OT 1065: Old Testament Foundations:
Dr. Barbara Green, O.P., instructor;
Fall 2011; 3 units
Mondays, Thursdays 11:10-12:30;
DSPT (corner of Arch and Vine) room 2

This course provides a basic overview of biblical material, starting “at the beginning” and concluding with the expulsion of Jews from the Jerusalem area in the year 135 C.E.

● The instructor’s main responsibilities are:
  • To present the material in a compelling way
  • To demonstrate effective use of critical methods and tools
  • To help students practice on becoming competent readers.

● The student’s main responsibilities are:
  • To deepen a sense of the beauty and truth of biblical material
  • To acquire a solid grasp of how critical methods and tools work
  • To demonstrate a basic skill in using critical methods and tools to read well.

● Collaboratively, we will know we are doing our work well when you remember and love the biblical texts, can see the presence and value of critical interpretation, can use these strategies effectively yourselves both in class and in written assignments.

● In terms of materials: We will read a good deal of biblical text, follow the historical story-line by reading Michael D. Coogan, A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and supplement with occasional articles. Attendance and prepared participation are crucial. A course reader is available under the name and number of this course at Copy Central, on Hearst just below Euclid.

● You will have three written assignments and two oral ones (details below), all of which will demonstrate your grasp of critical methods and tools and your ability to use them effectively in interpretation. Assignments must come in on time and not need revision. If you require an extension please ask for it before the assignment is due; if you wish an absence to be considered “excused,” please notify the instructor by e-mail. Please be aware of the pertinent policies on academic honesty (DSPT’s, GTU’s, your school’s).

● Your grade will be based on the five assignments counting equally (5/7 of your grade) and on general attendance and participation pre- and post-reading week (2/7).

● It is often helpful to consult the instructor. Short, simple items can be taken care of before or after class, but feel welcome to ask for an appointment: bgreen@dspt.edu. The sooner an appointment can be scheduled, the better, especially when it concerns an assignment due.
Detailed and Provisional Syllabus: Here, in general, is how we will proceed. Note assignment in the biblical text, in Coogan, and of articles. In general, classes will follow a particular format (see template at the end of the syllabus). The three written and two oral assignments follow a common format (see end of the syllabus for that template).

class # 1  September 10
read:  
Coogan chs. 1-2; note in the back an appendix and chronology
other: Green, “This Old Text” and “Plumb, Level, Square” (available electronically to those who are registered for the course)

anticipate:  
initial question: what is expected? why do we have to do this? how do we do it?
lecture title: Committed and Critical Study of the Bible
main critical questions: what is involved in academic, religious, critical biblical study in the 21st century?
main critical methods: overview of all of them

class # 2  September 14
read:  
Genesis 1-11, with focus on the flood story (chs. 6-9)
Coogan chs. 3-4

anticipate:  
initial question: What is this ancient and classic story about?
lecture title: Why Everyone Has a Flood Story
main critical questions: Where did this story come from? Why is it told as it is?
main critical methods: historical: source criticism; redaction criticism; comparative and criticism

class # 3  September 17
read:  
Genesis 12-35 as feasible; if not all that, do chs. 24-28 (on Rebekah)
Coogan ch. 5 to p. 69
other: Tammi J. Schneider, Mothers of Promise (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 10-12 and 217-19

anticipate:
initial question: What can we know of the early ancestors, specifically the matriarchs?
lecture title:
main critical questions: Where did these stories come from? What emerges differently for us if we focus on the ancestral women rather than on the men? Will our "reader’s gender" affect what we see?
main critical methods: historical source and redaction; literary: narratology; reader-centered feminist/Jewish

class # 4 September 21
read: Genesis 37-50
Coogan ch. 5 from p. 69

anticipate:
initial question: how do we read fruitfully, using critical tools responsibly?
lecture title: Reading Joseph’s Coat: Who’s Guilty and of What?
main critical questions: how do methods and critical tools help our reading? what is expected in the assignments for this course?
main critical methods: literary: narratology; touch on historical referents and reader angle

class # 5 September 24
read: Exodus 1-15 (at least 1-5 and 12-15)
Coogan ch. 6
other: three simple handouts

anticipate:
initial question: How did Israel get into Egypt, and out again?
lecture title: Complexities of Liberation
main critical questions: what motifs comprise stories of liberation, and why? why are these Exodus/Moses stories re-used?
main critical methods: historical: form criticism; literary: shape of hero’s journey; reader-centered: why these texts work for liberation movements

class # 6 September 28
read: Exodus 16-19; 32; Exodus 20-23; Deuteronomy 5-12
Coogan chs. 7,8,9,10 (as best you can; at least scan them)
other: simple handouts

anticipate:
  initial question: how does Judaism mark (biblical) law as crucially important?
  lecture title: Holding Logical Opposites Fruitfully
  main critical questions: given that all (most) biblical law is delivered at Sinai/Horeb at a
  given moment, how do we account for discrepancies within the biblical
  collection?
  main critical methods: historical source and redaction; historical social scientific

class # 7 October 1
read: Joshua 2,6,7; Judges 13-16; Ruth
     Coogan chs. 11-12
     other

anticipate:
  initial question: what are the needs and deeds of leadership that Moses and Joshua do and
  then cease to be accomplished after them?
  lecture title: Things Fall Down and then Apart
  main critical questions: what do we know about the origins of Israel in the land from
  various sources, and why does it matter to look in various ways?
  main critical methods: history: archeology and sociology; literary: plot

assignment # 1 will have been completed by now

class # 8 October 5
read: 1 Samuel 1-2 Samuel 1
      Coogan ch. 13
      other: Barbara Green, “Suspecting the Dreaded” in King Saul’s Asking (Collegeville,

anticipate:
  initial question: How do we think of a person as an analogy for something larger, like an
  era?
  lecture title: Monarchy Nested., Failing and Falling
  main critical questions: how does King Saul function to show us failure?
  main critical methods: literary: Bakhtin’s contribution to critical reading

class # 9 October 8
read: 2 Samuel 2-1 Kings 11 (if not all, do 2 Sam 11-12 and 1 Kings 3,8,9,11
Coogan chs. 14-15
other

anticipate:
  initial question: how and why is David presented as he is?
lecture title: A Man after God's Own Heart, But...
main critical questions: how can we discern viewpoint and diagnose it as historical, literary, and/or our own reader-centered view?
main critical methods:

class # 10 October 12
read: 1Kgs 12-2 Kings 13 (if not all of it, do 1 Kgs 12, 17-19, 22; 2 Kings 5, 9-11)
Coogan ch. 16
other

anticipate:
  initial question: who and what are the prophets that emerge in the northern kingdom?
lecture title: A Prophet Like Moses: Anyone Who Qualifies?
main critical questions: how do these prophets fit/not fit into their 9-8th century settings?
main critical methods: historical: comparative aNE, social scientific; literary: type scene

class # 11 October 15
read: Amos; Hosea (at least 1-3, 10-13); Kings 17
Coogan ch. 17
other

anticipate:
  initial question: what problems are the prophets and the Deuteronomist critiquing?
lecture title: The Power of Imagery to Catch our Attention
main critical questions: how do we "decode" and "re-code" prophetic language?
main critical methods: historical: background events; literary: genre, metaphor

assignment # 2 due at the beginning of this session

class # 12 October 19
read: 2 Kgs 16-21; Isaiah 1,6,7-8, 18, 26, 31, 36-9; Micah 1-5
Coogan ch. 18
other

anticipate:
**initial question:** what can we learn about Isaiah of Jerusalem, his kings, his challenges, his language, his re-use?

**lecture title:** Prophets in and out of their own Context: How it Works (or Not)

**main critical questions:** how does Isaiah talk? what does he say about Zion? why and how is he re-used in the NT?

**main critical methods:** grab bag: some of everything; listen for what you recognize

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**class # 13 October 22**

**read:** Jeremiah 1-5; 37-39; 2 Kings 22-25; Lamentations 3  
Coogan ch. 19

other: unpublished “Clue in the Cupboard”

**anticipate:**

**initial question:** how to understand the challenges and disasters that culminated in exile from Judah in the late 7th-early 6th centuries

**lecture title:** Hopes Raised, Dashed...Disaster Looms, Recedes, Swamps

**main critical questions:** how to read Jeremiah skillfully and fruitfully

**main critical methods:** historical: events; literary: plot, characters, discourse

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**class # 14 November 2**

**read:** Ezekiel 2-5, 8, 10, 40-43; Obadiah; Psalm 137;  
Coogan ch. 20;


**anticipate:**

**initial question:** what can we learn of the exile: causes and circumstances?

**lecture title:** Approaching the Priestly Holiness System Respectfully

**main critical questions:** how can we detect, appreciate, and critique biblical responses to exile?

**main critical methods:** historical: source P; reader-centered: sacral violence

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**class # 15 November 5**

**read:** Isaiah 40-55  
Coogan ch. 21

other:

**anticipate:**

**initial question:** why return from Babylon to Judah? why not?

**lecture title:** Hearing Second (Deutero-/Exilic) Isaiah
main critical questions: what was he saying, and to whom?
main critical methods: historical: history of traditions; literary: rhetorical; reader-centered: typology

class # 16 November 9
read: Ezra and Nehemiah
Coogan chs. 21-22

anticipate:
initial question: how was Judah/Israel re-established in the land after return from exile?
lecture title: Challenges of Return
main critical questions: what constituted “return,” so far as we can see?
main critical methods: historical/literary: ideology; literary: characterization

class # 17 November 12
read: Haggai; Zechariah 3, 6-7; Malachi; Isaiah 65-66
Coogan ch. 22
other

anticipate:
initial question: what can we see of the post-exilic problems by listening to the prophets?
lecture title:
main critical questions: how do prophets typically talk? what are they talking about?
main critical methods: historical: events, forms

assignment # 3 due at the beginning of this session

class # 18 November 16
read: Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9; Daniel 9; Isaiah 63:7-64:11; Pss. 74, 79; 2 Chron 6; (if you can’t do all of them, do Ezra or Nehemiah, do a psalm; do Daniel and Chron)
Coogan ch. 23
other

anticipate:
initial question: what is post-exilic prayer and how is it uttered? why?
lecture title: Beseeching God from Deep Grief and Compunction
main critical questions: how can we study these prayers so as to get “inside” them?
main critical methods: literary: rhetorical; reader-centered: contemporary theology
class # 19 November 19
read: Esther—as your Bible has it (Bibles vary); Daniel 1-6; Tobit
Coogan ch. 24 and pp. 396 to end of chapter
other: Mary E. Mills, "Household and Table: Diasporic Boundaries in Daniel and Esther,"

anticipate:
initial question: what was life like for Jews permanently living in exile/diaspora?
lecture title: Remaining and Faithful
main critical questions: how do we read these exile-set stories to get a glimpse of life in
   diaspora without over-literalizing their detail?
main critical methods: historical: life outside “the land;” literary: genre: novella; reader-
   centered: violence

class # 20 November 23
read: Job 1-2, 3 a round (4-14 or other parts assigned), 28, 32-37, 38-42
   Coogan ch. 24 from p. 380
other

anticipate:
initial question: what is the book about?
lecture title: 
main critical questions: how to focus on what the book seems to want to discuss, rather
   than go straight to what readers want it to mean?
main critical methods: historical/literary: redaction and structure; general literary issues;
   theology in all three “worlds”

assignment # 4 due at the beginning of this session

class # 22 December 3
read: Daniel 7-12
   Coogan ch. 24 and pp. 398 ff.
other Greg Carey, Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic

anticipate:
initial question: what is this genre, where did it come from and where is it going?
lecture title: Surviving Parlous Times
main critical questions: to what is this type of literature a response? why does it remain
popular to this day?

*main critical methods:*

class # 23 December 7
read: 1 Maccabees 3:1-4:61; 2 Maccabees 6:8-7:42
Coogan appendix

*anticipate:*

*initial question:* what do we need to know between the dwindling of the OT storyline (disappears mid 4th-century) and the events of the first century CE?

*lecture title:* Catching Up, Finishing Up

*main critical questions:*

*main critical methods:*

class # 24 December 10
read: NT selected texts

*anticipate:*

*initial question:* how best to see the two traditions (Judaism and Christianity) as flowing from biblical Israel?

*lecture title:* Meetings and Partings of the Ways

*main critical questions:* what can we know about the two first centuries

*main critical methods:* general historical, literary and reader-centered considerations

class # 25 December 14
read: all biblical text we have dealt with, plus selected NT ones

*anticipate:*

*initial question:* how has our OT study helped us, among other things, to see more distinctly and centrally the importance of the OT biblical heritage for Christians?

*main critical questions:* what can you say about the material assigned you and its contribution to understanding the NT? how have methods helped you?

*main critical methods:* any/all of them

*assignment # 5 will comprise this class*
class # 26 December 17
read:

anticipate:
    initial question:
    lecture title:
    main critical questions:

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

• Template for class sessions:
Come prepared with basic reading done and having pondered, as best you can, the initial question
provided on the syllabus. (I know there is a lot of reading and that our schedule moves
relentlessly, so do your best to stay on schedule. Read at least a part of what’s assigned for each
class, else the whole discussion will float past you). There will be a brief discussion of the initial
question, followed by a presentation by the instructor. Listen for the main interpretive tools used,
which are named on the syllabus and should assist our approach to the main critical questions we
will work on. The last 20-25 minutes will be general discussion: Ask clarifying or follow-up
questions and also be prepared to explain how the day’s main methods were used helpfully (or
not!). As we finish a session, be sure you know what the main interpretive methods were: be
clear on each method’s name, its job, its effect. Part of your learning and surely part of your
preparation for assignments is to be clear on the functioning of these basic analytical tools.
Remember: the instructor will think it was clear, so if you are uncertain, take the initiative to ask.

• Template for assignments:
The assignment is basically the same each time (slight variation at the end), to give you the
opportunity to become proficient with methods of interpretation. The two essays with which we
begin the course will help you here, so review them frequently. Each of the five times you do the
assignment (first orally with a group, then three times written [on your own or with a partner],
and then together as a whole class) you will provide the following information:

—text you are interpreting (identified by chapter: verse)
—your primary and persistent question about your text  3 points
—what your main methodological tool was:
- its “official” name 2 points
- a brief (2-3 sentence) description of it 3 points
- an indication of where it is located in the “workshop” 1 point

—what two smaller methodological tools were, providing for each:
- its “official” name 2 + 2 points
- a brief (2-3 sentence) description of it 2 + 2 points
- an indication of where it is located in the “workshop” 1 + 1 points

—describe what you were asking and how the methods helped you further your interpretation 15
—name three insights that were new to you (result of critical and committed analysis) 9 points
—how, briefly, your reading was specifically helpful 3 points
—other 4 points

*you will then (in groups of 3, self-selected or assigned) schedule an appointment (30 minutes) to do aloud with the instructor some portion of Genesis 37-50 that we did not do together in class; that is your first assignment, which must be completed by the start of class # 7. For materials, Coogan will take care of historical material; library reserve will have a copy of literary materials you might need: Barbara Green, What Profit for Us? Remembering the Story of Joseph (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996); the exegesis shelf has excellent commentaries that will provide other material you need. If you are resourceful and want to view and comment upon artists’ interpretations of the story, any two images would open up a reader-centered angle. If you discuss art, be sure to bring/send a copy of any image used.

*your second assignment is due at the start of class # 11; I recommend you do 2 Kings 5 (but you may substitute another text if you like; check first, though); for useful material representing diverse types of scholarship, besides Coogan, consult in your reader Robert L. Cohn, 2 Kings (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000): 35-42; and Jean Kyoung Kim, “Reading and Retelling Naaman’s Story,” (JSOT 30: 2005) : 49-61.


*your fourth assignment is due at the start of class # 21; recommended is Esther but substitute if you wish, after consultation; for useful material representing diverse types of scholarship, besides Coogan try Adele Berlin, “Introduction to the Commentary” of The JPS Bible Commentary on Esther (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001): xv-lix (exegesis
shelf at the library); on library reserve for us is Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1991), filled with great literary information; in your reader is an article by a Christian (other three write from a clear Jewish perspective): Kevin McGeough, “Esther the Hero: Going beyond ‘Wisdom’ in Heroic Narratives,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70.1: 2008: 44-65.

*your fifth assignment will be done orally and in class #25; we will review what we have traveled through and see how it is condensed and expanded in the NT portrait of Jesus. You will each be assigned a section of material we have studied and will, with the help of critical methods explicitly named, name ways in which the NT portraits of Jesus (texts specified) show him deeply formed by his OT heritage and clearly passing that tradition along as well as creatively re-shaping it. In other words, to appreciate Jesus, one must know the OT in detail!*

*your second one is due at the start of class # 11; I recommend you do (but you may substitute another text if you like; check first, though);*

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**READER**

please find articles in order of our use of them; and in the second part of the reader, find some materials that may help you additionally with your assignments:

**class # 2 September 14**


**class # 3 September 17**

**class # 4 September 21**

**class # 5 September 24**
class # 8 October 5

class # 13 October 22
unpublished Green, “Clue in the Cupboard”

class # 14 November 2

class # 16 November 9
Barbara Green, Mindful (Amazon/Booksurge, 2008):7-11, 22-51

class # 19 November 19

class # 22 December 3

class # 23 December 7

class # 24 December 10

first assignment
(no materials beyond what has been specified already)

second assignment


third assignment


*fourth assignment*

*fifth assignment*
(materials tba)

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absences (x= excused)
Since you will be using this form twice more and perhaps three times, I am making some suggestions based on my reading of your second assignment (most did 2 Kings 2). These should clarify what is unclear to some and may explain questions you have on the papers returned to you. When you’ve had a chance to read this and the comments on your papers, make an appointment if you need clarification; if you want help before the next assignment is due, ask for an appointment in plenty of time.

—text you are interpreting (identified by chapter: verse) please print it correctly
—your primary and persistent question about your text 1 point

—your main point to demonstrate 2 points I added this in class; be sure you address it

—what your main methodological tool was:
  —its “official” name 2 points e.g., source criticism
  —a brief (2-3 sentence) description of it 3 points define it succinctly but clearly
  —an indication of where it is located in the “workshop” 1 point with history tools because...
—what two smaller methodological tools were, providing for each:
  —its “official” name 2 + 2 points characterization feminist criticism
  —a brief (2-3 sentence) description of it 2 + 2 points define those
  —an indication of where it is located in the “workshop” 1+1 points with literary...reader-centered because...

—describe what you were asking and how the methods helped you further your interpretation 15 this is where you, responding to your question and aiming to demonstrate your main point, use the tools you have named in order to comment on your passage; it is likely you will not do a whole long passage but offer specific points, using your tools in a way that signals you know what you are doing

—name three insights that were new to you (result of critical and committed analysis) 9 points insights are fresh to you, and they are not themes, truisms, or morals; e.g., you don’t want to say “It’s good to have servants in case you need help” but rather, I was surprised at the importance of servants in this passage, since I had thought...

—how, briefly, your reading was specifically helpful 3 points this means the reading you did, so name what you read (Coogan, reader article, other) and say specifically why it helped (or did not)

—other 4 points this gives you a chance to say anything else you want to say; foolish to omit it, since it has points and should be a complete freebie!

Note: This is really a preparation for writing a good biblical studies paper; here in this assignment you are getting ready to do it but don’t actually have to do it! On this one, of 50 possible points, the range was from 16 to 50, with most in the 40s. So basically good job!!