



OTEN5300: Exploring the Old Testament
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Biblical Studies Division

Fall 2021

Tuesday/Thursday: 2:00 - 3:20 pm

Professor's Name: Archie W. England

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the literary, historical, and theological contents and contexts of the Old Testament. Significant interpretive issues are noted, major theological themes covered, and their relevance for Christian living addressed.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. The student will understand the canonical development and arrangement of the OT.
2. The student will identify significant OT themes, characters, nations, and historical events (and their relationship to the NT whenever appropriate).
3. The student will demonstrate the value of the background, setting, literary structure, and message of the OT books (authorship, date, content, and analysis).
4. The student will work with selected methods currently employed in the study of the OT and explain the implications of the various theories.

Course Teaching Methodologies

Students will be exposed to a high volume of Old Testament knowledge through lecture-based presentations of historical scholarship on ancient Israel, reception of the literary character of the Bible, and explorations of its theological implications. Class discussions concerning the relevance of various ways of studying the Bible upon the life of the church will help frame and integrate this knowledge. Bible reading and textbook reading will give students a base of textual knowledge from which to explore various ways of studying the Old Testament in depth. Students will gain facility in research through intense focus on the text of the Old Testament, reflective assessment of its impact on contemporary ethical conversations, analysis of critical approaches to the history of Israel, and engagement with hermeneutical theory and its positioning of the practice of historiography. Students will also collaborate towards understanding the world of the Old Testament by jointly researching and presenting their study of the peoples of the Ancient Near East.

Textbooks

Required Course Texts

1. Any recent English translation of the Bible
2. Hess, Richard S. *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.
3. Walton, John H. *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*. Zondervan Publishing, 1994. (CBOT)
4. Arnold, Bill T., and Brent A. Strawn. *The World Around the Old Testament: The People and Places of the Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016.
5. Provan, Iain W., V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman, III. *A Biblical History of Israel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003.

Course Requirements

1. Students are responsible for reading the assigned material for each class meeting (see course schedule for reading assignments), including reading through the Old Testament in any modern English translation, by following the weekly assignments. All students are expected to have read the texts according to the course schedule and to come to class on time and prepared to participate in discussion on the topic of the day.
2. Oral presentations will be given during the third week of class on the contents of Arnold and Strawn. This text will supplement the core course material with exposure to the world of the Ancient Near East in terms of its direct impact on the interpretation of the Old Testament.
3. Students will demonstrate mastery of the canonical text by submitting four worksheets during the semester. Each worksheet will consist of questions requiring sustained research, and should be submitted as an informal research paper. The research requirements of each worksheet will be specified. While informal, submissions should be neat (single-spaced 12 pt Times New Roman) and rigorously documented. These assignments are called worksheets rather than research papers because their focus is more on the uncovering and synthesis of information than on the manufacturing of an original thesis.

Evaluation of Grade

Preparation, Participation, Reading (Bible, Hess, and Walton):	10%
Oral Presentation (Arnold and Strawn):	10%
Worksheet 1: Biblical Narrative Analysis	20%
Worksheet 2: Biblical Ethics Analysis	20%
Worksheet 3, Part 1: Critical History Analysis	20%
Worksheet 3, Part 2: Hermeneutics and History Synthesis (Provan, Long, and Longman)	20%

Lateness policy

Please notify the professor and/or teaching assistant as soon as possible if you, your family, or your church suffer emergencies that require your absence or might otherwise delay your completion of the work.

Unpreparedness through lack of reading, missed attendance, and consistent late arrival will significantly impact your participation grade. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course. Excessive lateness or absence will trigger automatic failure of the course in accordance with seminary policy.

In case of school closure due to hurricanes, the professor may modify of the course schedule or revise the course requirements. The first and second worksheets are designed so that they can be accomplished without access to research resources if weather emergencies require. If hurricane activity causes excessive closures, lecture material will be supplemented via BlueJeans.

Late assignment submissions will be accepted, but will have a maximum score of 60%. No submissions will be accepted once the semester ends according to the posted time of the final exam.

Extra credit is available through early submission of part or all of the final project and/or through submission of a book review, as detailed in the instructions for the final project.

Ricky's rubric for evaluating papers

	Substance (40%)	Research (30%)	Composition (20%)	Presentation (10%)
A	<p>Presentation of original concepts with subtlety and depth in conversation with major sources</p> <p>Strong, complete arguments with clear connection to data</p> <p>Research question relevant to the nature of the text, the needs of the church, and the norms of the academy</p> <p>Discovery, use, and presentation of significant quantity of high-quality data</p>	<p>Thorough representation of the field</p> <p>Meaningful use of sources</p> <p>Responsible interaction with sources</p> <p>Transparent acknowledgment of sources</p>	<p>Compelling, readable prose</p> <p>Unique, confident authorial voice establishing rapport with reader</p> <p>Serious style but not stuffy</p> <p>Very well-ordered thinking and wording</p>	<p>Clean text without distractions</p>
B	<p>Promising but inconsistent/incomplete arguments</p> <p>Competent conceptual development</p>	<p>Serviceable representation of the field</p> <p>Ambiguous acknowledgment of sources</p>	<p>Serviceable presentation of research</p>	<p>Minor errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or formatting</p>
C	<p>Failure to connect arguments with data</p> <p>Ambiguous concepts</p> <p>Inaccurate data</p> <p>Relevance is obscure</p>	<p>Shallow representation of the field, or reliant on small subset of sources</p> <p>Ambiguous acknowledgment of sources</p>	<p>Inconsistent language sometimes obscuring content or degrading research credibility</p>	<p>Frequent errors obscuring content</p>
D	<p>Derivative arguments</p> <p>Obscure concepts</p> <p>Grossly inaccurate data</p> <p>Research is off-topic or irrelevant</p>	<p>Inaccurate representation of the field</p> <p>Irresponsible or insignificant handling of sources</p>	<p>Damaged language obscuring content and degrading research credibility</p>	<p>Pervasive errors obscuring content</p>
F	<p>No effort evident</p>	<p>No effort evident</p>	<p>No effort evident</p>	<p>No effort evident</p>

Assignment instructions

Oral presentation (week 3)

Students will give oral presentations on the contents of each chapter in Arnold and Strawn. Participants may be grouped into research teams depending on the number of students enrolled.

These reports should demonstrate how you are critically thinking through the reading, picking up on the big ideas, and reflecting on how such thoughts might impact the ministry of the local church. The bulk of the content will come from Arnold and Strawn, but additional scholarly interaction is highly welcome.

Structurally, presentations should include:

1. A 10-slide (minimum) slideshow documenting the characteristics, history, religious practices, and biblical interactions with the people group (see below for content specifics)
2. A printed fact sheet to hand out, summarizing pertinent data about the people group being reported on
3. 10-15 prepared multiple-choice-style exam questions
4. 5-10 questions to present for discussion concerning the relevance of the people group to understanding the history of Israel and their potential theological significance in biblical perspective
5. A bibliography of scholarly resources

Examples of the kind of content that should be included in each presentation include:

1. Present significant historical, archaeological, geographical, literary, linguistic, and anthropological data concerning the population and culture in question
2. Account for every reference to this group in the Old Testament
3. Where was this people group in relation to Israel?
4. What kind of interactions took place between them and Israel?
5. Assess the significance of the people group's religion in the history of Israel
6. Investigate their gods and cults
7. What is the apparent theological significance of this people and their relation to Israel?

Instructions for this project will be specified in the first week of class.

Worksheets

The rest of the work in this class will take the form of three worksheets that build on the textbook readings but require extensive reading and research beyond the textbooks.

Each worksheet consists of several questions, of which a specific number per worksheet must be chosen and answered. Each worksheet should be between 3,000 and 4,000 words in single-spaced 12 pt Times New Roman. Worksheet 3 includes opportunities to earn extra credit through book reviews.

Resources

Technical assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. BlackboardHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Blackboard Learning Management System NOBTS.Blackboard.com.
3. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Help for writing papers at “The Write Stuff”

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer.

Policy

Attendance: See current Graduate catalog. Should the professor be delayed, students are requested to wait fifteen minutes before leaving. Class is then dismissed unless otherwise directed.

Citizenship/conduct: Class participation or lack thereof directly affects the final grade for this course. Proper behavior and attire are expected at all times in the classroom. Open food and drinks are not permitted.

Completion of all assignments: Students must complete and submit all assignments during the semester (i.e., before the posted time of the final exam) in order to receive a passing grade for this course. Because the reading and writing assignments are essential preparation for class discussion, students should not presume that late work will be accepted without severe impact on grades. Communication is essential. Quickly notify the professor and teaching assistant of accidents, illness, or unavoidable church/family-related delays.

Library: Students should be conscientious of other classmates when researching for the worksheets. In the event of classes moving to a BlueJeans virtual classroom, we will discuss an alternative research approach for the third worksheet.

Phones and laptops: Conversations and texting are not allowed during class time. Phones must not make noise and should not be answered except for emergencies. Playing, surfing, answering calls, or texting can result in expulsion (with absence) from that class day. This behavior impacts attendance and participation grades. Repeated offenses can lead to permanent expulsion from class. The use of computers in the classroom is a privilege. Computers should be used to take notes or gain access to pertinent material for lectures. Using technology for surfing social media, news, games, email, etc. may result in reprimand, expulsion for the day (counted as an absence), loss of privilege for using technology for the remainder of the semester, or even dismissal from the class (for belligerent repeat offenders).

Plagiarism: Students are given the task of writing reports and answering worksheet questions in order to help them learn how to think critically about the ideas of others and to present the result of their analysis in a readable form. Plagiarism defeats these purposes by cheating the student out of an opportunity to grow. Plagiarism is a failure to distinguish between the work of the student and the work of others, either intentionally or unintentionally. Students who plagiarize will be reported to the dean of students and a grade of “F” will be assigned. Self-plagiarism (reuse of assignments submitted in other courses) is not acceptable.

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Questions: For questions concerning these policies, please visit the professor at HSC 210.

Course Schedule

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment Due
1	8/17	Syllabus, the Ancient Near East, and Critical Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus 	
	8/19	Genesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis • Hess 1-54 • CBOT 12-13, 18, 60-61, 76-79, 80-82, 90-93, 96-98, 100-101 	
2	8/24	Exodus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exodus • Hess 55-78 • CBOT 21, 62-65, 71-73, 84-85, 99, 102-113 	
	8/26	Leviticus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leviticus • Hess 79-101 • CBOT 19-23, 37 	
3	8/31	The Ancient Near East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnold and Strawn, chapters 1-7 	Oral presentations
	9/2	The Ancient Near East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnold and Strawn, chapters 8-13 	Oral presentations
4	9/7	Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers • Hess 102-122 	
	9/9	Deuteronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deuteronomy • Hess 123-153 • CBOT 24-25, 38, 71-73, 79, 83-84, 86-87 	
5	9/14	Joshua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joshua • Hess 161-193 • CBOT 37-38, 83 	
	9/16	Judges and Ruth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judges • Ruth • Hess 194-274 • CBOT 26, 39, 104, 111 	<i>Optional:</i> Submit draft of worksheet 1 for feedback

Course Schedule

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment Due
6	9/21	Samuel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 Samuel • Hess 275-316 • CBOT 40-46 	
	9/23	Kings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 Kings • Hess 275-316 • CBOT 27-34, 40-46 	
7	9/28	Wisdom Literature, Poetry, and Job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalms • Job • Hess 393-451 • CBOT 47-51 	
	9/30	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proverbs • Ecclesiastes • Song of Songs • Lamentations • Hess 452-493, 561-567 	Worksheet 1
	10/5	Fall Break		
	10/7			
8	10/12	8th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosea • Amos • Hess 513-598 • CBOT 46, 52-56, 67, 74 	
	10/14	8th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaiah • Hess 599-646 • CBOT 58, 65-66 	
9	10/19	8th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonah • Micah 	
	10/21	7th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nahum • Habakuk • Zephaniah • Hess 656-682 • CBOT 68-69 	Worksheet 2

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment Due
10	10/26	7th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeremiah • Hess 540-560 • CBOT 69 	
	10/28	7th Century Prophets		
11	11/2	6th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezekiel • Hess 568-584, 611-617, 631-636 	
	11/4	6th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obadiah • Joel 	
12	11/9	5th Century Prophets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haggai • Zechariah • Malachi • Hess 683-710 • CBOT 58-70 	
	11/11	5th Century Prophets		<i>Optional:</i> Submit worksheet 3 (part 1 or 2 or both) as early final submission for extra credit OR as draft for feedback
13	11/16	Day of the Lord		
	11/18	Messianic Expectations		
	11/23	Thanksgiving Break (no class)		
	11/25			
14	11/30	Post-Exilic Writing and Ezra/Nehemiah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esther • Ezra • Nehemiah • Hess 348-391 • CBOT 27, 35-36, 75, 107-118 	
	12/2	Chronicles, Millennial Studies, and Daniel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel • Chronicles • Hess 317-347, 585-598 • CBOT 57, 75, 105-106 • Provan, Long, and Longman 	Worksheet 3

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Worksheet 1

Worksheet 1 is a biblical analysis requiring close reading of the Bible without reference to scholarship. This is your own analysis of narrative elements of the Old Testament.

Choose ONE of the following questions to answer in 1,500 to 2,000 words.

1. Read Genesis 12-25 closely. Account for every test Abraham faces and analyze whether he succeeded or failed in each one. Signify whether and how he honored God in each scenario.
2. Compare the life of David in the Former Prophets, the Psalter, and later references in the Old Testament. Follow this pattern for your research:
 - a. Compose a presentation of the life of David from the Former Prophets.
 - b. Gather and arrange material on his life from the Psalms.
 - c. Identify and arrange data from the remainder of the Old Testament.
 - d. Compare and contrast the picture of David composed by these sources, both in their total impression of him and in their accounts of the details of his life.

Choose ONE of the following questions to answer in 1,500 to 2,000 words.

3. Choose ONE of the following macro-level themes and research its role throughout the Old Testament. You will need to think carefully through the many complex aspects and impacts of whichever theme you choose and trace its expression, explicit and implicit, throughout the various biblical genres and time periods.
 - a. creation
 - b. salvation (redemption, deliverance, rescue)
 - c. covenant
 - d. kingdom
4. Investigate the social function of the sacrificial system. Specifically, address the observance of the sabbath in light of narrative portrayals of festival observance. Where in the Old Testament is sabbath actually portrayed as being observed?

Worksheet 2

Answer both of the following questions in 1,500 to 2,000 words EACH. Much of your research should be done within the Bible, but some scholarly research beyond the Bible is necessary to frame your answers adequately and to orient your thinking.

1. How is the Old Testament oriented towards questions of justice? Think through all dimensions of the word “justice.” Tabulate every location in the Pentateuch (whether law, narrative, or poetry) that addresses in some way the problem of verbally, relationally, economically, sexually, or physically abusive behavior.
2. How does the Pentateuch present the role of women in society? Discuss the different social roles for girls, women, wives, servants, etc., mentioned in the Pentateuch. How do the law codes in the Pentateuch speak to present-day questions about the roles of men and women in the church? Develop a biblical-theological rationale for how you relate these passages to the Christian community. Discuss also how they relate to the New Testament.

Worksheet 3, Part 1

The first part of this final project is a research project requiring extensive investigation in reference works. Choose TWO of the following questions to investigate. Present the results of your research in 1,500 to 2,000 words EACH. Document your research rigorously as you would in a formal research paper.

1. Who were the Israelites and where did they come from?

Be sure to consult, as a starting point, the following articles, in addition to Old Testament introductions listed in the bibliography of the syllabus:

- Niels Peter Lemche, "Israel, History of (Premonarchic Period)," Anchor Bible Dictionary, 3:526-45.
- William Dever, "Israel, History of (Archaeology and the 'Conquest')," Anchor Bible Dictionary, 3:545ff.
- R. J. D. Knauth, "Israelites," Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, 452-58.
- Philip Davies, "What Separates a Minimalist from a Maximalist? Not Much." Biblical Archaeology Review (2000): 24-27, 72.

2. How does Genesis 1-11 relate to Genesis 12-50? Should these two sections be understood separately?

3. Discuss the authorship of the Pentateuch. Include arguments for one author (traditional authorship), the fragmentary hypothesis, supplementary hypothesis, and documentary hypothesis.

Consult the following as a starting point:

- T. Desmond Alexander, "Authorship of the Pentateuch," Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch, 61-72
- John Van Seters, "The Pentateuch," in The Hebrew Bible Today
- See articles on the "Yahwist Source," "Elohistic Source," "Priestly Source," and the "Deuteronomy Source" in the Anchor Bible Dictionary
- Old Testament introductions listed in the bibliography of the syllabus

4. To what extent should the church adhere to the laws in the Old Testament?

Worksheet 3, Part 2

Part 2 is an interactive response to *A Biblical History of Israel* by Provan, Long, and Longman, in which you will be answering the following question from a variety of specific angles: Is the history communicated by the Old Testament *real*? Interact substantively with *A Biblical History of Israel* to explain what you believe to be the historical, theological, and apologetic/evangelistic relevance of this question in light of the following specifications. choose TWO of the following to answer in 1,500 to 2,000 words EACH.

1. Is historical narrative the same as history? Should historical narrative be understood instead as a species of literature? Or is it something else altogether? Address the nature of Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles, and the Former Prophets.
2. How should apparent contradictions in the Old Testament be handled?
 - a. How should differences between the first and second chapters of Genesis be understood?
 - b. Characterize the relationship between Chronicles and the Former Prophets, and answer the question: Who killed Goliath?
3. Discuss the accuracy/reliability of the Old Testament in light of the transition of focus from tabernacle to temple. Is there a contradiction involved here? Have multiple perspectives been partially integrated? What do you think is going on?
4. What can the appearance of tension between the priests and the prophets tell us about the dynamics at work in Israelite history, and specifically in the development of the biblical canon?
5. Characterize the historical nature of the Old Testament in light of the Documentary Hypothesis and its after-effects in the twentieth century.
6. In what ways has the weight of tradition conditioned our reading of the Old Testament as Christian theology (if at all)? Has this tradition diminished the credibility or reliability of the Old Testament in the face of changing modern scientific conjectures/conclusions?
7. Interact with C. S. Lewis's essay "Is Theology Poetry?" by showing how Lewis deals with the roles of literal and metaphorical language in theology. Make an argument for whether or not his approach applies as well to the language of the Bible. How can history really be known in the tensions between literal testimony and poetry, fact and metaphor, data and narrative?
8. If poetry is handled as theology, is its historical and literary nature damaged or erased? Can ancient, inspired, canonical poetry be read as *both* history *and* theology without degrading either of these dimensions?

Extra credit opportunity: Submit a substantive, critical review of one of the following in 1,500-2,000 words:

- John Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah*
- Brent Strawn, *The Old Testament Is Dying*