

ALPS/MHT COURSE OF STUDY
March 2-3, 16-17, 2018
London, KY

COS 221—Bible II, Torah and Israel's History
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Course Objectives

This course interprets the critical events, developing institutions, and traditions of ancient 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. Two papers are written and submitted before the first weekend session (see pre-class assignments below); a third paper is 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/MTH office.

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 1

Terence Fretheim discusses how 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 be 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) related to 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 Israel's 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 (April 7-8)

- Before God delivers the Hebrews from captivity in Egypt, five women perform acts which set the stage of what is about to occur. 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 those regarding 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?

Students will write an essay over the topics of Assignment 2 *after the final class meeting*.

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*.

Pre-Class Paper 2

In the law codes of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, how does *holiness* apply both to worship and to community life beyond worship? How are holiness and idolatry prominent themes in Joshua’s speech to the Israelites at the great assembly at Shechem (Joshua 24)? How does Joshua, like Moses, stand at an important point of transition in the history of ancient Israel (see “Rhetoric of Entitlement and Extermination” in Birch *et al*, 196-205)? How does Joshua’s speech, like the Book of Joshua as a whole (see introduction in *NISB*), connect Israel’s past with its future? How do the judges who follow compare to Moses and Joshua? Give examples. How might religious leaders today identify with Joshua and the judges? Pick a judge with whom you identify: Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, or Samson (all four discussed in Coogan, 217-225)? Incorporate your answers to these questions in an essay on the topic, “Leading the Covenant People.” Recommended length: 750-1000 words (3 to 4 pages double-spaced).

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 (April 21)

- 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 (April 22)

- Summarize David's career as king and assess his faithfulness to the covenant. What are his successes and 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 ended 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 Jezebel 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.