

CAS313, MWF 9:00-10:00

Instructor: Professor Michael Zank, PhD

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Hours: MWF 1:20-3 and by appt.

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Office Hours MWF 10-11 and by appointment.

Announcements and other info posted at <http://blackboard.bu.edu>.

Please check at least once a day for updates. We usually also send out announcements in an email.

## **Brief course description**

*Introductory study of Jewish and Christian scriptures; connections between biblical and related ancient cultures; biblical genres (epic narrative, law, prophecy, poetry, historiography, gospels, letters, apocalypse) and their literary character; major classical and modern strategies of reading.*

## **Course goals**

- Basic knowledge of the Jewish and Christian canons of scripture and their respective Ancient Near Eastern and Hellenistic-Roman provenance;
- Major genres (epic narrative, law, prophecy, poetry, historiography, letters, biography, apocalypse);
- Understand how biblical texts relate to other texts: including Hebrew Bible alludes to or resembles other ANE writings; New Testament writings cite Scripture (Torah, Prophets); of "texts relating to other texts" (e.g., citation, imitation; prophecy-fulfillment);
- Acquaintance with classical strategies of appropriation (including typology and allegoresis) and modern critical approaches.

## **Course texts**

*New Oxford Annotated With Apocrypha*, NRSV, Augmentd, 3rd 2007 (Oxf) [abbr. NOAB3 ]or 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2010 (Oxf) [abbr. NOAB4]

John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler, Anthony D. York, David Citino, *The Bible as Literature. An Introduction* (Oxford U Press, 2006, Fifth Edition). [abbr. BAL]

Notes:

BAL and the third edition of NOAB will be available at MUGAR Reserve.

Also note that you may read biblical text in other forms (e.g., online) or editions, using the New Revised Standard Version (included in NOAB) or a different translation, but you still need to consult NOAB (3 or 4) for annotation,

introduction, essays, and other accompanying material (maps, indexes, timelines, etc.).

## **Assignments and grading**

There will be an unspecified number of homework assignments, including reading exercises with guided questions, that will be graded using V, V+, and V- as marks. (Homework in total will make up 25% of your course grade.)

In place of discussion sections, this course uses the discussion board feature on blackboard in addition to in-class discussions. Quality and frequency of your contributions to our online and in-class discussions will enter into your participation grade. (Participation overall: 20%)

Midterm exam: 15 %

Final exam: 20 %

**Commentary Project (20%):** You will pair up with a classmate for this exercise. The task is to write a cooperative commentary on a book, passage in a book, character, or problem arising from biblical literature. This is due, in class, on the last day of classes.

**Attendance:** You can take two unexcused absences. From the third unexcused absence you will lose 5% of your overall credit points for every class you miss. Valid excuses for absences include deaths or severe cases of illness in your immediate family or sickness (doctor's note required unless university policy stipulates otherwise).

## **Course Outline**

### **Week One: Introduction to the course**

Wed Jan 19

Introductions

Fri Jan 21

Canon and Canonization: What is in

Read: BAL Ch. 6 "The Formation of the Canon." Alternatively, please read the essay on canonization in NOAB4 "The Canons of the Bible" (2185 ff), NOAB3 pp. 453ES ff, or "Canon and Canonization" (from *Jewish Study Bible*; pdf on Blackboard).

### **Week Two: Canon and Canonization**

Mon Jan 24

Canon and Canonization: What is out

Read: NOAB3: Introduction to the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books (3-10 Apocrypha) or NOAB4: Introduction to the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books (Apocrypha 1361-1367); or BAL Ch. 13 "Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha."

Co-curricular event Tue Jan 25 (recommended):

Details at <http://www.bu.edu/otherwithin/events/calendar/?eid=106759>

Wed Jan 26

The New Testament (and other early Christian writings)

Read: Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction*, 1-17 (pdf on blackboard/course documents); NOAB3/NT pp. iii-vi ("Introduction to the New Testament") and viii-x ("The Narrative Books-Gospels and Acts"); 204-207 ("Letters /Epistles in the New Testament"), and 362-363 ("Apocalyptic Literature"), or NOAB4 Intro to the Gospels (NT 1743-1745), "The Acts of the Apostles" (1919-1921), Intro the Letters/Epistles in the NT (1973-4), and Intro to The Revelation of John (2153-2155).

Fri Jan 28

"New Testament: Concept and Canon" (pdf on blackboard/course documents). Reading: Read one of the alternative readings you did not read for the last class and look up the biblical passages and external web-links associated with this powerpoint. If you are unfamiliar with the abbreviations by which biblical books are cited, check the list of abbreviations (NOAB4 p. xxi; NOAB3 p. xxv).

### **Week Three: Texts referring to other texts. For example: The Gospel acc. to Mark**

Homework for this week: read *all* of the Gospel of Mark in one sitting, following the guidelines/reading questions posted on blackboard.

Mon Jan 31

Discussion of Mark, Ch. 1-8

Wed Feb 2

Discussion of Mark, Ch. 9-12

Fri Feb 4

Discussion of Mark, Ch. 13-16

### **Week Four: What's missing? Parallels, Alternatives**

Mon Feb 7

Childhood gospels: Matthew and Luke

Read Luke 1-3 and Matth. 1-3

Also read: BAL Ch. 14 ("The Gospels")

Wed Feb 9

Other gospels: Gospel of Thomas, Infancy Gospel, Secret Gospel of Mark

(pdf blackboard)

Fri Feb 11

Who was Jesus of Nazareth and how do we know?

Read: David Flusser, s.v. "Jesus" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Second Edition (pdf blackboard).  
Powerpoint: "Gospel as Vita" (on blackboard).

View: PBS/Frontline series "From Jesus to Christ" (online at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/watch/>) Part 1, especially sections 2, 5, 10, 11, and Part 2, especially sections 1, 6, 8, 10-12.

### **Week Five: What's in a title?**

Mon Feb 14

"Messiah"

(Handouts on blackboard)

Wed Feb 16

Further discussion of handouts (with Erin Anderson).

Fri Feb 18

Guest lecture: Israeli composer Matti Kovler.

Read: Psalm 139 and Yeats, "Second Coming" (<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-second-coming/>)

### **Week Six: Yehudah/Yehud/Ioudaia/Ivdaea: Judah in History**

Tue Feb 22 Guest lecturer: Dorie Manson, ABD (BU, DRTS)

Early Israel and Judah: 1200 BCE to 586 BCE

Read: NOAB3 507-514 ES or NOAB4 "Cultural Contexts: The Ancient Near East" (2236-2242); BAL Ch. 4 and 5.

Wed Feb 23 Guest lecturer: Micki Bellami, ABD (BU, DRTS)

Early Second Temple Period: Persian and Hellenistic Times

Read: NOAB3 514-519 ES; NOAB4 "Cultural Contexts: The Persian and Hellenistic Periods" (2242-2247); BAL Ch. 11.

Fri Feb 25 Guest lecturer: Prof Jonathan Klawans (BU, CASRN and Director, DRTS)

Late Second Temple Period: Roman Rule

Read: BAL Appendix 3 and Ch. 12. NOAB3 519-525- ES; NOAB4 "Cultural Contexts: The Roman Period (2247-53).

## **Week Seven: What's in a metaphor?**

Mon Feb 28

"Virgin Birth;" "Resurrection"

For "virgin birth" read Isaiah 7:14.

For "resurrection" read 1 Corinthians 15.

Co-curricular event (required):

Matti Kovler, The Escape of Jonah and other works.

See <http://www.bu.edu/sciparts/calendar/index.html>

Or check the University Calendar for details.

Wed March 2

"Resurrection"

Read: Ecclesiastes 3, Genesis 3:19, 5:21-24, 6:1-5, 25:7-10; Deuteronomy 34: 1-8, 1 Sam 28, Psalm 49, Ezekiel 37:1-14, Daniel 12:1-4, 2 Macc 7, 4 Macc 14ff, 1 Enoch 51 (online), Wisdom of Solomon 1-5, Acts 23: 1-10.

Fri March 4

Guest lecture and demonstration: Rabbi Kevin Hale, Torah Scribe (*sofer stam*), Northampton, Mass. Rabbi Kevin Hale is a traditionally trained *sofer stam*, torah scribe who lives and works in Leeds (Northampton) MA. His work includes restoring *sifrei torah* (Torah scrolls), writing new scrolls, and teaching about Jewish sacred scribal traditions. A 1997 graduate of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Rabbi Hale 's mentor was Rabbi Eric Ray, a world-renowned *sofer*, artist and authority on the provenance of Torah scrolls, who could identify and write 2,000 distinct Hebrew scripts.

## **Week Eight: Review**

Mar 7 Midterm prep

Mar 9 Midterm prep

Mar 11 **Mid-term in class**

[Spring  
Recess  
March  
12-20]

## **Week Nine: Creation and the Garden of Eden**

Mon Mar 21

## Creation

Read: Genesis 1-2:4a and compare with Babylonian creation hymn *Enumah Elish*, a translation of which can be found here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/stc/index.htm>. (For print edition see Prichard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*). Read through all seven tablets (some are really fragmentary). The most important one for us is Tablet Four. See if you can identify any similarities between Marduk as the slayer of Tiamat and the biblical Elohim (God) in Genesis 1-2:4a.

Also read BAL Ch. 3.

Wed Mar 23

## The Garden of Eden

Read: Genesis 2:4b-3

Fri Mar 25

Adam and Eve in later tradition: Paul and Deutero-Pauline letters.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 45, Romans 5:13-15, and 1 Timothy 2:12-14 (deutero-Pauline).

## **Week Ten Adam, Eve, and the return of the "great enemy"**

Mon Mar 28

## The Life of Adam and Eve

Online at <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/> and other places). Please read both Latin and Greek versions (the Greek is also known as The Apocalypse of Moses).

Wed Mar 30

## Satan in the Bible outside of Genesis

Read 1 Chronicles 21 and compare with 2 Samuel 24.

Also read Job 1-2, Ezekiel 28:11-19, Isaiah 14:12, Rev 20:7.

Recommended reading: Northrop Frye, *The Old Enemy*.

Fri Apr 1

More primordial history: the flood and other Babylonian tales

Read Genesis 4-11. Compare the biblical flood story with Tablet IX from the Old Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh (a translation of which can be found here: <http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/gilgamesh/tab11.htm>). What are the similarities, what is different? What other Babylonian connections can you find in the primordial history of post-diluvial humanity? Why is the pre-history of "Israel" located in the Babylonia of

the "Chaldeans"?

## **Week Eleven Hebrew epic narrative. The case of Genesis 12-50**

Mon Apr 4

Modern approaches to studying the Bible

Read NOAB3 "Contemporary Methods in Biblical Study" (497-505 ES); NOAB4 2227ff; BAL Ch. 18 and Appendix 4.

Wed Apr 6

Patriarchs and Matriarchs

Read: Gen 12-38

Fri Apr 8

Patriarchs and Matriarchs (cont'd)

Gen 19-50

## **Week Twelve Exodus. Sinai. Tabernacle**

Mon Apr 11

Exodus 1-19

Wed Apr 13

Exodus 20-24

Fri Apr 15

Exodus 25-40

## **Week Thirteen Commandments. Reward and Punishment. Death of Moses**

Wed Apr 20

Deuteronomy 4-12

Th Apr 21

Deuteronomy 26-30

Fri Apr 22 (Good Friday)

Deuteronomy 31-34

## **Week Fourteen Kingship and Prophecy**

Mon Apr 25

Deuteronomy 17, Judges 9, 1 Sam 8. Psalm 2. Isa 11.

Wed Apr 27

1 Sam 9-10, 15-16, 18. 2 Samuel 1, 3, 5-7, 11-12, 1 Kings 1-13.

Fri Apr 29

2 K 17-20, 22-25.

### **Week Fifteen Poetry**

Mon May 2

Song of Solomon

Wed May 4

Book of Job

### **May 10-14 Finals week**

### **May 20-22 Commencement**