



BOSTON COLLEGE
BIBLICAL HERITAGE I: SYLLABUS
FALL 2017 (STOKES N401): TUES/THUR 3:00-4:15 PM
3 CREDITS



Image from the Babylonian Gate of Ishtar, Istanbul Archaeological Museum © Clint Burnett

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I. Course Description

The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) is fundamental for Judaism and Christianity (and to some extent Islam) and Jews and Christians consider it Scripture. The HB/OT, along with the New Testament (NT), is foundational for Western thought and has influenced modern conceptions of God, nature, human origins, the problem of evil, and the role and function of government. Therefore, the HB/OT has and continues to play a role in all our lives whether we realize it or not. This course introduces students to the books of the HB/OT, their historical and social contexts, including the ancient Near East, and various theological messages of the books.

II. Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to answer three questions about the HB/OT:

1) *What is the HB/OT?*

Students will know: the books of the HB/OT, languages in which they were written, their literary genres, historical circumstances surrounding their composition, and differences between the Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant Bibles

2) *Whence the HB/OT?*

Students will be able to: discuss origins of various texts, their authors, reasons the books were written, and how they were edited

3) *Whither the HB/OT?*

Students will be able to: understand how the HB/OT continues to inform modern theology, faith, and culture; discuss various interpretations of books of the HB/OT; and to reflect on contemporary social, cultural, and ethical issues with theological insights from Christianity

III. Textbooks

Primary Text: The Bible

M. Coogan et al., eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford, 2010)

Secondary Text:

John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014)

Supplementary Readings:

Besides the Bible and Collins, students will read short primary source texts from Michael Coogan, *A Reader of Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Sources for the Study of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) and *The Context of Scripture*, 3 vols., eds. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger (New York: Brill, 1996-2002) as well as concise (one to three pages) entries from *The Ancient Near East: An Encyclopedia for Students*, 3 vols., ed. Ronald Wallenfels (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2000). N.B. These will be posted on Canvas and provide the social context of the Bible. Students will print them out and bring them to the class on the day their reading is assigned

Suggested Text:

David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000)

IV. Core Requirements

THEO 001: Biblical Heritage I satisfies one of a two-semester core requirement in Theology. To receive credit for this core, students must complete this entire course, including THEO 002: Biblical Heritage II. Therefore, Biblical Heritage I and Introduction to Christian Theology II will not fulfill the core requirement.

V. Student Responsibilities

1) Come to class and participate. Students are required to attend every class they can and attendance will be taken: it is 25% of your grade (v.i.). Students are allowed three unexcused absences and there is no need to inform the instructor of the reasons surrounding these first three absences. Every other unexcused absence will result in the deduction of 2.5 percentage points of student's participation grade. Therefore, if a student has four unexcused absences, then the most he or she can earn for participation will be 90/100 points (i.e., 22.5/25 %). N.B. An excused absence is defined as a documented medical or family emergency, which must be turned into the instructor within one week of the absence in question. Students are required to make up any missed quiz within one week of being absent (v.i.).

2) Bring your Bible. The Bible is our primary text and will be read at every meeting.

3) Complete your assignments on time, including readings. Penalties will be enforced on late assignments. Five points will be deducted for every day that an assignment is late.

4) Laptops and cellphones are not permitted in class. If students have an emergency and need to have cellphones out in class, then let the instructor know before class.

5) Have academic integrity. Any dishonest act violates BC's academic integrity so don't cheat or plagiarize. BC defines cheating as the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work that includes, but is not limited to:

- use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
- fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, results, sources for papers or reports, or in clinical practice, as in reporting experiments, measurements, statistical analyses, tests, or other studies never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data;
- falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
- copying from another student's work;
- actions that destroy or alter the work of another student;
- unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
- the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
- submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
- dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

BC defines plagiarism as: "the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own." Student are responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged. For more information see BC's policies at:

<http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html>.

6) BC provides reasonable accommodations and integrated access for students with learning disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . .” If students have learning disabilities, then please inform the instructor by Sept 12 and provide the proper documentation from Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, dugganka@bc.edu, at the Connors Family Learning Center or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, paulette.durrett@bc.edu, in the Disability Services Office.

VI. Assignments and Grading

1) Class participation 25% (= 100 points)

Participation is defined as: filling out your introduction (Aug 31), coming to class having read all necessary assignments, contributing to class discussions, answering the instructor’s and other students’ questions, reading the Bible aloud in communal exegesis exercises that will occur at most class meetings, and working together in groups.

2) Quizzes 25% (= 100 points)

Typically, there will be a short quiz every Thursday (5 to 7 minutes) (totaling eleven for the semester) on material from primary sources—the Bible and ancient Near Eastern texts—as well as Collins. These are designed to ensure that students are reading course materials and not to “trip them up.” Students are required to take eight quizzes only (each worth 12.5 points, totaling 100 points). Therefore, students can miss three quizzes with no consequences. If students take all eleven quizzes, then they will count as extra credit. N.B. Questions from the final exam will be taken from quizzes.

3) Paper 25% (= 100 points)

The paper focuses on a research question about the Bible that students have developed in consultation with the instructor. This can be anything that interests the student such as: why does God receive Abel’s sacrifice, but not Cain’s? The student’s task is to define a question, read material from the Bible and other primary sources related to it, formulate an answer, and then articulate it in the form of a seven-page paper. This assignment will take place in two iterations. Students will turn in the first iteration on Oct 12 for 10% of their total grade (= 40 points). The instructor will grade these papers and return them promptly. Students will then revise and re-submit a second iteration of their paper on Nov 16 for the other 15% of their grade (= 60 points). N.B. Students will be graded on their progress from the first iteration of the paper to the second. Students will turn in papers through Canvas.

4) Final Exam 25% (= 100 points)

The final exam is closed book and will consist of short answer questions, identification of key biblical passages, and one essay question. N.B. Short answer questions and scripture identification will be taken directly from the weekly quizzes and students’ papers will serve as a foundation to answer the essay question.

5) Extra Credit

The instructor will provide the following opportunities for extra credit: attending select public lectures (for 10 points), memorizing selections from the Bible (10 verses for 10 points), and learning the Hebrew and Greek alphabets (for 10 points for each alphabet).

Grading Scale: A: 100-90 (= 400-360 points); B: 89-80 (= 359-320 points); C: 79-70 (= 319-280 points); D: 69-60 (= 279-240); F: 59-0 (= 239-0 points)

Disclaimer: This syllabus is like the law of the Medes and the Persians (see Dan 6:12). This means that the syllabus does not change. The instructor interprets it as a binding contract between himself and his students.

VII. Schedule and Readings

Date	Topic	Primary Reading	Secondary Reading	Assignment/Quiz due
Aug 29	Introduction	Syllabus		
Aug 31	HB/OT, its Criticism, and ANE		Collins 1-30	Introduction: Post to Canvas Quiz: HB, ANE, including Geography (students will have to identify the following empires on a map: Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Israel)
Sept 5	Creation 1	Gen 1-3; Enuma Elish; A Creation Myth of Ashur	Collins 31-47; Gender and Sex from ANE Encyclopedia	
Sept 7	Creation 2	Gen 1-3; Enuma Elish; A Creation Myth of Ashur	Collins 31-47	Quiz: Creation
Sept 12	Flood, Re-Creation, and Babel	Gen 4-11; Atrahasis; Sumerian King List	Collins 47-49; Gods and Goddesses from ANE Encyclopedia	
Sept 14	Abraham	Gen 12-22	Collins 51-59; Religion from ANE Encyclopedia	Quiz: Flood and Re-Creation
Sept 19	Jacob	Gen 25:19-32:32; 37:1-36	Collins 59-60; Rituals and Sacrifice from ANE Encyclopedia	

Sept 21	Joseph	Gen 39-50	Collins 60-62; Theology from ANE Encyclopedia	Quiz: The Patriarchs
Sept 26	Moses and the Beginning of the Exodus	Exod 1-7:13; Birth Legend of Sargon	Collins 63-68; Inscriptions from ANE Encyclopedia	
Sept 28	The Exodus	Exod 7:14-16:36	Collins 69-72	Quiz: Moses
Oct 3	Road to Sinai	Exod 19-24	Collins 73-76	
Oct 5	The Sinai Covenant	Exod 25, 32-34; Treaty Between Hattusili III of Hatti and Ramses II of Egypt; Vassal Treaty of Esar- Haddon	Collins 76-83	Quiz: The Exodus and Sinai
Oct 10	Priestly Theology	Lev 1-7, 16, 17- 26; Code of Hammurabi	Collins 85-95	
Oct 12	Deuteronomy	Deut 1-4:40; 6:1- 7:26; 27-34; Treaty Between Hattusili III of Hatti and Ramses II of Egypt; Vassal Treaty of Esar- Haddon	Collins 97-108	Paper: submit on Canvas by 11:59 PM
Oct 17	Deuteronomistic History (DH), Joshua, and Judges	Josh 1-12, 24; Judg 1:1-3:30; 21:25; Merneptah Stele; Mesha Stele; Amarna Letters	Collins 111-38; 329-332; Fortifications from ANE Encyclopedia	
Oct 19	Samuel and Saul	1 Sam 1-15	Collins 139-44; Kings ANE Encyclopedia	Quiz: Priestly Theology, Deuteronomy, DH, Joshua, and Judges, 1 Samuel
Oct 24	David and Royal Ideology	1 Sam 16-2 Sam 7; Psalms 2, 45, 110, 132; Coronation	Collins 144-54	

		Prayer		
Oct 26	David's Difficulties	2 Sam 8-24	Collins 154-57, 293-302	Quiz: David
Oct 31	Solomon and a Nation Divided	1 Kgs 1-16; Cylinder of Gudea; Tel Dan Stele	Collins 159-69; Palaces and Temples from ANE Encyclopedia	
Nov 2	Kings and Prophets	1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 14; Mari Letters; Disappearance of the Storm God	Collins 173-79	Quiz: Solomon, Kings, and Prophets
Nov 7	Assyrian Crisis and Israel's End	Amos; Hosea; 2 Kgs 15-17	Collins 179-202	
Nov 9	Assyrian Crisis and Judah	Isa 1-12; Mic 1-7; 2 Kgs 15-20; Sennacherib's Prism	Collins 203-12	Quiz: Assyrian Crisis
Nov 14	Babylonian Crisis 1	Jer 1-12	Collins 213-22	
Nov 16	Babylonian Crisis 2	Habakkuk		Revised Paper: Submit on Canvas by 11:59 PM
Nov 21	Fall of Jerusalem	2 Kgs 24-25; Lamentations; Lamentation of Ur	Collins 222-24	
Nov 28	Exile	Ps 137; Jer 31-33; Ezek 1-18	Collins 225-33	
Nov 30	Restoration	Isa 40-55; Ezek 33-39; Cyrus Cylinder	Collins 234-46; Monotheism from ANE Encyclopedia	Quiz: Babylonian Crisis, Exile, and Restoration
Dec 5	Psalms	Pss 1-2, 24, 45, 110	Collins 293-302	
Dec 7	Review Day			Bring questions and past quizzes; Refreshments will be served
Dec 20	Final Exam			Bring a writing utensil, a laptop (if you wish), and your Bible