

OT 3455 Former and Pre-Exilic Prophets
Dr. Barbara Green, O.P., instructor (DSPT)
Spring 2009; M, Th 11:10-12:30, CDSP 113
3 units

general description

This course offers a survey of the *former prophets* (as the books of Samuel and Kings are called in the Jewish tradition) and of the *latter* or writing prophets (*major and minor*) who are presented as having lived before the exile to Babylon (587 B.C.E.). In some cases we have stories *about them* and in other cases books are traditionally *ascribed to them*. While studying these texts, we will investigate the pertinent *historical and social contexts*, attend with care to the *literary qualities* of the biblical material, and experiment with *situated reading*, emphasizing our reception of these materials as Scripture. In each case, we will learn and utilize some standard contemporary and critical methods. We will pursue the ancient and existential question of what a specifically a religious prophet is and does and what may be appropriate response to religious prophets.

outcomes By the end of the course the student will have demonstrated:

- 1) a *complex understanding* of who and what the former and pre-exilic prophets are in their various contexts and facets by making intentional use of critical tools in your assignments (written and oral).
- 2) a *nuanced understanding* about the power issues uniting/dividing prophets and their various opponents and to observe how they are set up for us in the text; that is, rather than seeing “the truth” as clear and obvious to all, you will by written and oral work show it as more uncertain and challenging for all involved.
- 3) your *comfortable understanding* of a dual framework—that you have grasped the likelihood that at least some the material we have is *set* as pre-exilic (11th-6th century or so) but was likely *composed or edited later* than those settings (post-exile) and with specific later needs in mind by referring to this phenomenon in written and oral work.
- 4) an appropriate capacity to understand and can discuss the “*big picture*” in biblical *interpretation* by using and naming at least twelve standard critical methods in your written material.
- 5) an adequate sense of relevant chronology (10th to 6th centuries) which you will demonstrate by passing a quiz with a good score (8-10/10).
- 6) your sense of some appropriate *continuity (but also discontinuity)* between what we think biblical prophets were and what we think contemporary prophets are by presenting your contemporary prophet against the backdrop of the biblical ones.

7) a suitable sense of how biblical prophets functioned and are now represented for our appropriation demonstrated by general participation that is *steady, accumulative, shareable, useful* for the class as well as for yourself.

assignments

The *default assignment* is as follows:

- ongoing reading/preparation from Bible: a lot—18 books, including three big prophets; 1 book; a reader. Plan to participate prepared in every class session.
- commit to memory and easy reference the framework from pre-monarchy to exile; take a take-home quiz on it; quiz is due at the start of class #4;
- choose a conflicting pair (likely a prophet and king) and write about their presentation in the biblical narrative, attentive to historical, literary and reader perspectives (a grid will help you; one is done pre-Reading Week and one post RW); 5 pages each; those assignments are due at the beginning of classes #8 and #23;
- write up a problem in a position paper, attentive to methodology (a grid to help you); one pre-RW and one post-RW; 3 pages each; due at the beginning of classes # 11 and #19;
- choose a “modern” prophet and prepare to present him/her in terms of “prophet issues” (grid to help you); do it with a partner or alone; (prophet chosen by end of quiz from list available or someone of your choosing—check out with instructor); presented orally in classes # 26-28;

Alternative Assignment: If anyone wishes to practice the skills involved in *writing a 15 page research paper* competently at the graduate school level, that is an option, though it entails following instructor direction on this project. You might choose this option if you are in an MA program and need to write a thesis. If you choose this option, please notify the instructor in writing (note or e-mail) after class # 2.

required materials

- a Bible of your choice; we are reading (parts of) eighteen biblical books. This is your main text. Bring it to every class session;
- Please buy (from UCB bookstore or via DSPT website) a handbook that provides basic information: Victor H. Matthews, *The Social World of the Hebrew Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001); you do not need to bring it to class, since its main job is to provide basic start-up information about our topics;
- Buy/download a class reader that will provide general background or particular information on a particular situation; average of one article per class session;
- Locate in the library the exegesis shelf, where the best/most current commentaries are kept at all times, non-circulating; you will need to consult them for various things;
- Anticipate being given an occasional extra article on occasion.

—Library reserve: W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* in case you need to consult it.

grading

We will proceed as follows: Assume there are 100 points possible in the course:

You will have the opportunity to collect them as follows:

- a quiz on the chronological framework at the outset of the class: 10 points;
- your characters in conflict paper: pre-reading week 10 points; post-reading week 15 points;
- your assessment of a prophetic problem paper: pre-RW 10 points, post-RW 15 points;
- your end-of-semester presentation on your contemporary prophet: 15 points;
- your general course attendance and preparation: pre RW 10 points; post RW 10 points;
- wild cards: 5 points at least, maybe more.

I know the frustration with points is that you feel uncertain about what grade the points translate to. The gain is that points are easy to track. I will keep the totals transparently so that you can ask (after every “intake/return”) where the general group is and where you are in relation to it.

Four more things about your grade:

—If you need an *excused absence* (prior commitment or serious emergency), please ask for it specifically (writing/e-mail is best).

—Assume that you will *not have a redo option* except on your quiz and on your first assignment, which can be redone if you schedule an appointment to discuss what went wrong (you’ll get the new grade);

—Assume *late papers will lose points*;

—Be aware of the GTU and your school’s *plagiarism policy*, which are grounds for flunking assignment/course (unlikely with our assignments!).

tracking your grade

Name: _____

a quiz: 10 points	_____
pre RW characters in conflict: 10	_____
pre-RW position paper: 10	_____
pre-RW general attendance/participation: 10	_____
post-RW characters in conflict: 15	_____
post-RW position paper: 15	_____
post-RW general attendance/participation: 10	_____

contemporary prophet presentation: 15

miscellaneous: 5

= _____ =

communication

I am generally available for appointments Mondays through Thursdays in DSPT office 207; please call (883-2076) or email (bgreen@dspt.edu); drop-ins are possible but *appointments are best*. I can meet you at CDSP shortly before or after the class for quick consultation. Early planning works best. A list of class names and e-mails will be available once you have all agreed to release them.

schedule of classes (each class session will be preceded by a syllabus supplement, which will be more detailed and more recent than this schedule, though we will generally follow this plan:)

class # 1 February 2:

read: syllabus; Matthews intro, chs. 1-2; Coote and Coote (reader); “The Clue in the Old Cupboard”;

focus: the framework for the story of prophets and kings;

note that among our methods, the reader/article information is generally *historical*

anticipate: we will set three things in place:

1. all questions related to the syllabus; come prepared with them;
2. an overview on prophets and of the whole period; come having read the material carefully; questions?
3. a keyhole through which to consider our story: the not-missing scroll mystery.

class # 2 February 5:

read: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges: whatever you can, at least observing what sort of material is covered; Matthews ch. 3; Green, *Mindful* (reader); Chaney, “Joshua” (reader); Greenstein, “Riddle of Samson” (reader);

focus: prelude to prophets and kings: note how the stories are not “simply historical” but are literary masterpieces crafted to suggest relationships among materials;

anticipate: we will talk about these materials (biblical and other); *read carefully* and critically; bring questions;

class # 3 February 9:

read: 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel 1-9; Matthews ch. 4; Green (reader); Bodner (reader)

focus: origins and destiny of kings and prophets; note ways in which Samuel functions as a prophet, how Saul epitomizes the experience of a people, and how a narrative can communicate on more than one level;

anticipate: we will “take apart” the articles by Green and Bodner to see how they were planned and executed

class # 4 February 12:

read: 2 Samuel 10-1 Kings 11; Matthews ch. 4; Bodner (reader);

focus: David Nathan, Solomon and Shemaiah

anticipate: we need to see why and how David is exemplary for our whole story—provides the measure for every other king; we’ll assess Solomon and see how different his characterization is

assignment due: quiz

class # 5 February 19:

read: 1 Kings 12-16; Matthews ch. 4; Hens-Piazza (reader)

focus: Ahijah of Shiloh and two kings (Rehoboam, Jeroboam); two unnamed prophets;

anticipate: we will talk about “ideology”/theology that is plausibly historical: what the D writer wants to valorize and vilify in terms of worship;

class # 6 February 23:

read: 1 Kings 17-21 Elijah and the Omrids: Ahab and Jezebel; Matthews ch. 5; Walsh (reader)

focus: we will fold our three general “worlds” together today, noting some historical, some literary, and some reader-alert angles

anticipate: this is a key day to raise issues about method if you have them, since your own use of them is coming up soon

assignment due: quiz redo (optional)

class # 7 February 26:

read: 1 Kings 22-2 Kings 2; Matthews ch. 5; Walsh (reader)

focus: three prophets and the Omrids

anticipate: we will look for ways in which the prophets resemble each other in literary characterization and also raise our own reader’s questions about the Micaiah narrative

class # 8 March 2:

read: 2 Kings 3-8; Matthews ch. 5; Cohn (reader)

focus: Elisha and his deeds

anticipate: we will talk about literary and sociological motifs, used in Christology

assignment due: conflict paper #1

class # 9 March 5:

read: 2 Kings 9-13; Matthews ch. 5; Brueggemann (reader); White (reader);

focus: unnamed prophets and King Jehu, Elisha and Queen Athalya: how the story is told

anticipate: we will follow the literary features of the story and also the “violent deity” question, which presses here

class # 10 March 9:

read: Amos 1-6; Matthews ch. 6; Premnath (reader)

focus: as we hit the 8th century, we are into clear historical times, and need to understand the social-scientific background for the period; as we arrive at our first latter prophet, we will begin to study historical forms of prophetic speech

anticipate: discussion of economics as Assyrian strength grows; how prophets talked

class # 11 March 12:

read: Amos 7-9; 2 Kings 14; Matthews ch. 6; Premnath (reader)

focus: confrontation between prophet, king, priest

anticipate: continuation of last class

assignment due: prophetic problem paper #1

class # 12 March 16:

read: Jonah; 2 Kings 14; Matthews p. 162-67; Green (reader)

focus: locating Jonah (former/latter) historically

anticipate: an exercise to see if these levels of interpretation are clear

class # 13 March 19:

read: Hosea 1-3 and 11-14; 2 Kings 14; Matthews ch. 7; Keefe (reader)

focus: reading metaphor in 8th century social context

anticipate: exercises in metaphor

****reading week****

****reading week****

****reading
week****

class # 14 March 30:

read: Hosea 4-10 and 2 Kings 17; Matthews ch. 7; Chaney (reader)

focus: more metaphor: shift from spouses to children/ critique of leadership

anticipate: 8th century prophets and Yahweh alone; collapse of Israel

(assignment due: conflict paper #1 if you are rewriting...)

class # 15 April 2:

read: Isaiah 1-8; 2 Chron 28; 2 Kings 18-19; Matthews ch. 8; tba (reader)

focus: language in Isaiah

anticipate: how to appreciate the beauty of the language

class # 16 April 6:

read: Isaiah 36-39 and 2 Kings 18-20; Matthews ch. 8; van Rensburg (reader)
focus: an historical episode carefully considered: how an event is cast, and why
anticipate: we'll talk about the overlap of history, literature and ideology/theology

class # 17 April 9:

read: Isaiah tba; Dt 2-12; 2 Kgs 18-20; Matthews ch. 8; McKinion (reader)
focus: ideology/theology considered in three ways: Zion theology; Christian appropriation
anticipate: how Jews and Christians read

class # 18 April 16:

read: Micah; Matthews ch. 9; Sweeney (reader)
focus: how Micah's words and situation compare/contrast with Isaiah's
anticipate: discussion of prophetic disagreement and the problem of "slippage"

class # 19 April 20:

read: Nahum; Zephaniah; 2 Kings 19; Matthews ch. 10; O'Brien (reader)
focus: we will study the classic issues of historical criticism
anticipate: demonstration of issues classic to prophetic books
assignment due: prophetic problem paper # 2

class # 20 April 23:

read: Habakkuk, Obadiah; 2 Kings 20-21; Matthews ch. 10; O'Brien (reader)
focus: demonstration of issues classic to prophetic books
anticipate: a discussion of the problems of "message-ing"

class # 21 April 27:

read: Josiah and Huldah 2 Kings 22-23; Grabbe (reader); ben Dov (reader);
back to our "Clue in the Cupboard" mystery
focus: why this story is the linchpin of the DH/our course
anticipate: discussion of the depth of the narrative and our reading challenges

class # 22 April: 30

read: Jeremiah prose: from chs. 21-36; Matthews ch. 11;
focus: piecing together the events of the post-Josiah kings
anticipate: opportunity to finish your twelve named methods

class # 23 May 4:

read: Ezekiel tba Matthews ch. 12; Place his early stuff before Jeremiah?
focus: how Ezekiel accounts for/portrays the exile, cf. Jeremiah's views
anticipate: how Ezekiel seems to provide the context for Priestly leadership
assignment due: prophetic conflict paper #2

class # 24 May 7:

read: Jeremiah from 1-20; poetry and images; Matthews ch. 11;
focus: miscellaneous literary richness
anticipate: opportunity to finish your twelve named methods

class # 25 May 11:

read: Jeremiah on the last days: from 37-45; 52; and from 30-33; Matthews ch. 11;
focus: reading the ending events; note on restoration;
anticipate: opportunity to finish your twelve named methods

class # 26-28: May 14, 18, 21:

read: reports on our contemporary “prophets”
focus: as described in assignments
anticipate: present/participate effectively
assignment due: a single-sheet, front and back, helping you with your presentation

reader (in “course” order)

●**For occasional use:**

Green, Barbara. “This Old Text: An Analogy for Biblical Interpretation.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36 (2006): 72-83.

Green, Barbara. “Tools for Biblical Interpretation, Neatly Shelved.” Unpublished

●**Class #1**

Coote, Robert B. and Mary P. Coote. *Power, Politics, and the Making of the Bible. An Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990. Pp. 12-66.

●**Class #2**

Green, Barbara. *Mindful*. Amazon/Booksurge: 2008: 20-43.

Chaney, Marvin L. “Joshua.” In Anderson, B.W. Ed. *The Books of the Bible*: New York: Scribner’s: 1989: 103-112.

Greenstein, Edward L. “The Riddle of Samson.” *Prooftexts* 1 (1981): 237-260.

●**Class #3**

Green, Barbara. “Sensing the Silent (1 Samuel 24-26). In *King Saul’s Asking*. Colleagueville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003: 91-104.

Bodner, Keith. “Nathan: Prophet, Politician, and Playwright.” In *David Observed: A King in the Eyes of his Court*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005:67-76.

●**Class #4**

Bodner, Keith. "Solomon's Succession and Jacob's Knavery: Connections between Genesis 27 and 1 Kings 1." In *David Observed: A King in the Eyes of his Court*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005: 140-52.

●**Class #5**

Hens-Piazza, Gina. *1-2 Kings*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006: 130-38.

●**Class #6**

Walsh, Jerome T. *1 Kings*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996: 284-9, 316-341.

●**Class #7**

Walsh, Jerome T. *1 Kings*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996: 284-9, 316-341.342-360.

●**Class #8**

Cohn, Robert L. *2 Kings*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000: 35-42, 91-5.

●**Class #9**

Brueggemann, Walter. "Stereotype and Nuance: The Dynasty of Jehu." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70.1 (2008): 16-28.

White, Marsha C. *The Elijah Legends and Jehu's Coup*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997: 45-76.

●**Class #10-11**

Premnath, Devadasan. "'Amos, Book of.'" In *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 1. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006: 135-41.

●**Class #12**

Green, Barbara. "Locating Biblical Jonah Historically." In *Jonah's Journeys*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005: 33-51.

●**Class #13**

Chaney, Marvin L. "Bitter Bounty: The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth-Century Prophets." In Robert L. Stivers, ed. *Reformed Faith and Economics*. Lanham, MD. University Press of America, 1989. 15-30.

Keefe, Alice A. *Woman's Body and the Social Body in Hosea*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001: 9-35.

●**Class #16**

Van Rensburg, Hanre Janse. "The Attack on Judah in Sennacherib's Third Campaign: An Ideological Study of the Various Texts." *Old Testament Essays* 17.4 (2004): 560-79.

●**Class #18**

Sweeney, Marvin. "Micah's Debate with Isaiah." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 93 (2001): 111-24.

●**Class #21**

Grabbe, Lester L. "Introduction." In *Good Kings and Bad Kings*. New York and London: T&T Clark, 2005: 3-10.

Ben-Dov, Jonathan. "Writing as Oracle and as Law: New Contexts for the Book-Find of King Josiah." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127.2 (2008): 223-39.

