I. Course Aims:

- To gain a knowledge of the contents of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)
- To learn to read and understand these writings in their historical, religious, and literary contexts
- To learn to recognize different genres in the Biblical writings and to discern the intents of the various authors and redactors (editors)
- To increase appreciation of the Bible as both a religious document written, adapted, and preserved by a multitude of individuals and communities throughout history and as a book which has helped to shape western culture.

II. Texts

- The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). For this class we will be using the Tanakh translation called *The Jewish Study Bible*. In addition to the Hebrew scriptures, it has a number of essays that we will be reading. We will be following the Jewish order of the Hebrew Bible and using *Tanakh* for classes. However, other translations will give you an understanding of how the order of the books has been changed. Please consult with me before using another translation.

III. Course Requirements

- Discussions and weekly interpretation papers: 30%

All students will write 1-2 page papers each week to aid in preparing for discussions of the texts. Ongoing interpretation of the Bible is an important part of the religious communities that value this text; we will be doing this in an academic context. Active participation in discussions is a critical component of this class. Missing more than two classes or two weekly papers will lower your final grade by one full point (B becomes C, for example).
Midterm and Final exam: 20% and 30%

Midterm and final exam questions will be given in advance. The final exam will be take-home and will be due on the day of the scheduled final exam. The final exam must be typed and double-spaced.

- Class presentations: 20%

Our primary focus for this course is the context in which the Hebrew Bible developed. But themes in the Bible have been explored and interpreted throughout the history of our culture. There will be weekly short power point presentations on historical or contemporary uses of the Hebrew Bible in western culture: in literature, art, music, dance, drama, psychology. For example, the week we learn about the Exodus, a presentation could focus on depictions of Moses artistically. Presentations should take about 15 minutes. See Guidelines for Presentations. Signup for each week will start the second week of class. Signup List for Presentations

IV. Course Outline

- Week 1: January 17-19: Introduction; getting to know the text and terminology
  
  Books of the Bible

  The Tower of Babel

  An introduction to the Bible

  Martin Luther King: "I have been to the promised land"

Reading: Jewish Study Bible, 1-11

Barry Holtz, Back to the Sources, chapter 1, pages 1-25 (E-Res)

Jewish Study Bible, 2062-67 (Biblical languages)

Re-Reading the Bible (E-Res)

Genesis, chapters 12-15

Explanation of the terms Copper, Bronze, and Iron Ages

Chart of Bronze and Iron Age periods relating to ancient Israel

Ancient Mesopotamian Civilizations

- TORAH (Weeks 2-5)

Week 2: Jan. 24-26: Patriarchs and matriarchs; the Joseph cycle

Reading: Ancient Israel, 1-31

Traditions underlying patriarchal stories
Who were the patriarchs?

Genesis, chapters 12-30; 35, 37, 41-50

**J,E, P in Genesis 15-30**

What is a hero?

Suggestions for presentations: Bob Dylan's *Highway 61*, the play *Joseph's Technicolor Dreamcoat*

Features of Biblical narrative

Week 3: Jan. 31, Feb. 2: The flight from Egypt; the Covenant

*Reading: Ancient Israel, 33-54*

*Jewish Study Bible, 2041-47 (Purity)*

Exodus, chapters 1-15; 19-24; 32-34; Leviticus 11-12; Deuteronomy 5-8

**Some principles of Torah commandments**

Suggestions for presentations: artistic depictions of Moses, Exodus themes in reggae and American film and music

Week 4: Feb. 7-9: The Promised Land; the conquest of Canaan

*Reading: Ancient Israel, 56-90*

**Two views of Biblical history**

Numbers 11-14; 20-24; Joshua 1-12; Joshua 24

**The Settlement of Canaan**

*Jewish Study Bible, 1827-35 (Biblical interpretation)*

Suggestions for presentations: American political speeches

**Excerpts**

*Manifest Destiny and 1990's War Discourse*

**Ronald Reagan: City on a Hill**

Week 5: Feb. 14-16: Formation of Epic; primeval stories


*Jewish Study Bible, 2000-2005 (Women's interpretations)*

Genesis 1-11
Myth

Enuma Elish

Suggestions for Presentations: Shakespeare, Milton

Some Interpretations of Cain and Abel

Gilgamesh: Summary of Events

The Epic of Gilgamesh

- NEVI'IM (Weeks 6-11)

Week 6: Feb. 21-23: The tribal Confederacy; Judges

Reading: Ancient Israel, 56-90

The Period of the Tribal Confederacy

Jewish Study Bible, 451-455, 1990-2000 (Bible in Israeli life)

Two Theories About Sources for the Early Israelite Monarchy

The Samuel Scroll

Judges 2-9; I Samuel 1-13

Samuel and the End of the Tribal Confederacy

Week 7: Feb 28, Mar. 2: Saul and transition to kingship

Reading: Ancient Israel, 90-100

Jewish Study Bible, 2084-2096 (Modern study of the Bible)

I Samuel 15-18; 28; 31

MIDTERM

---------------------------------------------SPRING BREAK-------------------------------------------------

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Week 8: Mar. 21-23: The United Monarchy: David and Solomon

Reading: Ancient Israel, 100-128

II Samuel 5-8; 11-13; 18

The City of David

I Kings 1-11
Israelite Religion

Biblical Religion

Week 9: Mar. 28-30: Divided monarchy; the prophets Amos, Hosea, Elijah

Reading: Ancient Israel, 129-150

Jewish Study Bible, 456-61

Prophecy

The Divided Kingdom, 922-850

I Kings 17-19

II Kings 2

Deuteronomist History

The Divided Kingdom, 850-750

Hosea 11-13; Amos 1-5

Week 10: April 4-6: Isaiah; Mosaic reform

Reading: Ancient Israel, 150-192

Fall of the Northern Kingdom

Isaiah 1-11; Jeremiah 1-5

II Kings 22-24

Deuteronomy 12-26

The Deuteronomy Law Code

Week 11: April 11-13: Exile; the priestly tradition

Reading: Ancient Israel, 193-216

Jewish Study Bible, 1863-1875 (Midrash)

II Kings 24-25; Ezekiel 1-20; priestly tradition in Torah

The Priestly Tradition

Priest vs. Prophet (Max Weber)

The Kingdom of Judah, 700-539
Week 12: April 18-20: Wisdom literature

*Reading: Ancient Israel, 216-230*

*The Persian Period: 539-400*

*Jewish Study Bible, 1275-79*

*New Religious Ideas*

Proverbs 1-3; 8-10

The book of Job

Week 13: April 25-27: The Psalms and the Megilloth

*Reading: Jewish Study Bible, 1279-84; 2097-2104 (Biblical Poetry)*

*An Alexander the Great Page*

Psalms 8, 11, 23-4; 103-4, 137, 150

*Parallelisms in the Psalms*

*The Psalms Scroll*

Ecclesiastes

Ruth, Esther

Week 14: May 2,4: The Song of Songs; Apocalyptic

*Reading: Ancient Israel, 231-254*

*Jewish Study Bible, 1929-1937 (Bible in the Synagogue), 2072-2077 (Canonization)*

*The Hellenistic Era*

*New Religious Ideas*

The Song of Songs

*Interpretations of the Song of Songs*

Daniel 1-3; 7-8; 12