

United Methodist Course of Study
Wesley Theological Seminary Satellite in Upper New York

COS 221—Bible II (2020) – October 17 – November 14, 2020 (Saturdays 10-noon)

Bible II – Torah and Israel’s History (*Hebrew Bible I*) - 2nd Year (*Foundational Course*)

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This course interprets the critical events, developing institutions, and traditions of Israel. Attention is given to the earliest Covenants, to the Exodus, to the rise of the monarchy, and to 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.

This course will provide an in-depth reading of biblical texts. We will examine historical context as well as traditional and contemporary interpretation with the goal of enabling students to work with biblical texts in a congregational setting for both educational and homiletic purposes as well as spiritual guidance.

Required Texts

Michael Coogan – (Required) *The Old Testament: A Historical And Literary Introduction* (Oxford, 2013, ISBN 0199946612)

Terrence Fretheim (Required)– *The Pentateuch* (Abingdon Press, 1996, ISBN 0687008425)

Oded Borowski *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (Society of Biblical Literature, 2003)

A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament (Reference)

Recommended - Reference Texts

Bruce C. Birch, Walter Bruggemann, Terence E. Fretheim, and David L. Petersen, editors - *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Abingdon Press, 2005; ISBN 068706676X)

Oxford Bible Atlas (Reference)

Bibleodyssey.org – short entries on biblical topics written by scholars in the Society of Biblical Literature.

Suggested - *Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition: Revised and Updated*, edited by Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Westminster John Knox Press, 2012) ISBN: 978-0664237073

*** Please have your study bible accessible for all classes

Bible II Syllabus

A note about class format:

I've been teaching in the Course of Study for several years now, always in the format of two weekends of Friday/Saturday sessions with several weeks in between. Since Fall 2020 will be online anyway, I'd like to take advantages of the opportunities provided by online teaching and put more of the interaction online, leaving shorter group zoom sessions to discuss the material that we're covering. I *could* schedule a full 20 hours of zoom sessions, but I suspect that would be as grueling for the students as it would be for me. There will be several short written assignments that I will ask you to post online. I will ask you to complete the assignments before the Saturday session for which they are assigned. Most will be shared in a discussion-board format so that you can discuss them online with your classmates. Our Saturday sessions will be spent in conversation – discussing questions from the preparatory work, highlighting themes, and discussing how to apply these materials in ministry.

The zoom sessions will be held on Saturday mornings from 10-noon on Oct. 17, 24, 31, and Nov. 7 and 14. The Zoom link will be posted on Blackboard. I am open to adjusting the timing slightly if the group agrees. If anyone has a schedule conflict with one of the sessions, please contact me ASAP so that we can discuss any possible options with the COS coordinators. If everyone in the class is willing, I will record the zoom sessions so that you can watch it again later.

Except for the required textbooks, all material will be available on the Wesley Seminary Blackboard site and all written work will be submitted there. I have reviewed this with the COS coordinators to account for the combined total of written assignments and for the equivalents between online discussions and class time, etc. I am open to feedback on the actual amount of time involved in preparing for Saturday sessions and am willing to make adjustments for later sessions.

I will indicate the expected length of entries for each assignment – since page formatting may disappear in Blackboard, I will usually count by word-length – i.e., half a page is approximately 150-200 words. The requested lengths add up to 20 pages for the whole course. You may write more if you wish, but you are not required to – please try to include sufficient detail from readings, while keeping your answers concise. For most of the assignments, unless otherwise indicated you will not need to do any outside reading apart from the required texts. You do not need to provide a full bibliography or footnotes for any citations, but please give parenthetical citations – for instance (Coogan, 23). Please complete these assignments before the start of the Saturday morning class.

For each Saturday session, the following material will be posted in Blackboard:

- Texts – Biblical books or chapters, along material in required books
- Q&A – submit questions about assignments and questions to for Zoom session
- Discussion Post – write a 150-word response to the posted prompt and reply to two of your classmates (75-100 words each)
- Video Response – watch a short video and respond to question (150-200 words)
- Resource – find a website or other resource that addresses content for that week, summarize what you found and discuss its reliability (key terms will be given as a starting point for the search) (150-200 words)
- Application – an outline of how you will use Biblical texts in ministry (150-200 words)
- Reflection – additional questions in preparation for class (500-600 words)

Bible II Syllabus

Schedule

- October 17 – 10-noon – Genesis (entire book) – and read appropriate chapters in Coogan and Fretheim, Chapters 1-2 in Borowski
- October 24 – 10-noon – Exodus (entire book) – and read appropriate chapters in Coogan and Fretheim, Chapters 3-4 in Borowski
- October 31 – 10-noon – Leviticus (entire book but focus on 11-26) – and read appropriate chapters in Coogan and Fretheim, Chapters 5-6 in Borowski
- November 7 – 10-noon – Joshua, Judges (entire books) – and read appropriate chapters in Coogan, Chapter 7 in Borowski
- November 14 – 10-noon – Samuel, Kings, Chronicles (selections) – and read appropriate chapters in Coogan

Assignments to be completed on Blackboard prior to Oct. 17 session

- 1) Discussion Post: (150 word response, plus 75-100 word replies to two classmates)
 - a. Go to <http://www.bigmyth.com> and watch some of the creation stories from the Ancient Near East (especially Bible, Greece, Egypt, Sumeria, Babylon)
 - b. What connections do you see in these stories? Similarities? Differences? What makes the Biblical story distinct? What is your gut reaction to finding connections between other ancient creation stories and the Bible?
- 2) Video Response: (150-200 words – in discussion– you may reply to others, not required)
 - a. Watch the first 30 minutes of <https://www.c-span.org/video/?317578-1/evolution-versus-creationism-debate> and comment on it: how does it reflect your views of the Bible, which speakers do you relate to most, which do you find convincing, how does it use the Biblical material and the scientific evidence?
- 3) Resource: (150-200 words)
 - a. find a website or other resource that addresses content for that week, summarize what you found and discuss its reliability. If you need something to search for, you may use these key terms as a starting point. (If any of these are unfamiliar, please look them up before class):
 - b. Baal, Canaan, canon, cosmology, El, Elohim, mythology, Tanakh, Tetragrammaton, Torah, Yahweh
- 4) Application: (150-200 words) (not shared with the group)
 - a. Give a brief outline and summary of how you might use part of this week’s Biblical texts in your ministry – it could be a Bible study, youth program, sermon, etc.
- 5) Reflection (500-600 words total) (not shared with the group) – Answer these questions:
 - a. Assumptions for Biblical Interpretation – What are your assumptions and priorities about how to interpret the Bible? Please read <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/theological-guidelines-scripture>. How does this fit with your own views?
 - b. What are the differences between the different canons (see the lists at the beginning of your bible and in the file to be shared on Blackboard) Why are these versions different? What difference is there in “Old Testament,” “Hebrew Bible,” etc?
 - c. What is the Documentary Hypothesis? What questions does it try to answer? What distinguishes the major sources (J, E, D, and P)? What are their respective dates? Do you find this hypothesis convincing?