

HEBREW BIBLE & THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The Old Testament is a collection of texts written long ago and far away. In this course, students will get “behind the scenes,” so to speak, by examining the cultural, linguistic, geographic, and social contexts of the Old Testament people. Familiarizing themselves with their ancient ways of thinking and living will ultimately furnish students with a fuller contextualized portrait of the ancient biblical people in their own world, leading to a richer understanding of their writing. Through this course, students will:

1. **Acquire.** The student will acquire knowledge in the essential cultural and historical background of the Old Testament [information literacy goal] (course lectures and readings). Program Goals: M.Div./MPS 1; MA 1; Nyack Core Goals 1a, 2a-c, 4a.
2. **Apply.** The student will apply critical methodology demonstrated in the course by interpreting Old Testament passages (discussion board posts and Methodology Essay). Program Goals: M.Div./MPS 1; MA 2-3; Nyack Core Goals 1a, 2c, 3a-b, 4a.
3. **Appreciate.** The student will appreciate a methodologically rigorous model of reading the Old Testament with its dynamic for transforming human life in the global Church and contemporary societies (course lectures and readings). Program Goals: MDiv/MPS 1, 3.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. Jonathan H. Greer, John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton, *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* (Baker Academic, 2018)
2. John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed., Baker Academic, 2018)
3. RECOMMENDED: *ESV Study Bible, Personal Size* (Crossway, 2012)
4. RECOMMENDED: Kate Turabian, *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (University of Chicago Press, 2018)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS

This **online** course will proceed **asynchronously** (no scheduled class attendance or class-wide video conference meetings required) on a Wednesday to Tuesday schedule. New lessons will post on Wednesday morning (9am) and any assignments or discussion board posts will be due the following Tuesday evening (11:59pm). All assignments must be turned into the appropriate Dropbox on e360. Late submissions will receive an automatic grade deduction, followed by a grade of 0% after two days.

Reasonable Accommodation: Any student eligible for and requesting academic accommodations due to a disability is required to provide a letter of accommodation from the Office of Disabilities Support Services within the first six weeks of the beginning of classes.

Assessments are as follows:

1. **Reading Log (10%):** Student must submit a one-page Reading Log to the appropriate Dropbox every week. It should include the following:
 - a. Approximately what percentage of the reading were you able to accomplish this week?
 - b. What was one thing you found particularly interesting (new, surprising, challenging, etc.) from the reading? No need to quote the text, but do include page references.
 - c. What was one question you have after completing the lesson and readings?
2. **Discussion Board Posts (20%):** Specific prompts will be given as part of the week's lesson and will count as the student's "participation" for the week. Posts should be 150-200 words unless otherwise specified. Students must post their own response in the appropriate FORUM, but **MUST ALSO** engage with the posts of **at least TWO** of their classmates. The instructor will moderate.
3. **Biblical "Scenes" Assignment (20%):** Choose **TWO** of the chapters from GHW section, "Scenes: Integrated Approaches to Event-Based Historical Contexts" (pp. 253-327). These chapters describe specific case studies of historical material that stand "behind the scenes" of the Old Testament texts.

After reading the chapters, answer the following questions in 2-3 pages (total for both):

1. What is the historical material presented in this chapter? Give a brief summary.
2. With what biblical text/passage does this historical material correspond?
3. How does the nonbiblical material describe this history?
4. How does the Bible describe this history?
5. How does understanding the history help you better understand the biblical text?

Due March 8, 11:59pm.

4. **Methodology Essay Topic Consultation (5%):** Students will "meet" one-on-one with the instructor via Zoom or phone call to discuss ideas for the final Methodology Essay. Student should come prepared with potential topics of interest. Topic will be decided in consultation with the instructor. Meetings will take place March 4-6. Scheduling will be done via Calendly.
5. **Methodology Essay Rough Draft (10%):** A 2-3 page rough draft of the final methodology essay, which should include a provisional thesis statement and a basic discussion of at least three works of scholarship. See below for further details. Due March 22, 11:59pm.
6. **Final Methodology Essay (35%):** A 6-8 page research paper on a topic to be decided in conversation with the instructor. See below for instructions and grading rubric. Due April 19, 11:59pm.

Plagiarism: In a Christian institution of higher education, academic integrity is particularly important. Every instance of cheating and plagiarizing will at least result in (1) the grade of "F" for the assignment and (2) a letter being sent to the Dean. The student is hereby warned, however, that plagiarism often results in stiffer penalties, as per the student handbook. I highly recommend that you acquaint yourself with what does and does not constitute plagiarism: <https://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism>.

Writing Center: All Nyack College students seeking assistance with pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing their written assignments are encouraged to use the resources available through the [Nyack College Writing Center](#), currently operating online via e-sessions.

Final Grades: Your final grade will be based on the following scale

93-100	A	78-79	C+
90-92	A	73-77	C
88-89	B+	70-72	C-
83-87	B	60-69	D
80-82	B-	< 60	F

COURSE CALENDAR

Week	Dates	Topic & Readings
1	Jan 19-25	<p>Overview, Orientation, and Introductions</p> <p>SUBMIT: Introduce yourself to the class via the WELCOME Forum! Post to the Discussion Board, Week 1.</p> <p>NOTE: Last day to Add/Drop is Wednesday, January 26.</p>
2	Jan 26-Feb 1	<p>Humanity</p> <p>NOTE: You should acquire the required textbooks <u>no later than this week</u>. Falling behind in the readings will negatively impact your success in this course.</p> <p>READ: Greer, Hilber, and Walton (henceforth GHW), pp. xvii-xix Walton, pp. 3-30 (skim), 173-187</p> <p>SUBMIT: Start of WEEKLY Reading Log Continue Discussion Board Posts/Responses</p>
3	Feb 2-8	<p>Geographies</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 5-36 Walton, pp. 131-170</p>
4	Feb 9-15	<p>Ancient Near Eastern Literature</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 91-148 Walton, pp. 33-44</p>
5	Feb 16-22	<p>Archeology and Iconography</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 39-87, 151-181</p>

6	Feb 23-Mar 1	<p>History, Part 1</p> <p>READ: Walton, pp. 189-211 (Read Walton first this week) GHW, pp. 187-216</p>
7	Mar 2-8	<p>History, Part 2</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 216-250</p> <p>SUBMIT: Biblical “Scenes” Assignment due March 8, 11:59pm.</p> <p>NOTE: Essay Topic Consultation meetings will take place March 4-6.</p>
8	Mar 9-15	<p>Spring Break (Mar 7-11) – No readings or assignments due March 15</p>
9	Mar 16-22	<p>Religion, Part 1</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 340-367 Walton, pp. 47-96</p> <p>SUBMIT: Methodology Essay Rough Draft due March 22, 11:59pm.</p>
10	Mar 23-29	<p>Religion, Part 2</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 368-380 Walton, pp. 97-127, 213-251</p>
11	Mar 30-Apr 5	<p>Death</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 381-387 Walton, pp. 293-312</p>
12	Apr 6-12	<p>Family</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 391-408 Walton, pp. 269-291</p>
13	Apr 13-19	<p>Social Organization</p> <p>READ: GHW, pp. 475-514 Walton, pp. 253-268</p> <p>SUBMIT: Final Methodology Essay due April 19, 11:59pm.</p>

14	Apr 20-26	Economy READ: GHW, pp. 411-472
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METHODOLOGY ESSAY

Choose a passage from the Old Testament (not a book, e.g. Ruth, but a contained pericope, e.g. the scene of Ruth and Boaz on the threshing floor, Ruth 3:1-18). How do the approaches we have covered in class (Geography, Religion, Economy, etc.) illuminate the meaning of the passage? In other words, what is happening “behind the scenes” of this passage? How does this influence its meaning?

This is a **research paper**. Essay must contain footnotes and a bibliography and **MUST BE** formatted in the Turabian/Chicago Style as per Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Information on this writing style can also be easily accessed online.

In addition to our course texts, students must consult *at least* five scholarly books and/or articles. Any questions on appropriate resources should be addressed to the instructor early in the research process.

Choosing a Topic

Students will choose a topic in conversation with the instructor. Individual student consultations (via Zoom or phone call) will take place March 4-6. The goal is to choose a topic that is neither too narrow nor too broad, but one that will provide the appropriate amount of material for a research paper of this length and expected depth. Please follow this link to schedule consultation:

<https://calendly.com/kayapigo-ats/ot504-essay-topic-consultation>

Following the topic consultation, students must submit a 2-3 page Rough Draft of the Methodology Essay, which should include a provisional thesis statement and a basic discussion of at least three works of scholarship. This is a draft, NOT an outline, and should thus be formatted as an essay.

Methodology Essay Rough Draft **due March 22, 11:59pm**.

Final Paper Submission: **April 19, 11:59pm**.

Formatting Specifications:

- A cover page with the title, your name, date, class, and name of professor
- Times New Roman font, 12-point type
- Double-spaced
- One-inch margins on all four sides
- Numbered pages (The cover page should not be numbered)
- Styled according to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (9th ed.) or *The Society of Biblical Literature’s Handbook of Style* (2nd ed.)
- Citations presented in footnotes, not in-text.
- A bibliography at the end of the paper.

Please address any questions or issues with formatting sooner rather than later. It is better to start with the correct formatting than have to fix it once the essay is written. This would be a great reason to consult with the [Nyack College Writing Center](#).

Performance/Grading Rubric: The items I assess in grading the essay are:

1. A CENTRAL THESIS around which the essay is built. The central theme should be concise, clearly stated and presented in the first paragraph of the essay. All key terms and the scope of the essay should be defined. (10 points)
2. A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK that will be used to analyze the data. Description of the method and its presuppositions should be summarized clearly and precisely. In this case, this refers to the historical context. What stands “behind the scenes” of the text? Your digest and its implications will tell me that you’ve understood the classroom methodology. (20 points)
3. PRESENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION of data. This is the main body of the essay. It should include as much data as needed to persuade me (points clearly organized, textual references cited, etc.). Note: A simple compilation of data is not an essay. The essay should not merely describe something. It is to be an analysis of the data encountered in the Old Testament text with an argument for a particular conclusion. Use current accepted style in documenting your sources and in presenting a final bibliography. (50 points)
4. Essay WRITTEN CREATIVELY and in a readable fashion. Include variety in style. Use TITLES, subtitles, and clear LOGIC. This formatting will save you from wandering around the topic. Reread your essay before submitting it. I will expect it to be clean and free of grammatical and typographical errors. (10 points)
5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS of these conclusions. Do not merely stop writing at some point (when you’ve satisfied the required number of pages?). Conclude your work appropriately. Avoid sweeping generalizations. Note questions that may remain unanswered. Rarely does an essay deal with a topic that can be completely or definitively answered within the space allowed for this essay. (10 points)

	A	B	C	D	F
Central Thesis (10 marks)	Stated clearly/creatively in meticulous detail (10)	Stated adequately in sufficient detail (8-9)	Stated partially in some detail (7)	Stated poorly without detail (5-6)	Missing or incomplete (0-4)
Theoretical Framework (20 marks)	Stated clearly/ Creatively in meticulous detail (19-20)	Stated adequately in sufficient detail (16-18)	Stated partially in some detail (14-15)	Stated poorly without detail (12-13)	Missing or incomplete (0-11)
Presentation and Documentation (50 marks)	Excellently organized Fully clear Supported and convincing (46-50)	Adequately organized Mostly clear Supported and convincing (40-45)	Partially organized Somewhat clear Supported and convincing (35-39)	Little or no organization Vague Little or no Support (30-34)	Missing or incomplete (0-29)
Creativity and Readability (10 marks)	Excellent Creativity Effective Style Logical and Helpful Headings Error Free (10)	Some Creativity Adequate Style Used Headings Occasional errors (8-9)	Little or no creativity Ineffective style Headings few or inappropriate Frequent errors (7)	Vague or erratic style No Headings Replete with Errors Incoherent (5-6)	Missing or incomplete (0-4)
Conclusions and Implications (10 marks)	Stated clearly/ Creatively Profound sense of the issues Visionary (10)	Stated adequately With command of the issues Appropriate prospects identified (8-9)	Stated partially Somewhat in command of the issues Prospects not well established or identified (7)	Stated poorly with poor command of the issues Prospects brief or unclear (5-6)	Missing or incomplete (0-4)