

## Old Testament and Other Hebrew Scriptures

(640:141:01): Fall 2010

Instructor: Dr. Kenneth Atkinson

Dates: MWF Office: Baker 154

Time: 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Office Phone: 273-6990

Location: Lang Hall 20

Office Hours: I maintain an open door policy for your convenience. Feel free to drop by my office whenever my door is open. I am always happy to talk with students.

E-mail: [Kenneth.Atkinson@uni.edu](mailto:Kenneth.Atkinson@uni.edu) My policy is to answer your message once I have received it. I try to check my e-mail throughout the day, so if you have not heard back from me please be patient.

Mailbox: Baker 135. I check my mailbox each day in case you want to drop something off for me to read.

Course Web Site: <http://www.uni.edu/atkinson> Visit my web site frequently for class updates and links to sites of interest. Instructor's

Professional Web Site: <http://northerniowa.academia.edu/KennethAtkinson>

Required Text:

Michael D. Coogan, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). ISBN: 0-19-974-29-1

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, Third Edition, New Revised Standard Version. M. D. Coogan, General Editor. (Oxford University Press, 2001). ISBN: 019528478X

Note: You must use this Bible.

Course Description: Each day people as varied as lawmakers, journalists, teachers, and members of religious communities invoke the Old Testament to sway public opinion or to regulate contemporary life. The problem for those who consider the Old Testament a binding authority for today's world is how to interpret it. Because the Old Testament reflects an ancient culture that no longer exists, and was written in languages that few people know, it is often a difficult book to understand. This course seeks to help you overcome these problems by introducing you to the history and ideas of the Old Testament and other contemporary texts, as well as the tools that biblical scholars use to understand them. My goal is to help you learn how to interpret the Old Testament in light of its historical background, and help you to evaluate the ways that people use this text. The skills that you will learn in this class are not only appropriate to religious studies, but are also necessary in order to become a critical thinker and lifelong learner. The class will examine how the books of the Old Testament came into being, who produced them, what they mean, and how they came to be collected into a canon of Scripture. In this class you will not only examine the Old Testament, but you will also read a variety of other ancient writings that will help you to understand this book. Classes will also include presentations of recent unpublished archaeological and textual discoveries that shed valuable light on the lost world of the Old Testament.

Course Objectives: This class is not only an introduction to the Old Testament and other ancient writings, but it is also an examination of academic approaches to these works. The lectures will examine Old Testament documents and related texts, highlighting their distinctive literary and religious features. No previous familiarity with the Old Testament or with scriptural interpretation is expected. In this class you will learn to read the Old Testament in a critical fashion, focusing on what the text actually says in light of its historical and cultural background. Some of the questions we will examine include:

- How do scholars reconstruct the text of the Old Testament?
- Do the Dead Sea Scrolls contain the same Old Testament printed in our English Bibles?
- Who wrote the Old Testament?
- What happened to the Ark of the Covenant?
- Does archaeology prove or disprove the accuracy of the Old Testament?
- How does the excavation of an ancient bathroom verify the Old Testament account of the destruction of Jerusalem?
- How can I become a biblical archaeologist?
- Are there any Europeans in the Old Testament?
- What happened to “lost tribes of Israel?”

At the end of this course you should have learned a new way of critically reading the Old Testament that brings to light its historical and cultural background. The primary goal of this course is to help you understand what took place during this complex period when Judaism emerged as a distinctive religion, without imposing later ideas or value judgments on the Old Testament. This course, therefore, focuses on what the authors of the Old Testament books meant when they wrote these documents. Because Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all regard the Old Testament as canonical, this course will help you understand these religions. You may wish to follow this course with a class on the history of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam, all of which are offered by UNI’s Department of Philosophy and World Religions.

#### Course Requirements:

(A) Attendance/Class Participation (approximately 20% of grade). This course requires your active participation. Because you have chosen to take this class, I assume that you want to learn as much as possible about world Old Testament and the academic study of religion. If so, then please be certain to arrive on time ready to share your ideas and thoughts on the assigned readings. As a member of this class, please be respectful of other people regardless of whether or not you agree with their opinions. I also expect you to remain open to new ideas throughout this course, which is the first requirement of the academic study of religion. Because attendance is critical to understand the material and texts that we will study, I will deduct a few points for more than three unexcused absences when I determine your final grade. I assume that you will miss a few classes due to illnesses, university activities, or other life issues. Only unexcused absences will be penalized, so if you have a good reason for missing class I will not count your absence. If you are sick, you do not need to obtain a note from a doctor or nurse to prove your illness. I will trust you, so just let me know that you were ill, and I will not count your absence. Whether your absence is excused or not, you are required to keep up with the readings and lectures. If you miss a class, I suggest that you obtain copies of the notes from a fellow student. I am always happy to sit down with you and go over any material at any time. I am pleased to have you in my class if you are involved in any university program (sports, ROTC, student

government, etc.) that may occasionally prevent you from attending this course. Please provide me with a letter by September 3rd about your activity or program, the name and phone number of a contact person, and the projected number of absences.

(B) Quizzes (4 total; approximately 40% of grade). There are four (4) quizzes. Each quiz covers the assigned readings and the lectures. All quizzes are worth 50 points. There are no make-up quizzes. The quizzes will cover major events, people, places, and vocabulary from the assigned readings and material presented in class. Because we have much material to cover in this class, I may not discuss each reading in depth. I like to include a few questions on material that I did not explain in class in order to reward you for reading the assigned texts. You are always free to ask me questions in class about any of the assigned readings to help you prepare for the quizzes.

(C) Exams (4 exams; approximately 40% of grade). There are four (4) exams in this class. Each exam includes identifications of events, terms, names, quotations, multiple-choice, and sentences for you to complete with the appropriate word. You must be present for the exams: no make-up exams will be given unless you have an excused absence in advance or some legitimate emergency! The exams are not cumulative. General Comments: I am required by the university to provide you with the following information.

- Grading: When I calculate your final grade, I will look at how you have improved during the course. I like to see evidence of intellectual development over the course of the semester. I will reward you for your contributions to the class discussions and your regular attendance. If you simply show up for each class, do the readings, and participate in class discussions, as well as study the assigned materials, you should have no trouble receiving an excellent grade for this course.

- Reading: In addition to the readings listed on this syllabus, I will periodically send you short readings about current events by e-mail. These will be sent to your university e-mail account. You must have access to your assigned UNI e-mail address for this class. If you need help with your university e-mail account, please consult the ITS home page for assistance (<http://www.uni.edu/its/us/faqs/email/email14.htm>). Make certain that you periodically delete old messages since these accounts are rather small.

- Final Exam: Note the Final Examination Schedule in your Fall 2010 Schedule of Classes (page 17) or the UNI website (<http://www.uni.edu/registrar/calendars/final-exam-schedule-spring-2010/fall-2010>). Please read this information and keep this chart handy since some exams are scheduled for different dates and times. I am required to adhere to this schedule unless you follow the procedures described on page 17 of your Fall 2010 Schedule of Classes. It is a good idea to hold onto this book since it contains much useful information. Pay particular attention to the Liberal Arts Core requirements on page 18 of this book or the UNI website (<http://www.uni.edu/vpaa/lac/>). I am always happy to answer any questions you may have about this chart or the university. The final exam is not a cumulative test, but only covers the last portion of the course.

- Policy on Late Work: All assignments must be completed for class on the day listed on the syllabus. Late submissions will not be accepted. No exceptions! If you do not show up for an exam, presentation, or quiz, you will receive zero points for that exam, presentation, or quiz.
- Disabilities and Assistive Testing Services: Assistive Testing Services are provided to enrolled students approved by the University of Northern Iowa Office of Disabilities Services for accommodations. Alternative testing formats, as well as auxiliary aids such as readers, scribes, or assistive technology, are available. Tests are to be scheduled in advance with the Department of Academic Services -- Examination Services office. The test service is provided for University course tests and final examinations (not quizzes) to students enrolled in classes that are unable to provide the approved accommodations (i.e. extended time, large print options, reader/recorder, or computer testing). Course testing accommodations are based on disability documentation as determined by the University of Northern Iowa Disabilities Services. I will make every effort to accommodate disabilities. Please contact me

if I can be of assistance in this area. All qualified students with disabilities are protected under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C.A., Section 12101. The ADA states, “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.” Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodations through Student Disability Services. The Office of Disability Services is located in 103 Student Health Center (319-273-2676 [Voice] or 319-273-3011 [TTY]). Email: [disabilityservices@uni.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@uni.edu). See pages 10-11 of your Fall 2010 Schedule of Classes for more information or consult the Office of Disability Services website (<http://www.uni.edu/disability/>).

- Discrimination:** It is the policy of the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal and/or state law. Further details concerning UNI’s policies may be found in your Fall 2010 Schedule of Classes (pages 12-13). For additional information, visit: <http://www.uni.edu/equity>,

- Plagiarism:** Any attempt to present someone else’s work as your own is plagiarism, and may result in an “F” for the course. The University of Northern Iowa has a very specific policy statement related to the issue of plagiarism. This policy statement can be found in several places on the UNI website, but it is most prominent in the UNI Student Handbook in Section 3.01 “Academic Ethics/Discipline” (<http://www.uni.edu/pres/policies/301.shtml>). You should become familiar with the Academic Ethics Policies found at this website or in the University Catalog.

- Weather Policy:** My policy is to conduct class as long as the university is open. You will find additional information on my weather policy, as well as your local weather, on my web site. I do not expect you to risk your life to attend this class. If you feel that it is not safe for you to attend class, then please stay home. I will trust your judgment and allow you to make up any assignments you have missed without penalty. Just let me know that you could not attend class due to the weather and I will not count your absence. For UNI’s weather policy, see: <http://www.uni.edu/pres/policies/407.shtml>

## CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

### DATE CLASS TOPIC ASSIGNMENT

Week 1—Introduction to the Course. The Academic Study of the Bible.

August 23 Class Introduction

August 25 What is the Bible? Coogan, Chapters 1-2

August 27 Creation Coogan, Chapter 3 Bible: Genesis 1

Week 2— The Beginnings of Israel: The Ancient Near East

August 30 How Can We Know Anything About the Past?

September 1 The Formation of the Pentateuch Coogan, Chapter 4 Bible: Genesis 2-11

September 3 Primeval History

Week 3—The Ancestors of Israel

September 6 Labor Day Holiday

September 8 The Ancestors of Israel: Abraham Coogan, Chapter 5 Bible: Genesis 12-50

September 10 The Ancestors of Israel: Abraham's Descendants Quiz # 1

Week 4—Escape from Egypt

September 13 The Exodus: Part One Coogan, Chapters 6-7 Bible: Exodus 1-15

September 15 The Exodus: Part Two

September 17 Law and Ritual Coogan, Chapters 8-10 Bible: Exodus 20:22-23:33 & 25-40

Week 5—The Conquest

September 20 Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan Coogan, Chapter 11 Bible: Joshua 1-8

September 22 Jericho

September 24 Exam One

Week 6—The Emergence of Israel

September 27 The Era of the Judges Coogan, Chapter 12 Bible: Ruth, Judges 1-5, 11, 18-21

September 20 Archaeology and the Judges

October 1 The Establishment of the Monarchy Coogan, Chapter 13

Week 7—The United Kingdom

October 4 The Reign of Saul Bible: 1 Samuel 1-12

October 6 The Reign of David Coogan, Chapter 14 Bible: 1 Samuel 13-31

October 8 The United Kingdom: Fact or Fiction? Quiz # 2

Week 8—The Divided Kingdom

October 11 The Reign of Solomon Coogan, Chapter 15 Bible: 1 Kings 1-11 & Psalm 89

October 13 The Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah: Part One Coogan, Chapter 16 Bible: 1 Kings 12-2 Kings 14

October 15 The Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah: Part Two

Week 9—The Northern Kingdom of Israel

October 18 The Northern Kingdom and its Prophets: Part One Coogan, Chapter 17 Bible: 2 Kings 14-17

October 20 The Northern Kingdom and its Prophets: Part Two Amos & Hosea

October 22 Exam Two

Week 10—The Southern Kingdom of Judah

October 25 The Southern Kingdom of Judah and its Prophets: The Syro-Ephramite War Coogan, Chapter 18  
Bible: 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah 7-8

October 27 The Southern Kingdom of Judah and its Prophets: The Assyrian Invasion of 701 B.C.E. Bible: 2  
Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36-39

October 29 The Southern Kingdom of Judah and its Prophets: The End of Assyrian Domination Coogan,  
Chapter 19 Bible: 2 Kings 21-23; 2 Chronicles 33-35

Week 11—The Fall of Jerusalem November 1 The Fall of Jerusalem Bible: 2 Kings 23:31-25:30; 2  
Chronicles 36

November 3 The Book of Jeremiah: Jeremiah's Life Bible: Jeremiah 1-25, 34-45, 52

November 5 The Book of Jeremiah: Jeremiah's Teachings Quiz # 3 Week 12—Exile and Return

November 8 Jews in Judah and Babylon Coogan, Chapter 20 Bible: Lamentations, Psalm 137, Obadiah  
November 10 Ezekiel Bible: Ezekiel 1-24

November 12 Exam Three

Week 13—Return from Exile

November 15 Return from Exile Coogan, Chapters 21-22 Bible: Ezra 3-6, Haggai, Zechariah 1-8

November 17 Trouble in Judah Bible: Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah, Zechariah 9-14

November 19 History Rewritten: 1-2 Chronicles Coogan, Chapter 23

Week 14—Thanksgiving Break November 22-26 No

Class Week 15—Israelite Literature

November 29 The Book of Psalms Bible: Psalms 1, 3, 23, 7, 10, 22, 92, 116

December 1 Wisdom Literature: Proverbs Bible: Proverbs 1-9

December 3 Wisdom Literature: Job Coogan, Chapter 24 Bible: Job Quiz # 4

Week 16—Israelite Literature: Continued

December 6 Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon Bible: Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

December 10 Survival in Exile: Esther Bible: Esther December 12 Survival in Exile: Daniel Bible: Daniel

Week 17—Final Exam Week December 15 (Wednesday)

Exam Four 10:00-11:50