

ALPS/MTH COURSE OF STUDY
Mar 31-Apr 1 & May 12-13, 2017
Hiwassee College

COS 221—Bible II, Torah and Israel's History
Instructor: Russell B. Sisson, Ph.D. (rsisson@unionky.edu)
Phone: 606-546-1321

Course Objectives

This course interprets the critical events, developing institutions, and traditions of Israel. Attention is given to the earliest covenants, the Exodus, the rise of the monarchy, and other events up to the eighth century prophets.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a historical overview of the experience and faith of ancient Israel.
2. Exegete selected passages that illustrate crucial turning points in the history of Israel.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

Required Texts

Coogan, Michael D. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN-13: 978-0199946617.

Earlier editions of the Coogan textbook may be used, but reading assignments refer to page numbers in the 3rd edition.

Fretheim, Terence E. *The Pentateuch: Interpreting Biblical Texts Series*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. ISBN-13: 978-0687008421.

Students should have the following textbooks from previous COS classes:

The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0687278329.

Students may use other versions of the Bible along with NISB, but not in place of it.

The New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010. ISBN-13: 9780687334117.

Powell, Mark Allan, ed. *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. New York: HarperOne, 2011.

Recommended Reference

Curtis, Adrian. *Oxford Bible Atlas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-0199560462.

Birch, Bruce C., Walter Brueggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament, 2nd edition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0687066766.

Requirements and Grading

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class sessions. Grades on four exegetical essays will determine a student's grade for the course. One paper is written and submitted before the first weekend session (pre-class paper assignments described below); a second and third essay are written after the first session and submitted at the second weekend session; the final essay is written after the second weekend session and submitted within one week following that session. Pre-class papers should be submitted in accordance with guidelines established by the ALPS/MHT office.

Pre-class Assignment 1

Readings: (1) Genesis; (2) Coogan, 3-22, 73-93; (3) Fretheim, 39-52, 67-100; (4) Birch *et al*, 29-92

Pre-class Paper: *The God of Creation and the Ancestors*

Terence Fretheim says that Gen 1-11 creates "a universal frame of reference" for reading the Pentateuch, which means the remainder of Genesis and the five books as a whole need to read in light of God's dealings with the human race prior to God's call of Abraham. (1) The traditions about God's dealings with the first humans recorded in Gen 1-11 reveal a God who acts to restore order when the order of creation is disrupted. Note and discuss the instances of disruption and restoration of order in Gen 1-11 and describes God's relationship to the human race before Abraham. (2) Genesis 12-50 recounts the trials and ordeals which Abraham and his descendants endure as God's chosen people. Note and discuss examples of how God's faithfulness to this chosen nation is revealed in the trials and ordeals they experience. How are the actions of non-Hebrews such as Melchizedek, Hagar, and Tamar (daughter-in-law of Judah) a part of the universal frame of reference established in Gen 1-11 for recounting the origin of the Hebrew people? (3) What lessons does Genesis offer to ancient Hebrews and to the church today about understanding the history of God's *chosen* people within the framework of God's redemption of all creation? Incorporate your answers to these questions in an essay on the topic, "The God of Creation and the Ancestors." Recommended length: 750-1000 words (3-4 pages double-spaced).

Assignment 2: Deliverance and Covenant

Readings: (1) Exodus; (2) Coogan, 94-145; (3) Fretheim, 101-120; (4) Birch *et al*, 93-172.

Topics for Class Discussion (Mar 31-Apr 1)

- Before God delivers the Hebrews from captivity in Egypt, five women perform saving acts. Who are these women and what is the significance of their deeds? Note how the Song of Miriam follows the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. How do the accounts of these women's deeds and words reflect the *inclusiveness* of the covenant community?
- How are commandments regarding worship and community life connected in the Sinai covenant? Answer in terms of the first ten commandments and the commandments which follow. How is the covenant relationship between God and the Hebrew a model for communities of faith today?

Assignment 3: Covenant and Conquest

Readings: (1) Leviticus-Deuteronomy (pay close attention to Lev 17-26 and Deut 4-18), Joshua, and Judges; (2) Coogan, 146-232; (3) Fretheim, 121-170; (4) Birch *et al*, 127-172 (review), 173-214; (5) articles on “Hexateuch,” “holiness,” and “idolatry” in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*.

Topics for Class Discussion (Mar 31-Apr 1)

- How does holiness apply both to worship and to community life beyond worship?
- Coogan discusses several ways of understanding Israel’s conquest of Canaan and the settlement of the land. What are they and which resonates with you and why?

Students will write essays on the topics of Assignments 2 & 3 following discussion of these topics at the first class session. These essays are due at the second class session.

Assignment 4: Rise of the Kingdom

Readings: (1) 1 & 2 Samuel; (2) Coogan, 235-289; (3) Birch *et al*, 215-288.

Topics for Class Discussion (May 12):

- What role did Samuel play in the life of Israel, particularly while Philistines occupied the land? What role did he play in the establishment of Saul as a king and during Saul's reign?
- Assess Saul as a religious leader. Was he a good choice as king and does he deserve Samuel's rejection?
- Through the prophet Nathan God made a covenant with David. What are the main provisions of this covenant? How does it compare to the covenant at Sinai?

Assignment 5: Divided Kingdoms

Readings: (1) 1 Kings & 2 Kings 1-2; (2) Coogan, 290-309; (3) Birch *et al*, 257-288.

Topics for Class Discussion (May 13)

- Summarize David's career as king and assess how faithful he was to the covenant. What were his successes and what were his failures? After the chaos following his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, where do we begin to see David again as “a man after God’s own heart”?

- Why was David not allowed to build the temple? Solomon completed the temple as God commands, but for all his strengths his reign ends in divine disfavor. Why? How do we reconcile this with his image as a wise ruler? What was the tradition of treaty marriage which led him have so many wives and be under their influence? Do you see a connection between God not allowing David to build the temple and Solomon's downfall after building it?
- What was the appeal of Baal worship and how did Ahab and Jezebul promote it? What was the response of the prophets?

Students will write an essay over the topics of Assignments 4 and 5 following the final class meeting.