

OT 5000
Introduction to the Old Testament

Course Syllabus ~ Spring 2020 ~ Akron
Friday: 7:00pm-9:00pm ~ Saturday: 8:30am-4:30pm

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It is customary to blame secular science and anti-religious philosophy for the eclipse of religion in modern society. It would be more honest to blame religion for its own defeats. Religion declined not because it was refuted, but because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive, insipid. When faith is completely replaced by creed, worship by discipline, love by habit; when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past; when faith becomes an heirloom rather than a fountain; when religion speaks only in the name of authority rather than with the voice of compassion its message becomes meaningless.

(Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel)

*“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God,
“when I will send a famine on the land—
not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD.*

*They shall wander from sea to sea,
and from north to east;
they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD,
but they shall not find it.”
(Amos 8:11-12)*

Course Description

This course will survey the Biblical books of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, focusing especially on the historical context, structure, literary features, and message of each book as well as the thematic connections between the parts and the whole of the canon. *Four Credit Hours*

Catalogue Description for OT 5000

This course introduces the literature of the Old Testament, the history of Israel, critical issues of Old Testament formation, method in Old Testament study, and the theology of the Old Testament. This course meets the OT General Comprehensive requirement for MA students and the English Bible competency requirement for MDiv students, who must meet the SBCT requirement. Not for credit in the MA/NT or MA/OT programs. Elective credit in MDiv program. Auditors are not permitted in General Comp courses unless they have taken previous undergraduate course work in the subject or are not intending to complete the MA program.

Textbooks

1. An English Bible. We will read throughout the entire Old Testament. I recommend the following translations for the purposes of this course: NIV, NRSV, NJPS, NET, and ESV.
2. Arnold, Bill T. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2014. ISBN: 978-0521705479. Syllabus abbreviation: **IOT**
3. Strawn, Brent A. *The Old Testament is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. ISBN: 978-0801048883. Syllabus abbreviation: **OTD**

Performative Metrics

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|------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. Memorization Quizzes (4x) | ~ | 10% (2.5% each) |
| 2. Content Quizzes (5x) | ~ | 50% (10% each) |
| 3. Congregational Analysis | ~ | 20% |
| 4. Research Paper | ~ | 20% |

Course Objectives

Students should be able to articulate with clarity and some nuance:

1. the basic **message** of individual Old Testament books, how the books relate to each other, and the manner in which the books fit within the canon;
2. foundational **themes** that weave through the Old Testament;
3. relevant **critical issues** in the discipline of Old Testament studies;
4. the **historical contexts** that of the texts, including the way in which the Old Testament reflects the world of the ancient Near East;
5. the different genres in the Old Testament, their distinguishing features, and how their form impacts their potential meaning.

Preparing to Achieve the Objectives

We will work together to meet these objectives by *investing* ourselves wholly in the task of comprehending, internalizing, and applying the material. Taking ownership of the following processes should set students up well for success in class:

1. Diligent *preparation* marked by regular attendance and careful reading and memorization of assigned texts in advance of class
2. Active, deliberate, and respectful *engagement* in class discussion, as measured by generating questions and comments in class discussion and group work
3. Careful reflection on feedback provided for projects, examinations, and other assignments

Achievement of Objectives Breakdown

1. *Students are expected to attend all class sessions.*

2. *Regular and active participation* is the norm for all aspects of our classroom experience. Such deliberate engagement may influence borderline grades at the instructor's discretion.

3. In order to bridge the socio-cultural gap between the world of the Bible and the, at times, very different one in which we live, students will memorize four passages during the course of the semester. (You can choose what version you use.) Starting on the second weekend, each Friday evening class will begin with a memorization quiz on the passage assigned for that weekend, for which see the schedule below. Each quiz accounts for 2.5% of your total grade and constitutes one part of the content quiz.

4. The content quiz just mentioned will address material from the previous class, focusing especially on class lectures and discussions that builds on assigned readings. Students will write their quiz during the Friday evening class beginning the second weekend. A final content quiz will be completed outside of class after our final meeting and submitted electronically. Each exam accounts for 10% of the total course grade. (The instructor will supply students with an overarching study guide the class before each quiz.)

5. In tandem with **OTD**, students will construct a congregational analysis that comprises two parts:

- a. a 1000-word assessment of the student's own congregation with respect to the use of the Old Testament. This assessment should also include a reflection on how their assessment correlates with the demise of the Old Testament in ecclesial contexts, as demonstrated by **OTD**. (You will have the option to turn in a first draft covering this part during our second weekend.)
- b. a 500-word proposal for how to rectify this problem.

A finished analysis will be due at the start of the Saturday session on the second-to-last weekend of class. This project accounts for 20% of the total course grade.

6. Students will research and write a concisely constructed argument essay paper that engages a particular problem or theme in the Old Testament of interest to the student. (N.B. *Summary* papers are not sufficient.) Creativity is highly encouraged. The paper should be *double-spaced*, printed on front and back, written in 12-point font, include both footnotes as necessary, and finish with a full bibliography that conforms to a particular standard (e.g., MLA, APA, Chicago, or SBL). And each paper should span at least 1500 words. Each student *must* first obtain approval of her or his topic from the instructor. Note also that the instructor will be more than happy to help students generate ideas if they find this leg of the task a struggle. The instructor will also help students track down resources. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions before or after class, during breaks, or outside of class via email. Once a topic has obtained approval, please feel free to reach out with any questions or issues that surface during the course of your research. More details, including a rubric, will be shared as the class progresses. This paper is due by the beginning of the Saturday session on the final weekend of class. It accounts for 20% of the total course grade.

Grading Scale

A+	98-100	B+	88-89	C+	78-9	D+	68-69
A	94-97	B	84-87	C	74-77	D	64-67
A-	90-93	B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63

Late Work Policy

Late assignments are not customarily accepted, though students are encouraged to consult the instructor before the deadline of an assignment if they have extenuating circumstances (e.g., family emergency or illness).

Plagiarism

Taking the words or ideas of another and presenting them as your own without properly crediting the source is not tolerated. This includes intentional stealing and deception as well as inadequate citations. In either case it is a breach of ethics and academic integrity. Any student who breaks the standard of academic integrity by plagiarism will receive a zero (0%) on that particular paper or exam and will be reported to the Dean of Students. Further, this may result in failure of the course, expulsion from the institution, or revocation of a degree already granted by TIU. All students should carefully review the *Catalog*, *Student Guide*, *Academic Handbook*, and *Style and Format Guide* for further information.

Attendance

Students are required to attend each and every session throughout the entire course period. Due to the nature of Extension classes, attendance at all sessions is especially important with weekend courses. Missing even an hour of a weekend class means a significant portion of the required contact with the instructor and learning community has been lost. For this reason, students missing any portion (hours) of an Extension course can result in a grade reduction; missing more than one weekend class session will result in a grade reduction and possibly failing the course.

In the case of extreme emergency or unforeseen circumstances (family emergencies, death, etc.) the student should contact the instructor and secure the necessary permission to miss time in a class and make up the missed class time and assignments. Vacations, ministry responsibilities and travel plans are not considered emergencies and such requests will be denied. As the schedule for the Extension courses is set ahead of time, students should plan ahead to be sure they will be able to make it to all class sessions before they register. If the emergency necessitates a longer absence the student should contact the Dean of Students to request an extension of time, or in rare instances a withdrawal from the class without penalty.

Class Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Assignments Due</i>
Weekend One: January 3 rd -4 th		
Friday	Course introduction Syllabus overview Project overviews Getting to know one another, the course, and how to optimize the experience	
Saturday	The geo-political context of ancient Israel The historical context of ancient Israel The archaeology of ancient Israel The Old Testament canon The Old Testament as literature Ancient and Modern Interpreters of the OT	Reading: <i>IOT</i> chs. 1-4, 16 (pp. 1-66, 261-74)
Weekend Two: February 7 th -8 th		
Friday	Introduction to the Pentateuch Genesis Creation/Flood Stories in literary context <i>Noah</i> film analysis (if time)	Content Quiz #1 The nature of the Old Testament: canon, contexts, history, and versions Memorization #1 Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Saturday	Exodus Documentary Hypothesis Divine names Leviticus Tabernacle Priesthood & sacrifice Sabbath Numbers Deuteronomy Ancient Near Eastern treaties	Reading: <i>IOT</i> chs. 5-10 (pp. 67-166) <i>OTD</i> chs. 1-6 (pp.3-155) Congregational Analysis ~ Draft #1 (Part a only) ~ optional

Weekend Three: February 28 th -29 th		
Friday	Introduction to the Historical Books Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) Joshua Judges Ruth	Content Quiz #2 Pentateuch Memorization #2 Joshua 24:14-15
Saturday	Samuel Kings Chronicles Ezra-Nehemiah Esther	Reading: <i>IOT</i> chs. 11-15, 23 (pp. 167-260, 370-82)
Weekend Four: March 20 th -21 st		
Friday	Introduction to Wisdom Literature Hebrew Poetry Job Theodicy	Content Quiz #3 Historical Books Memorization #3 Psalm 95:1-5
Saturday	Psalms Classifying the Psalms The functions of the Psalter as hymnal Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	Reading: <i>IOT</i> chs. 17-18 (pp. 275-306) <i>OTD</i> chs. 7-9 (pp.159-242) Congregational Analysis Final draft (both parts) Research Project Topic approval
Weekend Five: May 8 th -9 th		
Friday	Introduction to Prophetic Literature Isaiah Isaiah's <i>servant songs</i> The 5 th gospel?	Content Quiz #4 Wisdom Literature Memorization Quiz #4 Isaiah 2:2-4
Saturday	Jeremiah The New Covenant Ezekiel The decline of prophecy Daniel Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature Prophecy and Apocalypticism The Twelve Prophets Messianism	Reading: <i>IOT</i> chs. 19-22, 24 (pp. 307-69, 383-90) Research Project Final Draft due
Saturday, May 16 th	Content Quiz #5 due via email no later than 11:59pm	