

Hebrew Scriptures

REL 2210.072H / JST 2930.07HH, Fall 2013

MWF 4 (10:40-11:30), TUR 2306

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Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the modern scholarly study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and its world. While we will touch upon various literary genres in the Bible, we will focus on biblical narrative, as we trace the history of ancient Israel — inasmuch as this can be reconstructed from our primary sources — from its origins up to the Babylonian Exile (586 B.C.E.). We will also analyze various aspects of the “culture” of ancient Israel, including its political (judges, kings) and religious (priests, prophets) institutions. In particular, we will study Israelite religion, not just as a set of beliefs and practices, but as a mode of knowledge, a means of understanding god(s), humans, the world, and the relations between them. Topics will include: myth, ritual, sacrifice, law, and the sacred. Here, we will address the conceptual divide between so-called “pagan” religions and, for lack of a better term, the “monotheistic” religion of ancient Israel. The point isn’t to judge the relative merits of these two different religious systems, but to recognize and understand their differences. Our approach will be broadly literary and comparative. Thus, we will draw upon the mythic and epic traditions of Mesopotamia and Ugarit, in order to bring the peculiar nature of the Bible and biblical religion into better focus. And throughout the semester, various methodological questions regarding textual interpretation and the analysis of religion and culture will be raised.

Required Texts:

HarperCollins Study Bible — or other approved translation

Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, 2d edition (2010)

Stephanie Dalley, trans., *Myths from Mesopotamia*

additional secondary readings, course materials, and information will be made available through **Sakai** at e-Learning Support Services: <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>

Accommodations for students with disabilities: students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory

Participation (10%)

3 Exams (90%)

Make-up exams must be approved by instructor beforehand, or justified afterward by providing appropriate documentation (medical, etc.).

Grade scale:

	87–89 = B+	77–79 = C+	67–69 = D+	below 60 = E
93–100 = A	83–86 = B	73–76 = C	63–66 = D	
90–92 = A-	80–82 = B-	70–72 = C-	60–62 = D-	

Schedule:

PRIMEVAL HISTORY

Week 1

8/21 **Introduction:** syllabus; general background

8/23 **Philology (on the language and text of the Bible):** Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, “Introduction” (online); Coogan, ch 1

Week 2

8/26 **Cosmogony:** *Epic of Creation* (Dalley)

8/28 **Creation:** Genesis 1-3

8/30 **Discussion:** Coogan, chs 2-3

Week 3

9/2 **Labor Day (no class)**

9/4 **Myth versus History:** *Gilgamesh* (Dalley, pp 95-120); Eliade, “Sacred Time and Myths” (online)

9/6 **Discussion:** Coogan, ch 4

Week 4

9/9 **The Human Condition:** *Atrahasis* (Dalley)

9/11 **The Human Condition:** Genesis 4-11

9/13 **Discussion:** Coogan, ch 5

THE PATRIARCHS

Week 5

9/16 **Heroes:** *Gilgamesh* (Dalley)

9/18 **Patriarchs:** Genesis 12-36; *Aqhat* (online)

9/20 **Discussion:** Coogan, ch 6

FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

Week 6

- 9/23 **Joseph in Egypt:** Genesis 37-50
9/25 **The Exodus:** Exodus 1-15; Coogan, chs 7-8
9/27 **EXAM 1** (from 8/21 to 9/23)

Week 7

- 9/30 **The Covenant:** Genesis 12, 15, 17, 28, 35; Exodus 19-24; *Atrahasis*, pp 14-18; *Epic of Creation*, pp 259-64 (Dalley)
10/2 **Sacred Space:**
Exodus 35-40; Numbers 1-3, 9:15-23;
Exodus 33:6-11; Numbers 11:16-17, 12:4-10; Deuteronomy 31:14-15;
Genesis 28, 35; 2 Samuel 24; 1 Kings 8
10/4 **Discussion:** Coogan, chs 9-10

Week 8

- 10/7 **Sacred Time:** Exodus 12, 23:10-17, 31:12-17, 34:18-24; Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29; Deuteronomy 16
10/9 **Sacrifice and Purity:** Leviticus; Deuteronomy 14:1-21
10/11 **Discussion:** Coogan, chs 11-12

Week 9

- 10/14 **In the Wilderness:** Exodus 1-24, 32-34; Numbers 1-3, 11-17, 22-26; Joshua 1-5
10/16 **The Border:** Deuteronomy 12-26
10/18 **Discussion:** Coogan, chs 13-14

THE EMERGENCE OF ISRAEL

Week 10

- 10/21 **The Judge:** Judges
10/23 **And there was no king in Israel...:** Judges
10/25 **EXAM 2** (from 9/25 to 10/23)

THE UNITED MONARCHY

Week 11

- 10/28 **Samuel:** 1 Samuel; *Hammurabi Law Code & The Sumerian King List* (online)
10/30 **Saul:** 1 Samuel
11/1 **Discussion:** Coogan chs 15-16

Week 12

- 11/4 **David:** 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-2
11/6 **Solomon:** 1 Kings 3-11; Coogan, ch 17
11/8 **Homecoming (no class)**

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

Week 13

11/11 **Veterans Day (no class)**

11/13 **Class canceled (due to conference)**

11/15 **The Prophet:** 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 2; Amos; Hosea; Isaiah 1-6; Coogan, chs 18-19

Week 14

11/18 **The Messiah:** 2 Samuel 6-7; 2 Kings 17, 24-25; Psalms 2, 89, 110; Isaiah 9:1-6, 11; Coogan, ch 20, and review pp 279-86

11/20 **The Deuteronomistic Reform:** Deuteronomy 6-7, 29-30; 2 Kings 14-23; Coogan, ch 21

11/22 **The Exile:** Leviticus 26; Jeremiah 1-25, 34-45; Ezekiel 4-24; Psalm 137; Coogan, ch 22

THE EXILE

Week 15

11/25 **Class canceled (due to conference)**

11/27 **Thanksgiving (no class)**

11/29 **Thanksgiving (no class)**

Week 16

12/2 **The Rebuilding of Jerusalem:** Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 7-12; Coogan, ch 25 (pp 425-30)

12/4 **EXAM 3** (from 10/28 to 12/2)