INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is to introduce the literature of the Old Testament and to clarify its origin and content. For the Christian student, there will be connections made to the life of Christian faith and discipleship today. For the non-Christian student, the course serves as a serious review, within the Liberal Arts, of the Hebrew Bible as an essential foundation to much in Western culture including art, religion, literature, law, history, music, ethics, and science. Due to limitations of time, the course will focus upon selected portions of, as well as limited topics about, the Old Testament. The student should not expect to “cover” the entire Old Testament—this is an “introduction to” and not a “survey of” the Old Testament. Thus, the professor will explain clearly in class the criterion he uses for his selection of subjects that will be covered.

Course Fulfillment of the C-N General Education Goals

I. Communicate Effectively = in class discussion & verbal dialogue; written papers.
II. Reason Logically = in professor’s modeling and in student’s class dialogue & papers.
IV. Personal & Social Responsibility = recognizing the biblical ethic in Western culture.
V. Breadth of Knowledge/Perspective = more understanding of ancient history / religion.

Course Values

* The text of the Bible is the authoritative guide to Christian faith.
* Reflecting, seeking, inquiring over the open Bible is a genuine act of Christian devotion.
* Each individual student is to be cherished & encouraged as a unique, self-directed learner.
* The classroom is a place for respectful exchange of sometimes differing ideas or theories.

Course Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course the student should be able to . . .

. . . appreciate the Christian Old Testament as the Hebrew Bible of the Jews.
. . . explain the various views of the inspiration of the Bible most commonly held today.
. . . demonstrate knowledge of the historical content of the Old Testament by identifying key moments in the biblical story of ancient Israel.
. . . distinguish key literary genres in the Old Testament (creation accounts, psalms, etc.) and interpret selected Old Testament passages in their historical and religious context.
. . . identify key critical “tools” and techniques used in the scholarly study of the Bible.
. . . read with understanding and insight a college-level textbook.
. . . take clear, complete, and accurate notes on the proceedings which take place within a college classroom session. No tape recording is permitted during class sessions.
. . . review textbook readings and class notes effectively and efficiently in order to take college-level sectional tests to the very best of one’s ability.

Special Needs

Any student with a special documented disability (learning, sight, hearing, mobility, etc.) which may affect class activities should contact Mr. David Humphrey in the Kathleen Manley Wellness Center, dial ext. 3268 [ or the desk
receptionist, ext. 3350], or dhumphrey@cn.edu. Students will need to provide appropriate documentation to Mr. Humphrey. The student should write a brief note to the professor by the end of the third class meeting.

Course Requirements

1. Textbooks:


   Other textbooks, readings or learning materials as assigned or required during the course.

2. Tests:
   a. Sectional Tests (300 total points possible).
      Sectional tests will be given at previously announced times. Material covered in classroom discussion and textbook reading will be the focus. **Sectional Tests must not be missed without prior permission—make-up tests are not automatic.**

   b. Final Examination (100 total points possible).
      A cumulative final examination over the assigned reading and classroom discussions will be given on the day scheduled during the exam period by the Registrar.

3. Reaction/Response Papers (possible points as assigned across the semester).
   Throughout the course, the student may be required by the professor to react in writing to certain course topics, ideas, facts, theories, readings, class discussion, lectures, etc. These reaction essays and/or analysis papers normally will be assigned a numerical grade. When such a paper is given a numerical grade, that number will be entered into the process of averaging the final course grade. The overall purpose of these reaction/response papers is not to provide “busywork,” but to foster the student’s personal connection to course topics and to apply those ideas to the student’s own life.

4. Class Attendance.
   Class attendance is expected and necessary for success. Tests should not be missed. The professor will construct a seating chart in order both to learn students personally and to check attendance daily at the beginning of class. Each student’s total absences are reported to the Registrar at the end of the semester along with the final course grade.

   The attendance policy of the School of Religion will be followed:
   Students are expected to attend all classes for which they are registered. When students must miss class, they are obligated to account for their absences to their instructors and arrange to obtain assignments for work missed. Students will be allowed to make up class work missed if the absence was caused by documented illness, death in the immediate family, or participation in college sponsored activities.

   If a student misses a class the number of times the class meets in two weeks during a semester, the student and the advisor, will receive notice. When a student misses a class more than the number of times the class meets in four weeks during a regular semester, he or she may be assigned a course grade of “F” after the “Final day to drop a
course with W” as published in the Semester Calendar.

Course Grading

The final course grade for the semester will be determined by averaging grades on all work submitted by the student for a grade (sectional tests, written response papers, final exam):

- Sectional Test I 100
- Sectional Test II 100
- Sectional Test III 100
- Reaction/Response papers {100 total points, maximum—maybe less than that}
- Final Examination 100 { Final Exam given at a time set by Registrar

500 divided by 5 = 100 % average

The grading scale for converting that numerical average to a letter grade will be:

- A = 100-95; B = 94-88; C = 87-76; D = 75-70; F = below 70.

Any changes in this scale will be to the advantage of the student.

The instructor reserves the right to use his discretion to adjust the course schedule, topics, required work, grading process, etc. as changing circumstances may dictate.

Course Sequence

Why Should We Bother With the Old Testament?
Yes, it is very old, foreign, and sometimes strange or difficult to understand.

- Phillip Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, pp. 17-26
- Tullock, 1-9, 394-397

Who Cares About the OT? Where Does the OT Hold Its Authority?
The OT is sacred writing in 3 major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam. These are known as “Abrahamic faiths” because they share the OT as foundation.

How Did We Get the Written OT We Have Today?
“The Old Testament As Scripture” [Handout]

- God’s role—define “revelation” . . . 2 types.
- Author/writer’s role—define “inspiration” . . . 2-3 theories.
- Community’s role—define “canonization” . . . 2-3 collections.

- NOAB, 2185-2189

Where Did the OT Events Happen?
What was the geographical context of the OT? { Tullock, chap 2; NOAB, 2234-2236

How Did Jesus of Nazareth Handle the OT?
What was His hermeneutical approach that shaped His ethics and mission?

“‘Every Jot And Tittle: ’ How Jesus Interpreted the OT” [Handout]

- (Matthew 5:17-48) { also, review the Philip Yancey essay
How Do Different People Interpret the OT Today?
What are some popular approaches to the OT—with their strengths & weaknesses?
{ optional reading: NOAB, 2204-2221

What Tools Do We Have To Study the OT Today?
What are some scholarly methods to study the OT, in its literary and historical context?
“Tools for Old Testament Study” [Handout]
{ Tullock, 9-22; NOAB, 2192-2197; 2221-2234

Why is History So Important in the OT Story?
How did God’s special revelation come in historical events of “salvation history?”

When Did the OT Events Happen?
What was the chronological sequence of major events that shaped the OT story?
“History Is At the Heart” [Handout]
What, exactly, is “history?”
What OT events are the main ones to remember? { Tullock, chapter 2

How Does the OT Story Begin? { Tullock, chapter 3
Genesis 1-11: Why so many arguments and debates over these chapters?
Patriarchal Narratives: “Mommy, where did I come from?”—identity question
Joseph Stories: How and why does this section fit into the Book of Genesis?

Who Was Moses and Why Should We Care? { Tullock, chapter 4
Exodus: What Happened? Which Way Did They Go? Where did they cross?
Sinai: Sinai Covenant and the Mosaic Law—why are they still so important?

What information is included in the books of the Pentateuch?
How did ancient Israel worship God (e.g., the sacrifices in Leviticus)?

Who Was Joshua and Why Did Israel Care? { Tullock, 106-116 (also 127-128)
Why do we call it the “Conquest of Canaan?”
What do we mean when we call it “holy war?”

Why Do We Call The Next Group of Leaders “The Judges?” { Tullock, 116-127

Who Did the “United Monarchy” of Israel Have as Its First Kings?
Samuel: What role(s) did he play in Israel’s history? { Tullock, 131-139
The United Monarchy: Why was each of these kings so important? . . .
Saul { Tullock, 138-150
David { Tullock, 143-165, 174
Solomon { Tullock, 165-175
Why So Many Kings Over the “Divided Monarchy?” \{ Tullock, chapters 8, 9, 10

Why Were There Prophets—And What Did They Have To Say?
What was the role of the prophet? \{ Tullock, 194-197

What Made the Babylonian Exile Such a Deep Crisis? \{ Tullock, 272-313

What Was the “Restoration?”
Who were Ezra and Nehemiah? \{ Tullock, 297, 314-328

Why Are There Two Versions of Israel’s History in the OT?
“The Deuteronomistic History” – what’s the point of these books? “The Chronicler’s History” – what’s the point of these books?

Why Are Some OT Books Called “Wisdom Literature?”
Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs \{ Tullock, 329-356, 364-365

How Did Israel Express Both Its Praise and Its Grief?
What are the different types of psalms?

What is “Apocalyptic Literature” and Why Should I Care?
Book of Daniel \{ Tullock, 367-380

How Do the Short Stories Fit Into the OT Story?
Ruth, Esther, and Jonah \{ Tullock, 380-388
What is the difference between “particularism” and “universalism?”

How Does the OT Set the Stage for the New Testament?
How was a covenant relationship between God and God’s chosen people continued? \{ Tullock, 390-399

Ask: “What Have I Learned In This Course?”
Course Wrap-up
“What’s New About the Old Testament?” [student Reaction/Response Paper]

Final Examination – cumulative test of knowledge gained over the entire course