

Religious Studies 312--Hebrew Prophets--Spring 2014

Dr. Victor H. Matthews

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1. Texts Required:

- a. V. Matthews, *The Hebrew Prophets and Their Social World* (Baker, 2012 = HPSW)
- b. V. Matthews, *101 Questions & Answers on the Prophets of Israel* (Paulist, 2007 = 101)
- c. V. Matthews, *A Brief History of Ancient Israel* (Westminster, 2002 = BHI)
- d. Bible. Use any modern translation. NRSV will be used in class by the instructor. An on-line version of the NRSV translation is available at: <http://www.godweb.org/nrsv.html>

Study Aids

On-line Concordance: <http://bible.gospelcom.net>

Basic index to Biblical Studies Terms: <http://www.wfu.edu/~horton/r102/ho1.html>

On-Line Bibliography:

<http://courses.missouristate.edu/VictorMatthews/bib/PROPHET.html>

2. Course Description: The intention of this course is to do a close reading of the portions of the Hebrew Bible which include 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 placed on cross-cultural and comparative study of prophecy in the ancient Near East.

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 from **101** 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 **two** formal exams, a midterm and a final.

5. Make-up Exams: Students are expected to notify the instructor prior to an exam if they are unable to take it as scheduled. A make-up exam will be administered, but may consist of a different format than the original exam.

6. Written Assignments: One paper (a minimum of 12 pages) will be required in this course. A list of potential topics appears below. **Any other topics must be approved by the instructor.**

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.

Written Assignment Due: May 2, 2014

SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS

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

- ▶ A comparison of ecstatic prophets in the Mari texts and in the Bible
- ▶ Moses' "Call Narrative" (Exodus 3) as a model for later prophets
- ▶ "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 later prophets
- ▶ "Is Saul among the Prophets": 1 Sam 10:11 – an examination of ecstatic prophecy
- ▶ The Use of the Juridical Parable: Nathan's accusation against David
- ▶ "Pointing the Finger" -- the unnamed prophet of Judah and Jeroboam at Bethel
- ▶ The prophet as the "loyal opposition": the case of Elijah
- ▶ Comparisons between Elijah and Moses as authority figures
- ▶ The Mt. Carmel Contest as it compares to other "contests between gods"
- ▶ Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah: Female Prophets in ancient Israel
- ▶ Elisha and the "Sons of the Prophet" (2 Kings 4) -- Support Group?
- ▶ 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
- ▶ Isaiah's use of the "Stump" image and a Study of "Renewal" Stories
- ▶ Isaiah's "Song of the Vineyard" as a juridical parable/oracle
- ▶ Isaiah's "Emmanuel" prophecy and the Rabshekah's Theodicy
- ▶ 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"
- ▶ The role of Baruch in the book of Jeremiah
- ▶ Prophet vs. Prophet: Jeremiah and Hananiah – Cognitive Dissonance
- ▶ A Comparison of Ezekiel's vision of the "abominations" in the Temple with the "Dialogue over Suicide" in Egyptian wisdom literature
- ▶ Ezekiel's image of the "foundling" and unfaithful wife in Ezekiel 16
- ▶ Ezekiel's use of the "individual responsibility" theme
- ▶ 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 Irony of Theodicy
- ▶ The Use of Comedic Images in Jonah
- ▶ "Fear Not" Oracles in Isa 41-44
- ▶ Habakkuk's use of the "Woe oracle"
- ▶ Joel's use of the motif of the Plague of Locusts
- ▶ Malachi's denunciation of the priesthood (1:6-2:9)
- ▶ Isaiah 45 and the Cyrus Cylinder as Comparative Theodicy

- ◆ The social setting of Haggai
- ◆ Zechariah's use of apocalyptic images in chapters 8-14

- 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 active participation in class discussion.
- 8. Cheating:** MSU is a community of scholars committed to the ideal of academic integrity. All members of the University community share the responsibility and authority to challenge and make known acts of apparent academic dishonesty. **Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in the *Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures* (<http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/acintegrity.html>) also at the Reserve Desk in Meyer Library.**

Anyone caught cheating will be assigned an "F" for the course. Those who plagiarize the work of others will either be subject to a penalty of one letter grade on their written assignment or the imposition of an additional written assignment.

I would also direct you to the university statement of community principles at (<http://www.smsu.edu/declaration>).

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

Written Assignment = 100 points

Mid-term Exam = 100 points

Final Exam = 100 points

Class Participation = 100 points

Plus/minus grades: In order to give students appropriate credit for their work, grades will be reported with plusses and minuses at the end of the semester. Your overall numerical score in the class will be converted to a letter grade on the basis of the following chart:

90-92 = A-	93-100 = A	
80-82 = B-	83-86 = B	87-89 = B+
70-72 = C-	73-76 = C	77-79 = C+
	60-66 = D	67-69 = D+

Note that the university does not allow the reporting of D- or of A+ grades.

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

Final Exam: TBA; STRO 250

10. Special Services: To request accommodations for disability, students must contact the Disability Resource Center (<http://www.missouristate.edu/disability>), Plaster Student Union Suite 405, (417) 836-4192; TTY (417) 836-6792. Students must provide documentation of disability to Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations.

DS refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic (LDC). The LDC also provides diagnostic testing, for which a fee is charged.

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. Equal Opportunity: Missouri State is an equal opportunity employer/affirmative action institution, and maintains a grievance procedure incorporating due process available to any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against. At all times, it is your right to address inquiries and concerns about possible discrimination to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (417-836-4252). Concerns about discrimination can also be brought directly to your instructor's attention, and to the attention of your instructor's department head. The Missouri State statement of non-discrimination can be found at <http://www.missouristate.edu/eoa.htm>.

13. Office Hours: Students should feel free to consult with me about the course and their work. My office is in the Dean's Suite: STRO 207. I will be there 9-10:00 MWF/1-2:00 TR. If you can not meet with me during posted office hours, make an appointment to see me at a mutually agreeable time. Dean's office: 836-5529.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Reading assignments will list textbooks by abbreviations (**HPSW, BHI, and 101Q**). 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.

Unit One:

Setting the Stage: Historical Geography and the Outline of Israelite History Beginning with the Monarchy -- Read HPSW, 1-16 and BHI, 35-75.

Emic and Etic Perspectives: Geertz 1999: 50-63 and <http://faculty.ircc.cc.fl.us/faculty/jlett/Article%20on%20Emics%20and%20Etics.htm> and <http://www.sil.org/~headlandt/ee-intro.htm>

Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy: Read Grabbe 2000: 13-32; Huffman 2000: 47-70.

Spatiality: Yes – it does matter where events take place; Read: Matthews 2003: 12-20 and Stewart 2012: 39-50.

Defining the Role of the Prophet: Read HPSW, 17-36 and 101Q, 5-12.

Unit Two: The earliest Hebrew prophetic practices: Divination, Necromancy, Ritual Performance, Ecstasy: Read BHI, 1-30; Wilson 1979: 321-37.

➡ Moses and Balaam (Ex 3-14; 24, 32; Num 11; 22-24). Read HPSW 37-42; 101Q, 16-19.

➡ 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); HPSW, 43-55; 101Q, 23-31.

➡ Elijah (1 Kgs 17--2 Kgs 2), Micaiah (1 Kgs 22), and Elisha (2 Kgs 3--13). Read HPSW, 57-73; 101Q, 32-41.

Unit Three: The Last Days of Israel:

➡ Amos and Hosea. Read HPSW, 79-98; BHI, 65-75; 101Q, 46-57.

Unit Four: Judah as Vassal State:

➡ Read Isa 1, 5-11, 20, 24-27, 36-39; Mic 1-6; HPSW, 99-115, 117-123; BHI, 77-85; 101Q, 62-73, 77-80.

➡ Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk. HPSW, 125-138; 101Q, 84-86.

Unit Five: Last Days of Judah:

➡ Read 2 Kgs 22--23; Jer 1, 5, 7, 13, 16, 18-21, 25-29, 32, 34-41, 52; HPSW, 141-158; BHI, 85-99; 101Q, 87-88, 91-101.

Unit Six: Exile:

➡ Read Ezek 1-5, 8-10, 14, 16, 18, 33-34, 36-37, 43; Isa 40-53; HPSW, 159-173, 175-184; BHI, 101-113; Q101, 105-117, 121-123.

Unit Seven: Return and Restoration:

➡ Read Haggai; Zech 1-4; Isa 56-58, 62, 65; Joel; Malachi; Jonah; HPSW 184-191, 194-206; BHI, 113-118; 101Q, 124-129, 133-138.

Unit Eight: Post-Exilic Apocalyptic Visions:

➡ Read Zech 12-14; Daniel 7-12; HPSW, 207-214; 101Q, 138-145.

Final Exam: TBA; STRO 250

Required Reading

- Beck, John A., "Geography as irony: the narrative-geological shaping of Elijah's duel with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18)," *SJOT* 17 2 (2003), 291-302.
- 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.
- Grabbe, Lester, "Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy from an Anthropological Perspective," in M. Nissinen, ed. *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 13-32.
- Huffman, Hebert B., "A Company of Prophets: Mari, Assyria, Israel," in M. Nissinen, ed. *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 47-70.
- Matthews, V.H., "Physical Space, Imagined Space, and 'Lived Space' in Ancient Israel," *BTB* 33 (2003), 12-20.
- Stewart, Eric, "New Testament Space/Spatiality," *BTB* 42 (2012), 39-50.
- Wilson, Robert R., "Prophecy and Ecstasy: a Reexamination," *JBL* 98 (1979), 321-37.