

## SYLLABUS: PROPHETS OF THE BIBLE

Hebrew Studies 332/Jewish Studies 332/Religious Studies 332/Lit Trans 332

11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P. M. T/Th Spring, 2015

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TAs:

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### Goals

1. To become acquainted with the prophets of the Bible by reading selected passages from each.
2. To develop skills for reading the prophetic books. Your own reflections on the passages you study, informed by what you learn through reading and in class, will be the most important resource you will develop.
3. To understand how biblical scholarship has studied the prophets and to learn what it has uncovered about how the prophetic books were composed and how the prophets and their words are portrayed.
4. To understand what a prophet was in ancient Israel, how prophetism arose, how prophets were perceived by their contemporaries and what roles they played in their society.
5. To write well about a passage you have studied.

### Texts

Redditt, Paul L. *Introduction to the Prophets*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2008.

Troxel, Ronald. *Prophetic Literature: From Oracles to Books*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

*The Jewish Study Bible*. 2d Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. (Be sure to use the 2014 edition).

The *JSB*, above, has been chosen for the quality of its notes, introductions, and articles, but I highly recommend that for the “focus texts,” students also consult The New Revised Standard Bible. The NRSV is available free on-line. The New Revised Standard Version taps the best scholarship regarding both what the “original” Hebrew text was and how that text can best be translated into English.

Other readings will be posted on the course site of Learn@UW.

### Requirements

1. Read the assigned materials prior to class. Doing so will prepare you for the issues to be discussed.
2. Faithfully read the assigned passages for general reading from the prophets. Read especially carefully the texts marked “focus” which will receive special consideration in class. Questions to ponder about some focus passages will be posted on the course site.
3. Attend class, ask questions and take good notes. The assigned readings offer important introductions and discussions, but they are simply a starting point. The class sessions will supplement, clarify, and modify those readings, especially as we examine specific,

representative passages. The TAs will regularly take attendance in lecture and section. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect a student's grade.

4. Write three examinations: February 26; March 26; May 11. These exams will test your knowledge of the readings, the lectures, and your grasp of the texts discussed in class. EACH EXAM TESTS ONLY MATERIAL COVERED SINCE THE PREVIOUS EXAM. Barring extraordinary circumstances, you are expected to take each exam at the time it is scheduled.

5. Write a brief paper (5 pages, 6 is the absolute maximum) on a passage from one of the prophets, using a method of close reading you will learn during the semester. For particulars of the paper and a list of recommended passages, consult the instructions for the paper on the course site. Your TA will have additional information and will specify when the final product is due. A half grade reduction will be assessed for each day a paper is late.

**Suggested passages for final paper:** (Please use NJPS or NRSV).

- Isaiah 58:1-9a
- Jeremiah 6:16-22
- Hosea 14:1-7
- Amos 6:1-7
- Nahum 1:2-8

For further instructions, see the forthcoming handout on Learn@UW.

6. If you are registered for honors credit, please contact me early in the term.

### **Course Grades**

Course grades will be computed using the following values: a) exams: first exam, 20%, second exam, 25%, third exam, 25%; b) participation in discussion section, 10%, paper 20%

### **Office Hours**

I will be available in my office (958 Van Hise) 12:30-1:30 P.M. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. If these dates or time are incompatible with your schedule, please contact me (quant@wisc.edu) to arrange an appointment.

### **Policies**

Be responsible – you are adults, please act like it. Students are expected to be present in class and on-time. If you have a legitimate conflict, please notify the instructor in advance, or, in the case of emergencies, as soon as possible thereafter. The TAs will take attendance in section and lecture, and more than two unexcused absences will lower a student's grade by up to 10%.

Students are expected to be respectful to one another and to the instructors. Slurs and personal attacks will not be tolerated. Please use electronic devices only for taking notes or consulting the biblical text or other course readings. Handwriting notes and reading from a physical text has been shown to improve retention and contextualization of material, as well as being less distracting to others.

Students are encouraged to email the instructor or TAs any questions about assignments or topics germane to the course, but responses will likely not be immediate. Like you, the TAs and instructor have lives outside of this class, often including other classes, other work, family obligations, and the like. We try to respond as soon as possible, but we are often away from our offices and computers during evenings and weekends so do not wait until the last minute to contact us.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and all suspicions will be investigated.

Grades: The TAs will grade the assignments and exams. If a student feels that he or she has received a grade unjustly, he or she may meet with me to evaluate it. If in my judgment a TA has not been fair, I will change the grade. Note, however, that my standards may be even stricter than the TAs and a contested grade may be lowered if I judge that the TAs were overly gracious in giving the grade in question.

## **Class Assignments**

### **Week One**

January 20: Prophets and the Bible

The article on "Textual Criticism" by Emanuel Tov in the *JSB* provides a good supplement to the class discussion. Today's PowerPoint slides are available on the course website.

Those unfamiliar with the "story line" of the Bible might benefit from two web-based presentations created by Prof. Troxel that can be accessed from the course site. The first is a PowerPoint presentation on the "Narrative Thread of the Pentateuch," which provides an overview of the history of Israel as reported in Joshua through 2 Kings.

Also strongly encouraged is the essay by Stephen Geller, "The Religion of the Bible" in the *JSB*.

January 22: Prophecy and the Bible

Redditt, 21-51, "Approach to the Major Prophets."

Marc Brettler, "Neviim" in the *JSB*.

On-line: John J. Collins, "The Nature of the Pentateuchal Narrative" and (in the same document) "Joshua"

Read: 1 Samuel 3; 9:1-10:16 (i.e., chapter 3; chapter 9, verse 1, through verse 16 of chapter 10)

### **Week Two**

January 27: Prophecy in Israel and its environs

Redditt, 1-14, "What is a Prophet?" (down to "Prophecy as Literature")

On-line: Robert R. Wilson, "Prophet" and "Prophetess" and idem, "Early Israelite Prophecy."

January 29: Prophetic records in Israel; Hebrew poetry

Redditt, 14-17, "What is a Prophet?" (continued.)

Troxel, 1-18, "What Is a Prophetic Book?"

On-line: Examine Amos 3:3-8, using the questions on the course site, and bring to class with it the document, "My/His Servants the Prophets" (also on-line)

### **Week Three**

February 3: Hosea, Son of Beeri, Hebrew poetry

Redditt, 211-226, "Hosea, Joel, Amos" (down to "Joel")

On-line: Robert Alter, "The Psalms: Beauty Heightened through Poetic Structure" (a good introduction to Hebrew poetry) and Philip J. King, "The Great 8th Century"

Focus: Hosea 1:1-9 (i.e., chapter 1, verses 1-9) and read also the introduction to Hosea in the *JSB*. A copy of the markup of Hosea 1:1-9 is available on the course web site.

February 5: Hosea, Son of Beeri

Troxel, 19-36, "The Book of Hosea"

Focus: Hosea 1-3

Read also: Hosea 11

### **Week Four**

February 10: Amos of Tekoa

Redditt, 237-246, "Amos"

Read: Amos 1-5 and the introduction to Amos in the *JSB*.

February 12: Amos of Tekoa

Troxel, 37-53, "The Book of Amos"

Focus: Amos 1:3-2:16

### **Week Five**

February 17: Amos of Tekoa

Focus: Amos 7:10-17 in light of the questions on the course site.

February 19: Micah of Moresheth

Redditt, 266-281, "Micah"

Troxel, 54-71, "The Book of Micah"

Read: Micah 1-4; 7 and the introduction to Micah in the *JSB*.

\*Choose a **passage for your final paper** and prepare a markup of it to turn in to your TA on Friday.

### **Week Six**

February 24: Micah of Moresheth

Focus: Micah 4:1-8; 6:1-8

February 26: **EXAM**

### **Week Seven**

March 3: Zephaniah

Redditt, 303-312, "Zephaniah"

Troxel, 72-79, "The Book of Zephaniah"

Read: Zephaniah 1-3 and the introduction to the Zephaniah in the *JSB*.

March 5: The Book of the Twelve

[Purim]

Redditt, 197-208, "The Book of the Twelve"

Troxel, 80-90, "The Book of the Twelve"

Ehud Ben-Zvi, "The Twelve," in *JSB*.

### **Week Eight**

March 10: Joel and Obadiah

Redditt, 226-237, "Joel," and 250-255, "Obadiah"

Troxel, 91-107, "The Books of Joel and Obadiah"

Read: Joel 1-3 and Obadiah (all 21 verses!) and their respective introductions in the *JSB*.

On-line: Harold Brodsky, "An Enormous Horde Arrayed for Battle: Locusts in the book of Joel"

March 12: Nahum & Habakkuk

Redditt, 285-303, "Nahum" and "Habakkuk"

Troxel, 108-124, "The Books of Nahum and Habakkuk"

Read: Nahum 1, Habakkuk 1-2, and the introductions to both books in the *JSB*.

\*Write up your **initial thoughts for your final paper**—especially questions and observations drawn from your previous markup. Turn this in to your TA in section.

### **Week Nine**

March 17: Jonah and Haggai

Redditt, 256-266, "Jonah," and 316-321, "Haggai"

Troxel, 125-141, "The Books of Jonah and Haggai"

Read: Jonah 1-4, Haggai 1-2

March 19: Zechariah

Redditt, 321-344, "Zechariah 1-8" and "Zechariah 9-14"

Troxel, 142-160, "Zechariah 1-8" and "Zechariah 9-14"

On-line: Richard S. Hanson, "The Collection of Prophetic Books ends with Three Massas: But What's a Massa?"

Read: Zech 1, 4-6, 9

### **Week Ten**

March 24: Malachi

Redditt, 344-353, "Malachi"

Troxel, 160-171, "Malachi"

Malachi 1-4 and the introduction to Malachi in the *JSB*.

March 26: **EXAM**

\* \* \* \* \* **SPRING BREAK** \* \* \* \* \* [March 28<sup>th</sup>-April 5<sup>th</sup>]

### **Week Eleven**

[Passover/Pesach]

April 7: Isaiah, Son of Amoz

Redditt, 53-79, "Isaiah 1-39"

Read: Isaiah 7-8 and the introduction to Isaiah in the *JSB*.

Focus: Print and bring to class the pdf copy of Isaiah 6 available at this point on the course site.

April 9: Isaiah, Son of Amoz

Read: Isaiah 23-27

Focus: Isaiah 5:1-7 and Isaiah 8:16-20

\*Bring **two copies of your first draft** to your section on Friday.

### **Week Twelve**

April 14: Isaiah 40-55

Redditt, 81-101, "Isaiah 40-66" (down to "Introduction to the Prophet(s) Behind Isaiah 56-66")

On-line: Frank M. Cross, "The Council of <Adonai> in Second Isaiah"

Michael B. Dick, "Worshipping Idols: What Isaiah Didn't Know"

Read: Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12

Focus: Isaiah 40:1-11

April 16: April 21: Isaiah 56-66

Redditt, 101-107, "Introduction to the Prophet(s) Behind Isaiah 56-66"

Troxel, 190-207, "The Book of Isaiah (Continued)"

Read: Isaiah 56-59

Focus: Isaiah 56:1-8

### **Week Thirteen**

April 21: Archaeology and History of 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Online: King, "Jeremiah's Polemic Against Idols"

Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah"

April 23: Jeremiah, Son of Hilkiah

Redditt, 109-129, "Jeremiah"

On-line: Bring to class the comparison of Jer 25:1-13 in the Septuagint and the Masoretic text and examine the comparison of 2 Kings 22-23 and 2 Chronicles 34-35: what differences are there between Kings and Chronicles in their reports of Josiah's rule?

Read: Jeremiah 1-3; 7; 13; 15:15-21; 20:7-12; 32; 36 and the introduction to Jeremiah in the *JSB*.

### **Week Fourteen**

April 28: Jeremiah, Son of Hilkiah

Troxel, 208-224, "The Book of Jeremiah"

Focus: Jeremiah 1:4-19

April 30: Ezekiel, Son of Buzi

Redditt, 148-166, "Ezekiel"

Focus: Ezekiel 1:1-28

Read: Ezekiel 1-3; 8-11 and the introduction to Ezekiel in the *JSB*.

**\*Final Paper Due** in section on Friday.

### **Week Fifteen**

May 5: Ezekiel, Son of Buzi

Troxel, 225-241, "The Book of Ezekiel"

Focus: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Ezekiel 18

May 7: The end of Prophecy?

Redditt, 168-192, "Daniel"

Read: Daniel 1-3; 6-8 and the introduction to Daniel in the *JSB*.

**EXAM May 11, 5:05-7:05 P.M. (location TBA)**