you use electronics sparingly during lecture class—note taking is fine, as are other class-pertinent activities. Please do not buy the latest pair of boots or download that new Jay-Z album in class. The T.A.'s may have specific requests that they make of you in regard to electronics in the classroom.

Policy on Special Requests:

The Professor does not conduct business concerning special exemptions/assignments, etc. over e-mail, via Twitter, on Facebook, via text message, over the phone, or even via carrier pigeon (as impressive as that feat might be). In order to make any special requests, students must speak with the professor face-to-face, either before or after class, or at a

pre-arranged time (it is completely permissible to arrange the meeting through one of the media listed above).

Textbooks:

Required:

- John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
- The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible—this translation is available in a variety of formats, including hardcover, paperback, and now widely available online as well. I have asked that a particular edition be held in bookstores (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, 3rd. ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press]), but it is unnecessary for students to purchase this particular edition if they already own or have access to another edition of *the NRSV translation*. (Because we cannot get bogged down in questions of why one student’s Bible translates a verse one way, while another’s takes a different approach, this version will be the standard for our class. Its chief advantage is that it taps the best scholarship regarding both what the “original” Hebrew text was and how that text can best be translated into English.)
- Access to Learn@UW

Course Schedule:

The following abbreviations are used below: *SIHB* = *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*; **BT = **Biblical Text**; passages are cited by indicating the book, followed by the chapter and verse(s), separated by a colon. (For example, “Genesis 1:12–27” designates Genesis chapter one, verses 12 through 27. “Genesis 1–3” designates chapters one through three of Genesis.) Verses are separated by commas (“Genesis 1:12, 16” = Genesis chapter one, verses 12 and 16), while chapters and parts of chapters are separated by semicolons (“Genesis 1:12–16; 2:1–3” = Genesis chapter one, verses 12 through 16, and chapter 2, verses 1 through 3)**

T Sep. 6

[Guest Lecturer: Nathaniel Greene — **N.B.: I will be at a conference during the first week of class; the class will nonetheless run during its initial sessions.]

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (Jewish *Tanak* / Christian Old Testament)

- During class students will fill out a “casting questionnaire” (for Reacting game).

Th Sep. 8

[Guest Lecturer: Nathaniel Greene]

Israelite History, Biblical Chronology, Ancient Historiography, and Modern Historicism

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 1–14.

Assignments (in addition to the reflection paper):

- Print out the timeline, found in the course website (Learn@UW), and begin filling in major events in the history of Israel and Judah using the information in the readings. We will continue using these sheets in class, so please bring them to class as well.

To be handed in Sep. 8: Reflection Essay #1. Write a self-critical paper (2 pages, double-spaced) briefly explaining your view of the Bible. These can be written from the standpoint of your religious tradition, if you wish, or from a secular (i.e., non-religious) position. Consider answering a few of the following questions: What does the Bible mean to you? What is it about? Who wrote it? Why was it written? What role does it play in your life today (e.g., as a normative religious document, or as a major piece of world literature)? What role *should* it have in the life of the average American citizen? What do you anticipate (expect or even fear) this class will do to your thinking on these issues? ***There is no right or wrong answer to any of these questions; they are yours alone.*** *I will not be grading these on the basis of content—you will be assigned a grade merely for completion (full credit for satisfactory completion).* ***Here's the catch—I'm going to keep them until the final week of class. At that point, you'll be asked to write a final statement asking you to reflect on your answers and in what ways your view of the Bible has or has not changed. Please make sure to write your name on the assignment.***

T Sep. 13

The literary environment of the Bible

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 15–27.
- S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford: OUP, 1989):
 - Atrahasis, Tablet I, columns i–iv (pp. 8–15, ending with “The great Annunaki who assigns the fates.”)
 - Gilgamesh, Standard Version, Tablet I, column iv (pp. 55–56)
 - Gilgamesh, Old Babylonian Version, Tablet X, column iii (p. 150)
- M. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Louisville: Westminster, 1978):
 - Baal I (pp. 86–89).

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Sep. 15

The Pentateuch (/Torah), part 1: “Who Wrote the Bible?”

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 28–35 (This subject is a complex one, and potentially somewhat disconcerting to a number of students. Do not worry too much about the details of the textual source-division; focus primarily on what scholars have said about their reasons for dividing these sources.)

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Sep. 20

The Pentateuch (/Torah), part 2: The Primeval History

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 36–43
- BT: *read* Genesis 1:1–3:24; 6:11–8:12

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Sep. 22

The Pentateuch (/Torah), part 3: The Patriarchs

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 44–54
- BT: *read* Genesis 12:1–20; 16:1–18:33; 21:1–22:19

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Sep. 27

The Pentateuch (/Torah), part 4: The Exodus from Egypt and the Revelation at Sinai

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 55–63, 64–73
- BT: *read* Exodus 1:1–3:22; 13:1–15:21; 19:1–20:21; 40:1–38

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Sep. 29

The Pentateuch (/Torah), part 6: The Priestly Theology

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 74–83
- BT: *read* Leviticus 8:1–11:47; 16:1–34; Numbers 13:1–14:45

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Oct. 4

The Pentateuch (/Torah), part 7: Deuteronomy

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 84–93
- BT: *read* Deuteronomy 1:1–6:9; 30:1–20

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Oct. 6

The Deuteronomistic History, part 1: Joshua and Judges

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 94–106, 108–115
- BT: *read* Joshua 5:1–6:27
read Judges 4:1–23; 19:1–21:25

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion prompts, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

REVIEW SESSION: WE WILL SCHEDULE A REVIEW SESSION FOR TWO HOURS ON THE AFTERNOON/EVENING OF MONDAY, OCTOBER 10

T Oct. 11

EXAM #1 (on material through Oct. 4)

Th Oct. 13

The Deuteronomistic History, part 2: 1 & 2 Samuel

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 116–122, 123–130
- BT: *read* 1 Samuel 9:1–12:25
read 1 Samuel 16:1–17:58
read 2 Samuel 11:1–12:25

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Oct. 18

The Deuteronomistic History, part 3: 1 & 2 Kings

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 131–139, 141–151
- BT: *read* 1 Kings 3:1–28
read 2 Kings 17:1–18:37
read 2 Kings 22:1–25:30

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Oct. 20

Prophecy, part 1: Israelite Prophecy in Its ANE Context, Amos and Hosea

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 153–163
- BT: *skim* Hosea and Amos
read Hosea 1:1–3:5
read Amos 2:6–5:27

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session's discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Oct. 25

Prophecy, part 2:

GAME SESSION 1

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 164–184
- BT: *read* Isaiah 7:1–25; 36:1–37:38
read Zephaniah 1:1–3:20
read Habbakuk 1:1–2:20
read Nahum 1:1–3:19

Th Oct. 27

Prophecy, part 3:

GAME SESSION 2

Readings:

- BT: *read* Micah 1:1–3:12
read Jeremiah 7:1–34
read Jeremiah 18:1–23
read Jeremiah 26:1–24

T Nov. 1

Prophecy, part 4:

GAME SESSION 3

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 185–196
- see **Game Manual (online)** for biblical readings

Assignments:

•To be handed in Nov. 1: Reacting Paper #1. TOPIC: Identify one of the intellectual collisions that you see shaping up in this game. How do you predict it will play out? How do you think the character you have been assigned to play would negotiate this intellectual dilemma? Who do you view your intellectual allies to be? What biblical or secondary sources can you find that held to elucidate how your character can or should react in the context of the historical setting? Your paper must contain at least four citations of primary data and reference two secondary sources (NOT ONLINE SOURCES!).

Write a ca. 5 pg. paper (*no less than 1700 words, with max. 2300 words as an upper ballpark figure*), and hand it in to your section leader **in two formats: a hard copy and a .DOC file that you upload to Dropbox in Learn@UW**. N.B.: If you have quoted from a source or gained information from a source, **you must cite that source in a footnote** (see the *Chicago Manual of Style* for how to cite pretty much anything, from a newspaper to the internet; see the policy on **Academic Honesty** above).

Th Nov. 3

Prophecy, part 5:

GAME SESSION 4

Readings:

- see **Game Manual (online)** for biblical readings

T Nov. 8

Prophecy, part 6:

GAME SESSION 5

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 197–208
- see **Game Manual (online)** for biblical readings

Th Nov. 10

Prophecy, part 7:

GAME SESSION 6

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 209–219
- see **Game Manual (online)** for biblical readings

T Nov. 15

The Writings, part 1: 1&2 Chronicles

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 229–235
- BT: *skim* 1–2 Chronicles, devoting special attention to 1 Chr 1–9: what is the purpose of such extensive genealogies, do you think? Is there a literary centerpiece—a guiding principle or central passage—to this whole complex?
read 2 Chronicles 33:1–20; go back and compare this passage to the report on Manasseh’s reign in 2 Kings 21:1–18. How do the two presentations differ?

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Nov. 17

The Writings, part 2: Ezra and Nehemiah

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 220–228
- BT: *read* Ezra 7:1–10:44
read Nehemiah 4:1–9:38

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Nov. 22 — SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE (NO CLASS)

Th Nov. 24 — THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)

N.B.: In lieu of the first of these two class periods, the professor will be leading three 2-hour review sessions before the midterm and the final exam. See schedule at the appropriate places.

T Nov. 29

The Writings, part 3: The Psalms and the Song of Songs

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 236–246
- BT: *read* Psalms 1, 2, 6-8, 74, 82, 89, and 137
read Song of Songs 1:1–5:16

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Dec. 1

The Writings, part 4: Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 248–255, 256–266
- BT: *read* Proverbs 1:1–2:22; 7:1–8:36
read Job 1:1–2:13
read Job 38:1–42:17
read Qoheleth (=Ecclesiastes) 1:1–3:15; 12:9–14

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

•To be handed in Dec. 1: Reacting Paper #2. TOPIC: Identify one of the intellectual collisions that we have encountered in this game, and give as accurate and thorough an account as you can of it. You may pick one that you deem central to the game, or you may pick one that is a bit more peripheral. Your paper must contain at least four citations of primary data and reference two secondary sources (NOT ONLINE SOURCES!).

Write a ca. 5 pg. paper (*no less than 1700 words, with max. 2300 words as an upper ballpark figure*), and hand it in to your section leader **in two formats: a hard copy and a .DOC file that you upload to Dropbox in Learn@UW**. N.B.: If you have quoted from a source or gained information from a source, **you must cite that source in a footnote** (see the *Chicago Manual of Style* for how to cite pretty much anything, from a newspaper to the internet; see the policy on **Academic Honesty** above).

T Dec. 6

The Writings, part 5: the Diaspora Novellas

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 268–276
- BT: *read* Ruth 1:1–4:22
read Jonah 1:1–4:11
read Esther 5:1–9:19

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

Th Dec. 8

The Writings, part 6: Daniel, 1-2 Maccabees

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 278–300
- BT: *read* Daniel 1:1–3:30
read 1 Maccabees 1:1–2:69

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.

T Dec. 13

The Writings, part 7: Deutero-Canonical Wisdom Books and Additions to the Writings

- Collins, *SIHB*, 293–300
- BT: *read* Bel and the Dragon 1–40 (these are verses, not chapters!)
read Ben Sira (=Sirach) 24:1–34
read Wisdom of Solomon 6:1–8:21

Assignments:

- See the course website for this session’s discussion questions, which we will use to orient our questions for today.
- Make sure to be in class to receive your short critical reflections from the beginning of the semester. For the assignment that I want you to complete on the basis of this reflection, see Dec. 10.

Th Dec. 15

Concluding Reflections on Canonicity, Religious Traditions, and Scripture & Scripturalization of Texts

Readings:

- Collins, *SIHB*, 302–305
- John C. Lyden, “Whose Film Is It, Anyway? Canonicity and Authority in Star Wars Fandom,” *JAAR* 80 (2012): 775–786. **On Learn@UW.**

Assignment (to be handed in on Dec. 15):

•***To be handed in Dec. 15: Reflection Essay #2.*** I will hand back your short critical reflections from the beginning of the semester on Dec. 13. Your assignment to be handed in on Dec. 15 is to write another self-critical paper (1 page, double-spaced) reflecting on ways that this class has changed, challenged, or confirmed your thinking about what the Bible is and its place in your culture, your society, and your life. What has changed over the course of the semester? What hasn’t? ***Again, there is no right or wrong answer here—only completion is mandatory.*** *The goal of this assignment is simply to reflect critically on what you have learned in this course, and how it has affected you.*

REVIEW SESSION: WE WILL SCHEDULE A REVIEW SESSION FOR TWO HOURS ON THE AFTERNOON/EVENING OF TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20

Th Dec. 22, 2016 (10:05 am–12:05 pm)
EXAM #2