

Prophets of the Bible

Hebrew / Jewish / Religious Studies / Literature in Translation 332

Spring 2013 (TR 2:30 – 3:45, Ingraham 19)

Lecturer: Christopher M. Jones

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office hours: Thursday, Noon – 2 p.m.

Location: Espresso Royale, 650 State Street (all meetings here unless otherwise specified)

Classlist email: hebrst332-1-s13@lists.wisc.edu

WHAT THIS COURSE IS ABOUT

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the *critical* study of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible (the Jewish Tanakh, the Christian Old Testament). There are three units:

- We will study the twelve minor prophets first, using them to learn the basics of biblical criticism (especially redaction criticism) and to reinforce that prophetic books are scribal compositions, not rote transcripts of prophetic speech.
- Next, we will study the major prophetic books Isaiah and Jeremiah, focusing on the importance of historical context for understanding prophetic texts.
- In the last unit, we will take an extended look at the book of Ezekiel, using moral philosophy and pop culture to bring it into dialogue with the contemporary world.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments:

- Two midterm exams: 20% each (Feb. 28 & Apr. 11, in class)
- Final exam: 25% (Monday, May 13, 7:45 – 9:45 a.m.)
- Discussion section: 15% (See TA syllabus for guidelines)
- Literary analysis paper: 20% (see handout from TAs)
- Extra credit: attend lecture on May 1 and submit short write-up. Details to come.

Grading Scale:

A	94-100	BC	76-81
AB	88-93	C	70-75
B	82-87	D	60-69

EXAMS AND QUIZZES

- The midterm exams are not cumulative. The final is technically cumulative but will focus on material from the final unit of the course. Anything from the first two units of the course that appears on the final will appear on the final study guide.
- Exams must be written in-class and *must be taken on the day they are scheduled*, barring extraordinary circumstances (with proper documentation upon request).
- Exams will include identification, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short answer questions and at least one essay question each.

GENERAL POLICIES

- Let me know immediately if you have any need for special accommodations (due to religious observance, physical or learning disabilities, or life circumstances beyond your control, etc.). We will work together to ensure that you are able to participate to the fullest in this course.
- If you are a McBurney student, you will need to provide a copy of your visa to your TA.
- If you are interested in taking this class for honors, see me for an honors syllabus.
- This is a large lecture course and attendance is not taken in lecture. Nevertheless, the TAs notice who regularly attends lecture, asks questions, and participates. They also notice who is routinely absent and who acts disruptively. These come into consideration for borderline grades and can affect discussion section grades.
- This is an academic course on sacred texts. We approach the Bible differently here than we would in, for instance, a church or a synagogue. Even if your faith tradition gives you a strong background in biblical literature, it is no substitute for the lectures and readings in this class.
- *Lecture laptop policy*: non-educational computing, while not prohibited, can be distracting to others – keep it to a minimum. No videos or flash animation. Nothing offensive or inappropriate. Please use good judgment.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND MISCONDUCT

- Violations of the UW Madison academic honor code (UWS 14) will be dealt with swiftly, harshly, and thoroughly. If you have any questions about whether an act on your part might be construed as academic misconduct, please talk to us about it ASAP.

COURSE READINGS

1. Ronald L. Troxel, *Prophetic Literature: From Oracles to Books* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Available at local bookstores. **RT**
2. Hard-copy academic translation of the Hebrew Bible. A cheap NRSV is available under this course at local bookstores. If you use a different edition, check with your TA. **HB**
3. Course pack readings posted on Learn@UW. **CP**

SCHEDULE

Jan. 22 (T) – Course Introduction

Readings:

Text of President Bush’s “Mission Accomplished” speech CP

Lectures:

1. Course Introduction and Syllabus
2. How We Study the Bible at a Public University

Jan. 24 (R) – Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Literature

Readings:

RT pp. 1-4

CP Marti Nissinen, “What is Prophecy?”

CP Sampling of Bible tables of contents

HB 1 Sam 9-10; 1 Kings 22; Isaiah 1, 40

Lectures:

1. What is Prophecy? Comparative Perspectives
2. What is Prophetic Literature?

Jan. 29 (T) – Prophecy as a Scribal Phenomenon

Readings:

CP Excerpt from Calvino’s *If on a winter’s night a traveler...*

RT pp. 4-18

CP Excerpts from Soulen & Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*

Lectures:

1. Critical Methods in Biblical Study: A Crash Course
2. Writing by Committee: Scribal Culture and Prophetic Literature

Jan. 31 (R) – The Hebrew Prophets in History and Historiography

Readings:

CP Excerpt from Matthews, “Historical Geography”

CP Excerpt from Seltzer, “History of Ancient Israel”

HB 2 Kings 4-5, 9

Lectures:

1. Prophetic Literature in Historical/Geographical Context
2. Stories *About* Prophets in the Bible

Feb. 5 (T) -- Hosea

Readings:

RT pp. 19-23, 30-36 (required); pp. 19-36 (recommended)

HB Hosea 1-4

Lectures

1. No Church in the Wild(erness)? Holiness in Hosea
2. The Redaction of Hosea 4

Feb. 7 (R) -- Amos

Readings:

RT pp. 37-47 (required); pp. 47-53 (recommended)

CP Richardson, "Amos' Four Visions of Judgment"

HB Amos 1-2, 7-9

Lectures:

1. Genre Play in Amos 1-2, or, Why I Can't Stand Jerry Seinfeld
2. The Redaction of Amos' Judgment Visions (Amos 7-9)

Feb. 12 (T) -- Micah

Readings:

RT pp. 59-66 (required); pp. 54-71 (recommended)

HB Micah 1-3, 6

Lectures:

1. Social Justice in Micah 3
2. Micah 6 as Poetry (Mark-up)

Feb. 14 (R) – Deuteronomism, Zephaniah, and the Book of the Twelve

Readings:

RT pp. 72-90

HB Zephaniah 1-3; 2 Kings 22-23

CP Review Seltzer, "History of Israel," pp. 29-32

Lectures:

1. Zephaniah and Deuteronomism
2. Origins of the Book of the Twelve

Feb. 19 (T) -- Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah

Readings:

RT pp. 108-112, 115-121 (required); pp. 108-123 (recommended)

HB Nahum 1-3; Habakkuk 1-3; Obadiah 1

Lectures:

1. Nahum and Obadiah: Revenge Porn?
2. Habakkuk: Dialogue or Complaint?

Feb. 21 (R) – Persian Period Prophecy

Readings:

RT pp. 133-148; 150-151 (required); pp. 133-154 (recommended)

HB Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1, 3-4, 6

Lectures:

1. Haggai, Zechariah, and the Rebuilding of the Temple
2. The Cross-Redaction of Haggai and Zechariah

Feb. 26 (T) – Miscellaneous

Readings:

RT pp. 125-127; 131-133;

CP McKenzie, "Jonah and Genre"

HB Jonah 1-4; Malachi 3

Lectures:

1. Jonah: A Fish Story
2. Malachi, Zechariah 9-14, and the Completion of the Twelve

Feb. 28 (R) – **Exam #1** (In class)

Mar. 5 (T) – Studying Prophets for Fun and (maybe) Profit

Readings:

CP Blenkinsopp, "Modern Critical Study of Prophecy"

RT pp. 172-176, 190-192

Lectures:

1. A History of Modern Critical Study of Prophetic Literature
2. Isaiah's Peculiar Structure as an Example

Mar. 7 (R) – Isaiah 1-39 (First Isaiah)

Readings:

RT pp. 177-187

HB Isaiah 6:1-9:7

Lectures

1. An Isaiah Memoir?
2. Isaiah son of Amoz, some Scribes, and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis

Mar. 12 (T) – Isaiah 40-55 (Second Isaiah)

Readings:

RT pp. 192-195

HB Isaiah 40, 43-45, 48, 50-52, 55

CP Wright, “The Cyrus Cylinder”

Lectures:

1. Isaiah of Babylon?
2. Jerusalem in Second Isaiah: The Dream

Mar. 14 (R) – Isaiah 40-66 (cont)

Readings:

RT pp. 195-197

HB Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6; Isaiah 60

CP Strawn, “A World Under Control” (recommended)

Lectures:

1. Dream and Reality in Jerusalem in Isaiah 60
2. The Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 40-48

Mar. 19 (T) – The Servant(s) of the Lord

Readings:

RT pp. 197-201 (required); pp. 201-207 (recommended)

HB Isaiah 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12; Isaiah 56, 58, 65-66

Lectures

1. The Servant in Isaiah 49-55
2. The Servants in Isaiah 56-66: A Sect?

Mar. 21 (R) – Introduction to Jeremiah

Readings:

RT pp. 210-213; 217-224 (required); pp. 208-224 (recommended)

HB Jeremiah 1, 10

Lectures

1. Jeremiah: Structure and Themes
2. Which Book of Jeremiah?

Mar. 23 & 28 – **Spring Break**

Apr. 2 (T) – History and Rhetoric in Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon

Readings:

HB Jeremiah 7, 26 (read several times)

CP Barton, “History and Rhetoric in the Prophets”

Lectures:

1. Prophets and History: Barton’s Model
2. Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon as a Response to Isaiah

Apr. 4 (R) – Jeremiah’s Sign-Acts and the Fall of Jerusalem

Readings:

HB Jeremiah 20-22; 26-28; 32:1-25; 37-45; 51:59-52:34

Lectures:

1. Jeremiah’s Sign of the Yoke
2. Jerusalem Burns, Jeremiah Speculates in Real Estate

Apr. 9 (T) – Jeremiah After the Fall of Jerusalem

Readings:

HB Jeremiah 29-31; 32:26-33:26

Lectures:

1. The Book of Consolation
2. Review and Synthesis

Apr. 11 (R) – **Exam #2** (In class)

Apr. 16 (T) – Ezekiel’s Call

Readings:

RT pp. 229-231

HB Ezekiel 1-5

CP Odell, “Ezekiel and the Scroll” (recommended)

Lectures:

1. Ezekiel and the God-Mobile
2. In the Thirtieth Year...?

Apr. 18 (R) – Ezekiel’s Orientation in Time and Space

Readings:

- RT** pp. 225-229 (required), pp. 231-235 (recommended)
HB Ezekiel 8-12

Lectures:

1. Structure and Meaning in Ezekiel
2. Yhwh has left the building... (Ezek. 8-11)

Apr. 23 (T) – Prophets and Meth, or, Ezekiel and Moral Anthropology

Readings:

- CP** Newsom, “Models of the Moral Self” pp. 5-14 (the rest is recommended)
CP Klosterman, “Bad Decisions”
HB Ezekiel 3:16-21; 14; 18; 33:1-20

Lectures:

1. Moral Anthropology in Biblical Criticism
2. Radical Moral Freedom: Ezekiel’s First Ethical Model

Apr. 25 (R) – Ezekiel’s Second Ethical Model

Readings:

- HB** Ezekiel 6, 19-22
CP Reading TBD on collective responsibility and punishment

Lectures:

1. Problem God: Collective Guilt and Collective Punishment
2. Exodus 20 as a Revisionist History of the Exodus

Apr. 30 (T) – Ezekiel and Gender

Readings:

- HB** Hosea 1-3 (review); Jeremiah 3:1-14; Ezekiel 16, 23
CP Exum, “Prophetic Pornography”
CP Patton, “Should Our Sister Be Treated Like a Whore?” (recommended)

Lectures:

1. Israel/Judah/Jerusalem as Wayward Wife: History of a Metaphor
2. Prophetic Pornography? How Ezekiel Uses the Metaphor

May 1 (W) **Extra Credit:** Lecture by Prof. Steven McKenzie of Rhodes College, “My God is YHWH: The Stories of Elijah in the Book of Kings,” 7:30 p.m. in the Pyle Center

May 2 (R) - Ezekiel on Jerusalem's Fall

Readings:

HB Ezekiel 17, 24, 33, 37

CP Fox, "The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones"

Lectures:

1. Jerusalem's Fall in Ezekiel
2. *Can* These Bones Live?

May 7 (T) - Ezekiel on Restoration I

Readings:

HB Ezekiel 34-36; review Ezekiel 16:59-63

CP Schwartz, "Ezekiel's Dim View of Israel's Restoration"

Lectures:

1. God's Pride and Israel's Restoration
2. Israel's Shame and Israel's Restoration

May 9 (R) - Ezekiel on Restoration II

Readings:

HB Ezekiel 40-48

CP Smith, "To Put in Place" (recommended)

Lectures:

1. The Role of Space and Place in Israel's restoration
2. Review and Synthesis

May 13 (M), 7:45 - 9:45 a.m. - **Final Exam**