

OT 100W(H): INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Lancaster Theological Seminary

Term 3, 2020

Hybrid: face-to-face meetings 9-12 on Saturdays in Lark 206

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What does this course do?

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This course helps students critically and imaginatively engage the richness and the challenges of the literature known to Christians as the Old Testament, to Jews as the Tanak, and to interfaith and academic interpreters as the Hebrew Bible. It develops students' abilities to interpret individual passages and the collection as a whole in ways that take seriously at least four dimensions of interpreting the Old Testament:

- Its content
- Key scholarly conversations about its origins and character
- The diverse ways in which it is interpreted
- The ethical implications of interpretation

Pre-requisite for the course: BI100 (Interpreting the Bible) or permission of the instructor

EXPANDED DESCRIPTION

Christians (and non-Christians) have a lot of assumptions about the Old Testament—what they believe it says (“It predicts Jesus.” “It insists that modern Israel should be a Jewish-only state.” “It supports traditional marriage.”) and what character they believe it has (“It is violent.” “It is outdated.”). And yet few people actually have read the Old Testament carefully.

To address this reality, a key goal of this class is for students to spend time with the Old Testament—reading it for themselves, discussing what it means, and reflecting on its significance. We will “go wide,” considering most of the Old Testament rather than only a few books, and also “go deep,” reading selected passages carefully.

The “content” of the Old Testament, however, cannot be separated from its interpretation. “What it says” is shaped by who reads and for what purpose. Therefore, this class also pays attention to the dynamics of our reading, considering the roles that our religious traditions and own social locations play in our interpretation.

In this 10-week session, we won't be able to read all of the Old Testament or discuss all of the important issues of its interpretation. An additional goal of the class, then, is to prepare students for further study in the Old Testament.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to

1. Demonstrate familiarity with each section of the Christian Old Testament (Pentateuch, Historical Books, Poetic Books, and Prophets), including its contents and the scholarly issues engaged in its study.
2. Demonstrate the ability to interpret a passage of scripture using select skills of critical biblical scholarship and synthesize the results into a coherent and compelling interpretation.
3. Engage in constructive conversation about interpretive issues related to the Old Testament in ways that are informed by close attention to the text itself, the concerns of the canonical section, select skills of critical biblical scholarship, and the interpretations of others.

PRIMARY COURSE CONTRIBUTION TO MDIV CURRICULUM

MDiv Curriculum Goal 1: To encounter and engage theological disciplines in order to contribute to contemporary modes of thinking and community building.

This course helps students reflect on the distinctive contribution that the Old Testament can make to lives of faith and service.

ENGAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY

We engage diversity in class discussion, readings, and assignments. Our readings in the *Theological Bible Commentary* includes writers of diverse genders, ethnicities, and theologies. The *Africana Bible* foregrounds the perspectives of voices from Africa and the African Diaspora. The interpretative essay requires students to engage readers from various social locations. Fitting to our subject, our course considers Jewish perspectives on the Hebrew Bible as well as those of diverse Christians.

What are the logistics of this course?

COURSE DESIGN AND STUDENT COMMITMENT

This course is “hybrid,” which means that it integrates online learning with face-to-face classroom interaction. We meet face-to-face for three hours each weekend, where we process our learning and learn from one another. Between face-to-face meetings, students complete reading, engage in activities in the seminary’s online learning platform (Moodle), and conduct independent research. Students should expect to spend approximately 7 hours each week on work between class meetings.

In the spirit of the Inclusive and Expansive Language Statement found in the *Student Handbook*, you are expected to use inclusive language for human beings. I encourage (but do not require) you use inclusive language for God as well—even and perhaps especially if you find it uncomfortable. If you need help in learning to write inclusively, let me know.

GRADING

This course is offered for letter grade. Students wishing to take the course pass/fail may do so by completing necessary paperwork with the Registrar's office before the end of the drop period.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

The terms in the Lancaster seminary MDiv program are short, and our time together is limited. Students are expected to all attend all sessions of the course, and to attend each session fully. Missing more than one face-to-face session may jeopardize your ability to complete the coursework. Missing more than two face-to-face sessions will result in a failure of the course. Habitual lateness is problematic as well.

If our class session is cancelled by the seminary for weather or other reasons, we will meet at the normal time via Zoom (instructions found on Moodle).

WRITING STANDARDS

All written work should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* and should be double-spaced with standard margins. Use formal citation style, including a Works Cited page. Consult the Lancaster Theological Seminary *Student Handbook* for details.

Breaches of the seminary's standards of Academic Honesty will be treated according to the *Student Handbook*, section 9. At a minimum, plagiarism on an assignment will result in failure of that assignment; it may further result in failure of the course as well as other disciplinary action.

FOR HELP

- I'm available to help. Contact me to make an appointment. I regularly check email and my office voicemail. Contact information is at the top of the first page.
- The seminary offers many types of support—with technology, with writing, with resources. You can find various links on the main Moodle page that is associated with your seminary account. You can find a link to get to Moodle on the seminary's website by clicking on MyLTS-for Students.
- If you have formal accommodations from our Educational Specialist, you are responsible for initiating these accommodations by setting up a meeting with the professor before or within the first week of classes to discuss how these accommodations will be implemented in the course.

What resources will we use?

REQUIRED

We will use these resources every week:

- Coogan, Michael D. et al., ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha, Fifth Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. **Please bring to class each time.** (When I'm referring to the explanatory material, I'll abbreviate **NOAB5**; when I'm referring to the biblical text, I'll abbreviate **NRSV**.)
- Collins, John J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Third Edition. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2018. **(Collins)**
- O'Day, Gail and David Petersen, ed. *Theological Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. **(TBC)**
- Page, Hugh R. Jr., ed. *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2009. **(AB)**

OTHER RESOURCES

- Other documents found under the Resources tab on our Moodle site. **(Resources)**
- Occasional other readings as indicated in syllabus.

WHAT ARE THE ASSIGNMENTS?

WEEKLY READING, MOODLE ACTIVITIES, AND CLASS PARTICIPATION 30% of grade

Most weeks, students will engage in an activity on Moodle; sometimes it may be an open-book quiz to help you with your reading, while sometimes it may be a discussion forum in response to a prompt provided by the instructor. These activities are connected to your reading. My recommendation is that you read Collins first for an overview and some historical background, then the biblical passages assigned, then the other readings for further reflection.

For discussion forums, students will also read the posts of peers and formulate at least 2 responses. Prompts for online discussions are found each week on Moodle. **Activities/posts are due by Thursday at 8am; with discussion posts, 2 replies are due by Friday at 8 am.**

THREE REFLECTIVE ESSAYS. 40% of grade

To demonstrate their understanding of the diverse parts of the Christian Old Testament, students will write *two* short reflective essays comparing sections of the canon. These essays/projects are not research projects but instead demonstrate how you are integrating and reflecting on your reading and our class discussion. At the instructor's discretion, the goals of this essay might be met in an alternative format.

The third required essay synthesizes the student's learning from the course. This written assignment will be submitted as an artifact for the seminary's self-assessment process. *Instructions are given in Attachment A: Reflective Essays.*

INTERPRETATIVE ESSAY. 30% of grade

In this written assignment, students integrate their study of an Old Testament passage into a persuasive argument. In preparation, students are expected to study the passage carefully using particular methods of study and engage the interpretative issues addressed in class and in our reading. At an in-person (or Zoom) consultation with the professor, the student will make a research update. It is the student's responsibility to schedule this meeting and it must be completed by **March 28**. See Attachment B: Interpretative Essay

SUBMITTING WORK

Essays should be uploaded to Moodle, using this pattern for names of files.

Reflective Essay 1 OT100WH_Sp2020_your firstinitiallastname_reflection 1

Interpretative Essay OT100WH_Sp2020_your firstinitiallastname_interpretation

NOTE: It is your responsibility to make sure that the file uploads. If the professor indicates that the file is not visible, you are expected to email the paper immediately. Late assignments will be penalized a half letter grade per day late. Consult with me in case of emergencies. But don't be late or absent to class because of your paper.

OT100W(H) Tentative Course Schedule

between the dates: homework to complete between class sessions

with the date: the topic for class session

Week 1	Feb 22 Class 9:00-12:00	Building community; Preparing for the work ahead Overview of the Pentateuch
	Feb 23-28 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: TBC, "Genesis" (pp. 3-25) • Read: Collins, ch. 5 (pp. 67-77) • Read: Exodus 1-6; 11; 13-17 • Read: AB, "Exodus" (pp. 80-88) • Locate your timeline from BI100 and put it with your OT100 materials. We'll be consulting it in class frequently. • Pick your passage for the Interpretative Essay and start work!

Week 2	Feb 29 Class 9:00-12:00	Narratives of the Pentateuch: Genesis and Exodus	
	Mar 1-6 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, chs. 6 (pp. 79-89) • Read: Exodus 19-23 • Read: TBC, pp. 33-35 (up to "A second") • Read: Collins, ch. 7 (pp. 91-102) • Read: "Concepts of Purity in the Bible," Oxford Biblical Studies Online (available through library databases) http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/book/obso-9780195297515/obso-9780195297515-chapter-56. • Read: Leviticus 1-4; 11-12; 15; 18-20 	
Week 3	Mar 7 Class 9:00-12:00	Laws of the Pentateuch: Exodus, Leviticus	
	Mar 8-13 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, ch. 8 (pp. 103-113) • Read: Deuteronomy 1, 4, 6; 18; 27-28; 34 • Read: Collins, pp. 117-150 • Read: TBC, Introduction to "Joshua" (pp. 77-82) • Read: Joshua 1, 6-8; Judges 1-3; 1 Samuel 8-10; 15 	
Week 4	Mar 14 Class 9:00-12:00	Laws of the Pentateuch: Deuteronomy	Deuteronomistic History: Before the monarchy
	Mar 15-20 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, pp. 150-154 + chs. 12-13 (pp. 155-179) + 187-193 • Read: AB, pp. 127-129 • Read: Jacob Wright, "A Nation Conceived in Defeat," on Moodle. • Read: 2 Kings 22-25 <p>Make an appointment with the professor to make a research update on your Interpretative Essay.</p>	
Week 5	Mar 21 Class 9:00-12:00	Deuteronomistic History 2; the rise and fall of the monarchy	

	Mar 22-27 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, "Prophets, Introduction" + ch. 15 (pp. 197-213) • Read: AB, "Hosea" (pp. 164-168) • Read: TBC, "Amos" (pp. 267-269) • Read: Amos; Hosea 1-4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, ch. 16 (pp. 215-226) • Read: Introduction to Isaiah, NOAB5 (pp. 977-979) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Isaiah 1-11; 2 Kings 16 <p>Reflective Essay 1 due March 24, 3 pm</p>	
Week 6	Mar 28 Class 9:00-12:00	Pre-exilic Prophets	
	Mar 29-Apr 3 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, chs. 19-20 (255-284) • Read: Isaiah 40-55; 52-53 • Read: "Isaiah's Suffering Servant" found in Moodle 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, p. 287 + ch. 21 (pp. 289-299) • Read: TBC, "Ezra and Nehemiah" (pp. 155-164) • Read: Nehemiah, chs. 1-2; 7-9 • Read: NOAB5, "Introduction to Chronicles," (pp. 583-585) 	
Week 7	Apr 4 Class 9:00-12:00	Prophecy after the exile	History after the exile
Holy Week Break			
	Apr 13-17 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, ch. 23 (313-326) • Read: Psalm 1; 13; 22; 44; 79; 84; 136; 137; 145; 147 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, pp. 327-337 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Introductions to "Proverbs" and "Song of Songs" (pp. 191-192; 205-206) • Read: Proverbs 8-12; Song of Solomon 1-4 	
Week 8	Apr 18 Class 9:00-12:00	Psalms; Wisdom 1	Interpretative Essay due April 21, 3 pm

	Apr 19-24 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, ch. 25 (pp. 339-350) • Read: TBC, "Job" (pp. 167-176) • Read: Job 1-3; 14; 38; 42 • Read: AB, "Ecclesiastes" (pp. 260-265) • Read: Ecclesiastes 1-4
Week 9	Apr 25 Class 9:00-12:00	Wisdom 2
	Apr 26-May 1 Independent work & online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Collins, ch 27 (pp. 361-376) • Read: Daniel 1-2, 7, 10-12; 1 Maccabees 1-4 • Read: Collins, ch. 28 (pp. 377-387) + ch. 29 (389-393) <p>Reflective Essay 2 due Apr 28, 3 pm</p>
Week 10	May 2 Class 9:00-12:00	Apocalyptic and apocrypha
		Reflective Essay due 3: May 5, 3 pm

ATTACHMENT A: REFLECTIVE ESSAYS ON SECTIONS OF THE CANON

Students will write **three 550-750 word essays** comparing sections of the Christian Old Testament. In these essays, students demonstrate their (1) understanding of our readings and class discussions about these sections of the canon; (2) ability to apply that understanding to the question or prompt provided; and (3) their ability to use biblical passages or books as an example of their thesis.

These are **not research papers** but invite the student to formulate their own independent conclusions about issues raised in the reading and/or class discussion. The essay should advance a clear thesis and reflect a good understanding of course materials. References to material in our readings (including NOAB5) should use formal citation style.

If you would like to propose an alternative format for this assignment (for example, a video presentation), please meet with the instructor at least 1 week prior to the due date to discuss expectations.

Reflective Essay 1: The Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History

Many scholars believe that both the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History were put into their final form during or after the Babylonian exile. In that way, their stories were not simple tales about Israel's past but rather stories intended to give those living after exile a sense of identity and purpose.

How do these two collections compare and contrast in their perspective(s) on what it means to be Israel? (Who is Israel? How does an Israelite behave? etc.). After giving some general thoughts, choose one book from the Pentateuch and one book from the Deuteronomistic history as a case study for your comparison. (hint: It won't be very helpful to compare Deuteronomy with the Deuteronomistic History, since their perspectives are so similar.)

Reflective Essay 2: Prophets and Wisdom Literature

Often, interpreters draw sharp contrasts between the prophetic books and wisdom literature on key issues such as how they portray God, how they suggest humans know God's will, and the purposes of human existence. After giving some general thoughts, choose one book from the Prophets and one book from the Wisdom literature as a case study for your comparison.

Reflective Essay 3: The Modern Value of the Old Testament

What distinctive contribution can the Old Testament make to lives of faith and service?
 What does this collection offer when read on its own terms rather than as background
 to or predictions of the New Testament?

Grading rubric for the Reflective Essays/Projects

Possible	
40	Reflects a good understanding of our readings and class discussion regarding the sections of the canon: which books they include; the genre(s); scholarly issues raised; theological dimensions
25	Makes a clear and engaging independent thesis and supports it with relevant arguments
25	Chooses relevant examples and explains how they relate to the thesis
10	Well written or presented and easy to follow; properly cited
100	

ATTACHMENT B: INTERPRETATIVE ESSAY

This essay is an extension of the interpretative work you engaged in BI100: Interpreting the Bible. As in BI100, students analyze a biblical passage for its internal structure, literary context, historical context, etc. (The Resource documents from BI100 have been included in our OT100 Resource folder for your review.) Since our reading and class discussion will deepen our knowledge of the Old Testament, we can advance our use of the skills in conversation with new insights.

In this class, however, we go beyond the step-by-step approach of BI100. After completing all of the skills, students synthesize the results into a coherent and compelling thesis. In the essay submitted, they advance this thesis and support it with their findings. If the work in BI100 was like a worksheet, the essay in OT100 is the paper you write integrating the conclusions of your worksheet; the skills are your base research, while the essay is the final product.

These instructions map out the movement you will take from research to the final essay:

Getting Started

1. Choose a passage of approximately 10-20 consecutive verses in any book of the Old Testament other than Genesis.
2. Before you engage the thoughts of others, record what you see in this passage. What do you think it means for modern people? What observations or questions do you have about it?
3. Review what you've learned about this section of the canon and/or book. If we haven't studied it yet, get yourself oriented by reading the Introduction to the book in NOAB5 and skim the Collins readings that will be assigned for your book. What are the issues that come up? What should you be look for as you work on your passage?

Research: Applying the skills of biblical interpretation

4. Conduct Structural and Literary Analysis. Define the pericope; determine the internal structure of the passage; and consider the placement of the pericope within the book as a whole (*Moodle Resource: Analyzing Structures*). Add to your notes any other literary features of the passage that you notice: what is said about characters, repeated words, particular aspects of the style of the passage, etc.

You should be able to make a case for the pericope and map the internal structure of the passage on your own. To consider the literary context, you'll need some knowledge of the organization of the book as a whole. To do so, you can look at the "packaging" of your book in NOAB5 and/or consult the outline of the book in a commentary. You'll want to find an outline that is grounded in the literary features of the book, not a topical/preaching outline.

When you look at any resource, it is essential that you take note of your resources, including page numbers. You will need to offer citations by page number when you write the final paper, so take the notes you need as you go along.

5. Study this passage in light of its (ancient) historical context: how might the passage have resonated in the time period(s) in which it was written?

To get started, consult our readings about this book and/or section of the canon to guide you to the relevant questions: for example, the Pentateuch invites a discussion of source materials and the Deuteronomistic History may have been put its final form in the exile.

While you can find some historical background of your book in our readings, you will not find enough to dig very deep. So, you need to find substantive resources. This isn't the place to rely on NOAB5, internet resources, or Bible dictionary. You need **commentaries** and/or in-depth historical articles.

Consult at least two commentaries (and/or articles). Use your knowledge of research skills from BI100 to guide you. (Moodle Resource: *Research Skills in Biblical Studies*).

6. Engage at least one reader whose social location differs from your own and/or the authors who have considered in your research so far. You may encounter this reader in your class readings, through research, or having a live conversation with someone. Be sure, though, that your choice brings a new voice into the conversation.
7. Reflect theologically on the results of your study. In light of what you have explored, what do you believe this passage suggests about the nature of God and/or human existence? What significance does that theological perspective have?

Pre-planning the paper

8. Formulate a thesis sentence that would (1) synthesize the conclusions you reached in each step; and (2) be clear and engaging. (You may find it helpful to consider how your thinking has changed since step 1.)
9. Determine the organization that will best to support your thesis with arguments drawn from your research.

Writing the final essay

10. Polish your work into an essay of 1500-1800 words. Formal citations, including page numbers, are essential.
11. Read it out loud to yourself. Does it make sense? Proofread!
12. Upload your interpretative essay to Moodle by the due date. Consult p. 4 of the syllabus for naming the file.

Grading rubric for interpretative essay

Possible	
15	Makes a clear and engaging thesis and supports it with relevant arguments
20	Reflects a good understanding of our readings, class discussion, and resources consulted
10	Paper is well organized, easy to understand, and cites materials properly
20	Demonstrates close attention to the details of the passage: makes a case for the pericope, discusses internal structure, considers literary context in the book (and, if relevant, in its larger collection)
20	Demonstrates clear engagement with the historical context of the passage, paying close attention to the historical dimensions of the book
15	Thoughtful consideration of perspective from a reader of a social location different from your own
100	