

Rel 303 Jewish Scriptures/Old Testament

Spring 2022

2:00-3:15 Monday/Wednesday

Prof. Alice Keefe email: akeefe@uwsp.edu Office: 488C CCC

Office hours: Tuesdays 10:30-11:15, Wednesday, 1:00-1:45, Thursdays: 2-3,
and by appointment. You can request to meet with me via zoom.

Contact email: akeefe@uwsp.edu (There is also a messaging system on Canvas, but for best results in contacting me, use the university email system. I check that frequently during weekdays.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the literature of the Hebrew Bible (a.k.a. Jewish Scriptures, Tanakh, or Old Testament), with an emphasis upon the application of multiple disciplinary approaches in the work of interpretation.

In this course, we will study the Hebrew Bible as the literary creation of an ancient people, shaped in its composition by specific historical and sociological contexts. Our emphasis will be upon methods of interpretation, as is appropriate for an interdisciplinary studies class. We will see the meaning of any particular text is not fixed, and that any biblical text can be interpreted in multiple ways, depending upon the methodology used and the agenda of the interpreter.

No prior knowledge of the Bible or any religion is assumed or necessary for success in this class.

Important note: This is not a Bible study course such as one might find in a church or synagogue setting. The goal of a religiously-based Bible study course is to deepen faith by devotional reading and study of the Bible as revelation (i.e., the revealed word of God). The goal of an academic course such as this one is to explore the Bible in its dimension as a product of human experience, as a source for learning about the history of religion in the ancient world, and as a powerful shaper of culture in the world.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Knowledge

- Gain understanding of the content of the Hebrew Bible and the social and historical contexts that shaped its production.

Skills

- Ability to identify and apply multiple disciplinary approaches in the interpretation of biblical texts
- Practice and improve skills in reading comprehension, information literacy, critical thinking and writing

Dispositions

- Sensitivity to the multivalency of biblical texts

- Openness to dialoging with diverse interpretations of biblical texts
- Attentiveness to the agendas and approaches which shape interpretations of biblical texts

REQUIRED BOOKS AND MATERIALS

Jewish Study Bible (text rental)

Oxford Annotated Study Bible with the Apocrypha (text rental)

Michael Coogan, The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures (text rental)

Additional readings are posted on CANVAS

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

3 short essays	8 % each (=24%)
Research paper proposal	2 %
Research paper (5-8 pp.)	24 %
Oral report on research paper	2 %
Best 5 out of 6 quizzes	10 %
midterm test	15 %
final test	15 %
Class attendance & participation	8 %

EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

3 short essays (8% each): These short writing assignments will require you to explore various research media useful for biblical interpretation and will train you in the application of multiple methodologies in the work of interpretation.

Your short essays should

- Be grammatical and coherent.
- Be *typed* and double-spaced
- Be 300-500 words in length
- Address the prompt in a thorough and thoughtful manner
- Include citations using a uniform citation method (e.g., APA, Chicago, MLA)
- Be Handed in on date indicated on syllabus. Late essays will be docked 2 pts per class meeting late.

Midterm and final tests (15% each): The midterm and final tests will measure your mastery of the material covered in our assigned readings and class lectures. Tests will be timed, open book and taken on Canvas.

Late policy: Tests completed after due date will lose 3 points (out of a possible 100 points) per day late including weekends. Tests will close one week after due date.

Best 5 out of 6 Quizzes (10%): There will be six quizzes, each of which will cover material from the last quiz or test. I will count your best 5 out of 6 quizzes. These quizzes will help you keep up to date in the course and help you prepare for success on the exams. The quizzes will be timed, open book and administered on Canvas.

Late policy: Quizzes completed after due date will lose one point per day late (out of 10 possible points), including weekends. Quizzes will close one week after the due date.

Research paper proposal (2 %): Your proposal should contain:

- 1) a statement of which text(s) you will focus on,
- 2) what questions you will ask about this text, and
- 3) what methodologies will be used to address this question.
- 4) citations for at least three scholarly sources from a variety of research media (reference room resources, academic articles, commentaries and other books) which may prove relevant to your question. Use Chicago/Turabian or MLA citation style.

Graded on a 100 point scale. Late proposals lose one point per day late, including weekends. If your proposal is not satisfactory, you will be asked to redo it within one week. Your grade will be based on your final satisfactory proposal.

Research paper (24%): approximately 5-8 pages in length. Your research paper:

- should be based upon an approved research paper proposal
- must focus on a problem of interpretation concerning a specific text (or related group of texts) from the Hebrew Bible
- must include discussion of at least two distinct methodological approaches which lead to different interpretations of your focus text, or two different interpretations which emerge from using the same methodological approach.
- should be carefully thought out, leading from a question to a careful consideration of the problem of interpretation you are wrestling with, discussion of contrasting interpretations, and ending with a thoughtful conclusion where you offer your own interpretation based on the arguments and evidence presented in the body of the essay.
- should show evidence of solid research methodology, including use of reference room materials, books, and scholarly articles (located through using databases). You must use at least 5 sources (beyond assigned readings and not including the Bible itself) for your papers drawn from a variety of research media.
- Must include notes where appropriate (using parenthetical notation, endnotes or footnotes) and a reference list citing all sources using a uniform citation format. Use either Chicago (a.k.a. Turabian) or MLA style for your notes and reference list.

- Should be typed, double-spaced, and relatively free of grammar and spelling errors. Grammar and spelling errors will lower your grade significantly.
- Must be accompanied by an **oral report** concerning your research.

Oral Reports on your research paper (2%): In our last two weeks of class, each student will give an oral report to the class on their research into a biblical text.

Criteria for oral reports:

- Your presentation should be approximately 3-5 minutes long.
- Your presentation should clearly communicate your research and ideas to your audience, should be well organized and show evidence of careful preparation.
- The use of visual aids, such as having relevant scripture passages projected onto our board, are highly encouraged.
- The best presentations will conclude with a question for your audience to consider and respond to.

Attendance and participation (8%): You are expected to come to class consistently, having read the assigned material and thus able to participate fully.

Active participation will raise your grade in this category, and excessive absences will lower your grade. *Active participation includes three discussion posts.* Failure to complete discussion posts (on time) will lower your grade in this category.

The attendance grade showing on Canvas may not be your final grade in this category. To calculate your grade, I will begin with a baseline grade which is based on the number of unexcused absences, and then raise or lower that baseline grade depending upon your active participation in class and completion of discussion forums.

The baseline grade will be calculated as follows:

Excellent attendance: two or fewer unexcused absences = A in this category.

Good attendance: three to five unexcused absences = B in this category.

Poor attendance: six to eight unexcused absences = C in this category.

Even worse attendance: nine to ten unexcused absences = D in this category.

Failing attendance: eleven or more unexcused absences = specific failing grade calculated by following formula – $x*100/y$ in which x = number of unexcused absences and y = number of classes in which attendance was taken.

Excused absences:

An absence may be excused for reasons of illness, family emergency, Covid quarantine, military service call up, or a school or team related event; if you wish for an absence to be excused, you must send an email to Prof. Keefe *in advance of class* stating the reason for your absence.

If you miss class for any reason, be sure to complete all assignments for that day and review the lecture notes posted on Canvas.

Classroom Etiquette:

- Cell phones must be muted and put away. Please ask for special permission to have your phone on your desk in cases where it is urgent that you be available for a call.
- Laptop use in class is acceptable, though not recommended for taking notes. (Studies show most students learn more effectively by taking handwritten notes.) If you are using a laptop for taking notes, you must close all social media sites and other sources of distraction.
- Do your best to get to class on time. However, sometimes circumstances intervene, and it is OK to enter the classroom late. Please come up after class to get credit for attendance.
- When speaking in class about matters involving religion, be aware of the religious diversity within the class, and strive to ensure that your comments are respectful of difference and contribute to an atmosphere of civil discourse. Be careful to avoid generalizations about entire groups of people.

Plagiarism Policy I adhere to a strict policy on academic integrity. Any questions that you may have regarding academic integrity should be resolved before you turn your assignments in. The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university. For more information regarding the university policy on academic misconduct (plagiarism) and disciplinary procedures, please refer to the university home page for academic misconduct: [Student Conduct - Dean of Students | UWSP](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability Services Office and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way I can. For more information, please visit the Disability Services Office. You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.

Mandatory masking policy:

At all UW-Stevens Point campus locations, the wearing of face coverings is mandatory in all buildings, including classrooms, laboratories, studios, and other instructional spaces until further notice. Any student with a condition that impacts their use of a face covering should

contact the Disability and Assistive Technology Center to discuss accommodations in classes. Please note that unless everyone is wearing a face covering, in-person classes cannot take place. This is university policy and not up to the discretion of individual instructors. Failure to adhere to this requirement could result in formal withdrawal from the course.