

Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) RELG 301 / HIST 492

Dr. John Mandsager

Course Description:

Modern study of the Hebrew Bible from historical, literary, and archeological points of view. Reading and analysis of texts in translation.

Course Overview:

The Hebrew Bible is a cornerstone of Western culture, literature, and religion. For more than two thousand years, the Hebrew Bible – from its stories to laws, hymns to prophecies – has served as religious, artistic, and psychological inspiration for multitudes. This course will offer the opportunity to experience, contextualize, critique, and enjoy the Hebrew Bible in its diversity.

This course will immerse you in the diverse literary worlds of the Hebrew Bible, emphasizing how rich the multiple voices contained within the various biblical texts can be.

This is an academic and not devotional course, and as we read and learn together we will be guided by the assumption that the Hebrew Bible contains different works composed in different historical contexts from a multiplicity of viewpoints.

Office Hours:

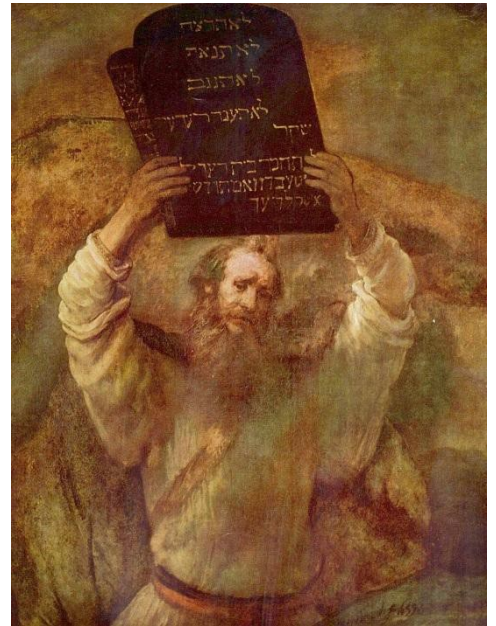
Tuesday 1-3, Thursday 3-5, or by appointment; Welsh Humanities Office

Building 223 mandsage@mailbox.sc.edu (650) 533-3022

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester, a successful student will:

- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of the content, contexts, and histories of the Hebrew Bible.
- Demonstrate understanding of the rich and varied voices, genres, and viewpoints found throughout the Hebrew Bible.
- Be able to critically analyze the Hebrew Bible from a variety of



historical contexts, using literary, historical, and extra-biblical evidence.

- Be able to critically assess the *arguments* contained within the Hebrew Bible – how the various biblical texts claim authority over behavior, culture, history, and religious belief and practice.
- Be able to address various scholarly methods for studying the Hebrew Bible in its ancient and modern contexts.

Preparation:

You must complete the readings before class, bring copies of the readings to class, and be ready to discuss what you’ve read!

Course Texts:

You will need an English translation of the Bible. For this course, please obtain the Jewish Publication Society translation: *The Jewish Bible: Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (ISBN-10: 0827603665) will be available in the Bookstore.

All other required readings will be on Blackboard under “Course Documents.”

Students might be interested in purchasing the following:

- Michael D. Coogan, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in its Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Coogan’s *Introduction* might be helpful in keeping up with the class materials, but is by no means crucial. I have placed a copy of this textbook on **Reserve** at the Thomas Cooper Library – it is listed under RELG301. And, I have a copy in my office – feel free to come by during office hours to take a look.

Grade breakdown: Participation: 20%, Quizzes: 10%, Midterm: 30%, Final 40%

Grading scale: 90-100=A; 86-89=B+; 80-85=B; 76-79=C+; 70-75=C; 66-69=D+; 60- 65=D; <59=F

	Topic	Prepare for Today:
	Welcome	What is the Hebrew Bible? What does it mean to study the Hebrew Bible?
Week 1	Creation and human origins	Genesis Chapters 1-4, 11
	Myths and contexts	Genesis Chapters 6-9 Excerpts from the <i>Enuma Elish</i> and from <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> (Blackboard reading 1)
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Sources for contextual reading of the Hebrew Bible</i> Read: Richard Friedman, “Who Wrote the Bible?” 15-32 (Blackboard reading 2)

Week 2	God and Abraham	Genesis Chapters 12-24
	Seniority and Struggle	Genesis Chapters 25-35
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>The Patriarchs and Israelite prehistory</i> Read: John J. Collins, "Chapter 4: The Patriarchs," 51-62 (Blackboard Reading 3)
Week 3	<i>Labor Day: No Classes</i>	
	Joseph	Genesis Chapters 37-48
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Literary reading of the Hebrew Bible</i> Read: Jonathan Kruschwitz, "The Type-Scene Connection between Genesis 38 and the Joseph Story" (Blackboard reading 4)
Week 4	From slavery to redemption	Exodus 1-15
	The giving of the law	Exodus 19-25, 31-34, Deuteronomy 4-5
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>From Egypt to Sinai</i> Read: Selections from the Passover Haggadah – feel free to read the whole worship service, but focus on pp. 6-16, which retells the story of the Exodus: "Passover Haggadah" (Blackboard reading 5).
Week 5	Communal law	Exodus 35-40, Leviticus 1-10
	Purity	Leviticus 11-18, 19-27
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Law codes and religious behavior</i> Read: Coogan, Chapter 8: "Law, Ritual, and Holiness," pp. 109-134 (Blackboard reading 6).
Week 6	The "Second Law"	Deuteronomy 1-28
	The Promise of Canaan	Numbers 33-36, Deuteronomy 29-34
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>The Deuteronomist</i> Read: Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy: The Present State of Inquiry," (Blackboard Reading 7)
Week 7	Conquering Canaan	Joshua 1-11, 13, 20, 23-24
	Leadership	Judges 2-5, 11, 13-16, 19
		Midterm

Week 8	"Give us a king!"	1 Samuel 1-3, 8-10, 15-18
	King David	2 Samuel 3-7, 11-12
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Archaeology and the search for King David</i> Read: Israel Finkelstein, "A Great United Monarchy? Archaeological and Historical Perspectives," (Blackboard reading 8)
Week 9	The threat of exile and religious reform	1 Kings 1-5, 11-12, 15-16; 2 Kings 17-25
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Josiah and the finding of the book of the Torah</i> Read: Richard Elliott Friedman, "In the Court of King Josiah" and "D," 101-135 (Blackboard reading 9)
	<i>Fall Break: No Classes</i>	
Week 10	What is a prophet?	Amos 1-5; Isaiah 1-14, 32-39
	"The man of the spirit is mad!"	Hosea 1-2, 9-10; Ezekiel 1-4, 16-17
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>The Prophet and the King</i> Read: Michael Walzer, "Prophets and their Audience," (Blackboard reading 10)
Week 11	Coming exile	Jeremiah 1-10, 21-22, 24-26
	The fear and hope of the prophet	Jeremiah 11-20, 23, 30-31, 51-52
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Prophecy and Torah</i> Read: J. Todd Hibbard, "True and False Prophecy: Jeremiah's Revision of Deuteronomy," (Blackboard reading 11)
Week 12	Poetry	Psalms 1-8, 22-23, 30, 38, 48, 52, 72, 90, 119
	Wisdom	Proverbs 1, 7, 10, 25-26, 31; Job 1-7, 38-42
	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>Poetry in the Hebrew Bible</i> Read: Robert Alter, "Forms of Faith in the Psalms," (Blackboard reading 12)
Week 13	Existential angst	Ecclesiastes
	Passion	Song of Songs

	<i>Discussion</i>	<i>The "wisdom" of Solomon and queer readings of the Hebrew Bible.</i> Read: Stephen D. Moore, "The Song of Songs in the History of Sexuality" (Blackboard reading 13)
Week 14	Conversion	Ruth, Esther
	Return from Babylon	Ezra 1, 3-7, 9-10:14, Nehemiah 1-2, 4-5, 8-9
	Retold history	2 Chronicles 22-36
Final exam		

Reminder: Each class session will consist of both a short lecture and a class discussion: each class will require you to think, raise your voice, and discuss material, either individually or in small groups. Plus, every Friday, the class will focus on a discussion of the main themes and ideas discussed during the week. Come to class with the assigned readings, take notes, look up terms, concepts, or biblical passages you are not familiar with, and ask questions. Share your findings in class! Your reading and interpretation of the assigned texts is *essential* for every class.

Classroom etiquette: Make sure to arrive on time, and turn off your cell phone. Cell phones must be out of sight and make no noise!

Attendance: I take attendance and will, as is USC policy, notify the *Student Success Center* after 2 absences. If you are unable to attend a class, make sure to inform me in advance, or as soon as possible. Unless I explicitly grant an exception for illness, family emergency or other extenuating circumstance, *students who miss 3 or more classes will*

lose 2 points per missed class from their final grades. Students will fail the class with more than 5 unexcused absences.

If you have special needs, make sure you are registered with the [Student Disability Services](#) office and notify me early on in the semester. I like to know what I can do to make this class a success for you. If you are an out-of-state student, have transferred, are a scholarship recipient, or think you need assistance, contact the [Student Success Center](#).

Academic Integrity: You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum penalty of your failing the assignment, and will result in additional disciplinary measures including referring you to the Office of Academic Integrity. Violations of the University's Honor Code include, but are not limited to improper citation of sources, using another student's work, and any other form of academic representation. Failure to uphold the University's Honor Code will result in a failing grade on the assignment and, depending on the severity of the case, fail the course, receive a note on your transcript, and have a serious chat with your Dean. Don't cheat: it's not worth it!

Assessments

- 1) **Quizzes (10%).** Seven times throughout the quarter, on dates that will *not* be announced in advance, the class will start with a five-minute quiz either on the readings for that class or on the previous class' main themes. The purpose of the quizzes is to make sure that both your attendance in the lectures and your preparation for the lectures is recognized and rewarded. The best five quizzes out of the seven will comprise 10% of your final grade (each quiz 2%). Please note that there is **no make-up** possibility for missed quizzes: you are given an opportunity to discount the quiz you missed by having two "extra" quizzes at your disposal.
- 2) **Participation (20%):** The success of this course's learning experience will depend on the active participation of each of you. Students will be called on to summarize and discuss the readings in class. Participation will be especially crucial on Fridays when class is more discussion oriented.
- 3) **Midterm (30%) and**
- 4) **Final (40%):** The exams will consist of biblical passages in accordance with central themes and ideas we studied in class. The exams will have three parts. In the first part, you will be tasked with answering 2-3 thematic questions; the second part will consist of short answer questions; and the final part will consist of questions about a one of the biblical passages we discussed in class.