

## STUDYING THE HEBREW BIBLE

**[Institution]**

**[Semester]**

**[Class Times and Location]**

**[Instructor's name, contact information, and office hours]**

### **Course goals**

This course is an introduction to the contents of the Hebrew Bible (also called the Old Testament in the Protestant Bible; Tanak in Judaism), and to the historical conditions that gave rise to and shaped these writings, as these are understood by contemporary scholarship. Our goals include your familiarity with:

- selected aspects of the ancient Near Eastern context;
- the general contents of the Hebrew Bible, including its organization, distinct genres, story lines, and prominent characters, themes, and episodes;
- scholarly perspectives on ancient Israel's formation and history, and the way that history shaped these writings; and
- different interpretive stances among different communities today.

### **Course resources**

#### **Required texts:**

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 4th ed. (New Revised Standard Version; Oxford University Press); or *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Jewish Publication Society translation; Oxford University Press)

John Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Fortress Press)

Please consult the course website regularly **[insert URL]**.

### **Course requirements**

- Complete readings from the Bible and from Collins as assigned in the Course Schedule
- Come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and discussion questions
- Complete the questions for each chapter read from the online Test Bank and submit these electronically to the instructor
- Complete quizzes as assigned
- **[insert other requirements]**

## Course Schedule

Week	Read in Collins	In the Bible	Focus questions for discussion
1	Introduction and chap. 1	[sample passages for discussion?]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you characterize your previous experience with the Bible? How has your understanding of the Bible changed (if it has)? How does your understanding of the Bible up until now compare with the approach Collins describes?</li> </ul>
2	Chaps. 2–4	Genesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What makes the Genesis creation story (Genesis 1–2) distinctive in the ancient Near East environment?</li> <li>In Genesis 22, what does the text tell you about the significance of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his own child?</li> </ul>
3	Chaps. 5, 6	Exodus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Exodus 1–3, how many different motives can you identify on the part of YHWH (the LORD)?</li> <li>What is the significance of the absence in Egyptian records of any mention of the Exodus?</li> </ul>
4	Chaps. 7, 8	Leviticus, Deuteronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which parts of Leviticus seem most relevant to contemporary life? How do different communities today understand Leviticus?</li> <li>If Deuteronomy was written centuries after Moses, what is the point of ending the Torah with his death?</li> </ul>
5	Chaps. 9, 10	Joshua, Judges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What motives are attributed to YHWH (the Lord) in Joshua? How do you understand the violence attributed to, or called for by YHWH?</li> <li>What is the significance of an archaeological record that doesn’t bear out the conquest narrative as narrated in Joshua?</li> </ul>
6	Chaps.	1 and 2 Samuel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What made David such an attractive</li> </ul>

	11, 12		<p>character as Israel's "greatest king"?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the significance of his fall?</li> </ul>
7	chaps. 13, 14	1 and 2 Kings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do these books want us to think about kings? about prophets? Why?</li> <li>• What does 1 Kings 22 want to convey about prophecy in Israel?</li> <li>• What might "prophecy" look like today, based on what you've read?</li> </ul>
8	chaps. 15, 16	Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is Amos in trouble? What does God think of religion, according to Amos?</li> <li>• Why (in Isaiah 6) does God want the people NOT to understand?</li> </ul>
9	chaps. 17, 18	Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is Jeremiah in the minority—and how did he get into the Bible?</li> <li>• What, according to chap. 20, is prophecy like?</li> </ul>
10	chaps. 19, 20	Isaiah 40-66; Haggai, Zechariah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do scholars distinguish "Second Isaiah" from Isaiah of Jerusalem? Do you find the arguments convincing?</li> <li>• Read the "Suffering Servant" passages identified in the textbook. What clues do you find to the Servant's identity?</li> </ul>
11	chaps. 21, 22	Ezra, Nehemiah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the innovations accomplished during the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah?</li> <li>• What do these innovations have to do with Jewish history?</li> </ul>
12	chaps. 23, 24	Psalms 1, 2, 22, 48, 72, 96, 100, 137; Proverbs 1-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two well-known Psalms are 22 and 23; 22, because it plays a part in the later Christian Gospels. Read on its own terms, what is Psalm 22 about; what does it "do"?</li> <li>• Why is "Wisdom" portrayed as a female character in Proverbs 8 and 9?</li> </ul>
13	chaps. 25, 26	Job; Ecclesiastes; Ruth; Jonah; Esther	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do Job and Ecclesiastes offer different views of the meaning of human life or of suffering?</li> <li>• What would you identify as the main</li> </ul>

			theme of the story of Ruth? Of Jonah? Of Esther?
14	chaps. 27, 28	Daniel; 1 Maccabees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What lessons might Jews living in a foreign land take from Daniel?</li> <li>• From Esther (read last week)?</li> <li>• From 1 Maccabees?</li> </ul>
15	chap. 29		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion: What do you make of the Hebrew Bible? How do you understand its contents or purpose differently at the end of the course?</li> </ul>