

# *Religious Studies 312--Hebrew Prophets--Fall 2000*

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**Bibliography URL: <http://www.smsu.edu/relst/PROPHET.html>**

## **1. Texts Required:**

- a. V. Matthews, *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Unpublished manuscript = SWHP)
- b. V. Matthews & D. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels*, 2nd Ed (Paulist, 1997 = OTP)
- c. L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, and Sages* (Trinity, 1995 = PPDS)
- d. Bible. Use any modern translation. NRSV will be used in class by the instructor.

**2. Course Description:** The intention of this course is to do a close reading of the portion of the Hebrew Bible which includes the major and minor prophets. Methods will be demonstrated for study and analysis of these materials, including the use of sociological, anthropological, historical, and literary criticism. In particular, the emphasis will be on cross-cultural and comparative study of prophecy in the ancient Near East and in other world cultures.

**3. Class Routine:** This course will include some lectures on methods, but the bulk of class time will be taken up with periodic student reports and discussion of the texts. Study questions will be given periodically in the course. These will form the basis of class discussion. Students will be expected to volunteer or accept assignment of individual questions that they will then research and present to the class for further discussion. Students will also be expected to initiate additional topics for class discussion.

**4. Exams:** There will be **no** formal exams. Grades will be based on student reports, critiques, class

discussion, and the final draft of the research paper.

**5. Make-up Exams:** Does not apply to this class.

**6. Written Assignment:** A 12-15 page research paper will be required in this course. Any subject dealing with a specific aspect of the material contained in the texts discussed is permissible. Narrow your topic carefully and be sure to clear it with me before you begin. The paper must be double-spaced, typewritten, and must follow a consistent style of documentation (either footnotes, endnotes, or MLA style). Proofread the paper carefully since a paper containing too many errors will be handed back to the student for revision and will receive a reduction in grade.

(1) The first draft of each paper will be presented to the class and critiqued by all students during class discussion and with a one page written critique by a portion (each student is required to critique **10**) of the class. This paper should analyze the effectiveness of the presentation and make suggestions on how to improve the final draft of the research paper.

**The presenter will provide copies of the working bibliography to each member of the class and the rough draft of the paper to the instructor at the time of the presentation.**

(2) One copy of the critique will be submitted to the instructor and another will go to the presenter. The critiques must be submitted **within one week of the presentation**. Late critiques will be penalized for each additional class day they are late.

(3) Each presenter will also be required to schedule an interview with the instructor to discuss their paper **before** proceeding with the final draft.

**First Draft of Paper is Due & Presentations Begin: October 2, 2000**

**Final Draft of Paper is due: December 4, 2000**

7. **Attendance:** Since this is a discussion class, it is essential that you make every effort to attend each class. A significant portion of your final grade will be based on your participation in class discussion.

8. **Cheating:** Cheating, as defined in the "The Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities," will not be tolerated in this course. Anyone caught cheating will be assigned an "F" grade for the course.

**9. Grading:** The final grade will be determined as follows:

First Draft Presentation = 100 points

Presentation Critiques (10) = 100 points

Final Draft of Term Paper = 100 points

Class Participation = 100 points

The grade will be determined on a ten point scale: 90-100 = A.

Borderline grades will be determined by such factors as attendance, completion of work on time, evidence of hard work, and a willingness to seek help as well as general contribution to class discussions.

**10. Special Services:** All physically and learning disabled students should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss any problems that the student or the teacher can foresee.

**11. Inclusive Language:** In line with the newest style guides, I will be using inclusive language. This means that I will use language that includes women whenever possible. Instead of "man" I will use "human beings." Instead of "he" I will use "he or she," etc. I urge you to follow my lead both orally and in written form.

**12. Office Hours:** Students should feel free to consult with me about the course and their work. My office is PACB 266. I will be there 10-10:50 M-F/2-2:50 M. If you can not meet with me during posted office hours, make an appointment to see me at a mutually agreeable time. Matthews office: 836-5491/ Religious Studies office: 836-5514.

## Instructions for Research Paper

One of the requirements for REL 312, Hebrew Prophets, is to submit a typewritten research paper, 12-15 pages minimum. Any subject relating to the material covered in the texts we discuss is permissible, but it is necessary that each student clear their topic with me before beginning. The paper must be double-spaced, typewritten, and all papers must follow a consistent style. I would suggest using either that contained in the *Harbrace College Handbook* or in one of Kate L. Turabian's style guides.

Many students fail to narrow their topic. If the topic is too broad the paper will be superficial and full of generalities. Here is an example of narrowing a subject: (1) Jeremiah's sermons, (2) Jeremiah's "Temple Sermon," (3) The Use of "Sacred Space" in Jeremiah's "Temple Sermon." The first two topics require full-length books. Only the last topic can be covered in 10-12 pages.

Too many papers are poorly written and contain numerous mechanical errors. Be sure to finish your paper early and proofread it carefully. If there are too many errors, the grade of the paper will be automatically reduced one full letter grade. Plagiarism is also a serious offense. The penalty for plagiarism may vary depending upon the individual case involved. However, two possible penalties are an automatic F or the requiring of an additional paper.

Documentation may be in the form of footnotes, endnotes, or the parenthetical format of MLA or Social Scientific notation. You must do a thorough and careful job of documenting all of your sources, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing material. When doing your bibliography, first provide a list of those sources used to prepare the paper. Then, in a separate list, compile additional sources on the subject that you did not use or which were unavailable in the SMSU library. This will help with the ordering of books and journals for the library.

## Instructions for the Critique of Oral Presentations

Each student will be required to write a 1-2 page critique of the oral presentation of each student's paper. Two

copies must be submitted, one (unsigned) for the presenting student and one (signed) to be graded by the professor. The critique should center on three areas: content, mechanics and style of writing, and bibliography.

**1. Content:** In order to critique the content of a paper, you must do some research on the subject of the paper. You should ask the following kinds of questions in analyzing its contents: Is the subject sufficiently narrowed? Are statements supported with relevant data? Is there evidence of adequate research or is there too much reliance on one or two sources? Are the sources up-to-date or outdated? Has the writer used any primary sources? Is the comparative approach being employed? Has the writer interacted with these sources and evaluated them to produce a work that is not slavishly tied to the sources?

**2. Mechanics and Style of Presentation:** Is the paper well presented, logical in its arguments, and generally understandable? Have quotations been adequately denoted, handled properly, and not misused? Were there any visual aids and if so were they used effectively? Was the presenter's manner of speech effective?

**3. Bibliography:** Has the writer overlooked any key sources? Make any suggestions you find in your research of the topic. **There are always additional sources to recommend.**

The final written form of the critique is up to the individual. However, it should not simply be a list of answers to the above questions. The critique should emphasize both strengths and weaknesses.

## SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS

Most of these topics will be touched on in class discussion, but students are encouraged to explore one of them in more depth for a research project. If you would like to suggest a topic for class discussion or for your research project that is not on this list, please check with me.

- A comparison of ecstatic prophets in the Mari texts and the Bible
- "It is Better to Obey Than Sacrifice" (1 Sam 15:22) – Practice Rather Than Ritual or Scripture as the True Test of Faith: a Comparison of Samuel and Zen Buddhist Tradition
- "Is Saul among the Prophets": 1 Sam 10:11 – an examination of ecstatic prophecy in Israel
- The prophet as the "loyal opposition": the case of Elijah
- Comparisons between Elijah and Moses as authority figures
- Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah: Female Prophets in ancient Israel
- Elisha and the "Sons of the Prophet" (2 Kings 4) – Prophetic Schools or Support Groups?
- Micaiah and God's deception of Ahab: Divine Trickster Images
- "Trample the Heads of the Needy" (Amos) – the Prophet as Social Critic
- The "Marriage Motif" in Hosea: Use of Marriage Taboos as Enacted Prophecy
- Prophetic Call Narratives and Eliade's Concept of Hierophany
- Isaiah's use of the "Stump" image and a Study of "Renewal" Stories
- Isaiah's "Emmanuel" prophecy and the Rabshekah's Claims: Theodicy and Assyrian Propaganda
- Micah's use of the "Law Suit" in 6:1-8 and the Egyptian Plea of the "Eloquent Peasant"
- The Use of "Sacred Space" as a factor in Jeremiah's "Temple Sermon"
- A comparison of the role of Baruch in the book of Jeremiah and the "Recorder" of the Buddha's Words
- Jeremiah's revelations and message as compared to the Spirit Message in Wovoka's Performance of the "Ghost Dance"
- Prophet vs. Prophet: Jeremiah and Hananiah – Cognitive Dissonance in Prophetic Encounter
- A Comparison of Ezekiel's vision of the "abominations" in the Temple with the "Dialogue over Suicide" in Egyptian wisdom literature

- Ezekiel's use of the "individual responsibility" theme – Transformation of Tradition during Periods of Cultural Trauma
- Ezekiel's vision of the "Valley of Dry Bones" – Creation and Recreation Stories
- Street theater and pantomime in Ezekiel and Zoroastrian Ritual
- The Influence of the Asherah Cult and its Condemnation in Prophetic Oracle
- Jonah and the Attempt to Flee from a God
- "Fear Not" Oracles in Isa 41-44
- Habakkuk's "Woe to" oracles and the Lament for Ur
- Joel's use of the Plague of Locusts
- Malachi's denunciation of the priesthood (1:6-2:9)
- Isaiah 45 and the Cyrus Cylinder as Comparative Theodicy
- A comparison of Daniel's Storytelling and the Visions of Neferti
- Ezra and the "Jewish Identity Movement"
- Zechariah's use of apocalyptic images in chapters 8-14
- Apocalyptic images in Daniel 7 and Akkadian Apocalyptic Prophecy

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Reading assignments will list textbooks by abbreviations (SWHP, OTP, and PPDS). Reserve materials will be listed by the author's last name. Reading should be completed as assigned and before class. You are responsible for all reading assignments & they will serve as the basis of each class' discussion. It is also expected that students will initiate topics for discussion during the semester.

Since this course will emphasize cross-cultural analysis of the phenomena of prophecy, discussion will include parallel materials from other ancient Near Eastern cultures as well as more modern ethnographic studies on the African Nuer society and American Indian prophets and shamans.

**Unit One:** Lectures on Historical Premise and Methodology for cross-cultural discussion of the Hebrew Prophets. Read SWHP 3-43; PPDS 1-19, 85-97, 99-118; Eliade, "Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred," 20-6; Lincoln, *Authority*, 74-89; Pike, 23-27; Geertz, 50-63; Berquist, 1-21; Alles, 110-23.

**Unit Two:** The earliest Hebrew prophetic practices: Divination, Necromancy, Ritual Performance, Ecstasy: Read PPDS 129-151; Wilson, 321-37.

- Moses and Balaam (Ex 3-14; 24, 32; Num 11; 22-24). Read SWHP 43-47 ; OTP, "The Story of Balaam," 59-78, "The Mari Prophecies," 109-110, "The Stories of Wenamon," 323-30; PPDS 121, 129.
- Samuel and other early monarchic prophets (1 Sam 3; 8-11; 13-16; 19, 28; 2 Sam 7; 12; 1 Kgs 1; 11-14; 16); Read OTP, "Treaty between Ramses II and Hattusilis III," 86-90; SWHP 48-60.
- Elijah (1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 2) and Elisha (2 Kgs 3-13) and the Nuer prophets. Read SWHP 61-77; PPDS 95-96; Fiensy, 73-83.

**Unit Three:** The Last Days of Israel:

- Amos and Hosea. Read OTP, "The Annals of Sargon II," 127-129; "A Sufferer and a Friend," 223-28; "Yavne-Yam Letter," 331-32; SWHP 78-95.

**Unit Four:** Judah as Vassal State:

- Read SWHP 96-124; OTP, "Lachish Letters," 134-136, "The Annals of Sennacherib," 139; "A Farmer

and the Courts," 215-22; ANET, "Akkadian Prophecies," 451-52; Isa 1, 5-11, 20, 24-27, 36-39; Mic 1-6.

- Zephaniah, Nahum. SWHP 126-133.

### **Unit Five: Last Days of Judah:**

- Read OTP, "The Annals of Nebuchadnezzar," 141-143; "The Lament for Ur," 169-175, "The Sufferer and The Friend," 219-224; SWHP 139-157; Overholt, *Channels of Prophecy*, 27-68 – a comparison of Jeremiah, Wovoka, and Handsome Lake; Jer 1, 5, 7, 13, 16, 18-21, 25-29, 32, 34-41, 52.

### **Unit Six: Exile:**

- Read OTP, "The Cylinder of Cyrus," 147-150; SWHP 158-180; Ezek 1-5, 8-10, 14, 16, 18, 33-34, 36-37, 43; Isa 40-53.

### **Unit Seven: Return and Restoration:**

- Read OTP, "Stories of Adapa," 41-45; "The Teachings of Amenemope," 189-198; SWHP 180-185, 188-200; Haggai; Zech 1-4; Isa 56-58, 62, 65; Obadiah; Joel; Malachi; Jonah.

### **Unit Eight: Hellenistic Period:**

- Read OTP, "Laments for Ur," 231-37; "The Visions of Neferti," 235-240; SWHP 185-87, 201-211; Zech 12-14; Daniel 1-7, 12.

## **Reserve Materials**

Alles, Greg, "Exchange," in Willi Braun and R.T. McCutcheon, eds. *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 2000), 110-24.

Berquist, Jon L., "Theories of Space and Construction of the Ancient World," presented to the Constructs of the Social and Cultural Worlds of Antiquity Group, Boston, 1999: 1-21.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: HBJ, 1959).

Fiensy, David, "Using the Nuer Culture of Africa in Understanding the Old Testament: an Evaluation," *JSOT* 38 (1987), 73-83.

Geertz, Clifford, "'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding," in Russell T. McCutcheon, ed. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in*

*The Study of Religion: a Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999), 50-63.

Lincoln, Bruce. *Authority: Constructions and Corrosion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Overholt, Thomas. *Channels of Prophecy: the Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

Pike, Kenneth L., "Etic and Emic Standpoints for the Description of Behavior," in Russell T. McCutcheon, ed. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: a Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999), 23-27.

Wilson, Robert R., "Prophecy and Ecstasy: a Reexamination," *JBL* 98 (1979), 321-37.