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RELS 101-09 and 10, Introduction to the Biblical Tradition, Fall 2006

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Religious Studies 101: Introduction to the Biblical Tradition
Fall, 2006
Prof. Steven L. McKenzie, 408 Clough, X 3908, hours by appointment

OBJECTIVES:

1. To introduce the academic study of the Bible
2. To acquaint students with the literature of the Bible in its ancient context.

TEXTBOOKS:

1. NOAB = *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 3rd edition. You may use another version, but the NOAB will be used in class, and contains notes that are sometimes helpful.
2. Brown = Michael Joseph Brown, *What They Don't Tell You: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2000).
3. HRB = Steven L. McKenzie, *How to Read the Bible: History, Prophecy, Literature – Why Modern Readers Need to Know the Difference and What It Means for Faith Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Come to class on time and with appropriate materials.
2. Read assignments for each class beforehand and come ready to discuss the reading.
3. Bring written assignments with you ready to turn in.

EVALUATION:

Final grades will be calculated by averaging writing assignments and daily quizzes (20% each) with the mid-term and final exams (30% each).

Attendance at every class is mandatory. Final grades will normally be reduced one-half letter for each absence beyond three **regardless of the reason for the absence**. After five absences, a student will normally be asked to withdraw from the course; after six, a student will normally receive a failing grade for the course.

Involvement in class means attentiveness and making meaningful contributions through comments and questions. Sleeping in class, holding individual conversations, and arriving late are disruptive, detract from the effectiveness of the class, and will have a negative impact on a student's final grade. Students who disrupt class in these ways or who come unprepared or without proper materials may be asked to leave and will be counted absent.

Writing Assignments are given for most days. Students must complete them beforehand and have them ready to turn in at the beginning of class. They should be type-written and double-spaced. Assignments that are improperly formatted will receive an automatic two point penalty. Late assignments will not normally be accepted. Students who are absent should arrange to have their assignments turned in at classtime. A certain number (10-11) of these assignments will be collected and graded according to the amount of thought and preparation they reflect. Students are invited to make changes to their writing assignments during class. However, handwritten assignments will normally not be accepted.

Quizzes over the reading assignments will be given on a certain number of days (10-11) usually but not exclusively when writing assignments are not collected. These will generally be in 10-point objective form (T/F, multiples choice). Quizzes cannot be made-up. In cases of absentia, a grade of 0 will normally be given.

Exams: There will be two exams, a mid-term and a final. The syllabus provides the study guide for all exams: identification questions are drawn from terms on the syllabus and those written on the board or discussed in class; essays come from daily topics. Students are responsible for discerning and assessing the relative importance of topics discussed daily. Make-ups for the mid-term are not automatic. Arrangements for anticipated absences must be made ahead of time.

CALENDAR:

Thurs. 8/24 - Introduction to the course

Write a paragraph relating your experience with the Bible and expressing what you anticipate about this course (in class).

Read Brown pp. 1-5, 36-39

Tues. 8/29 - Rules of thumb

Read Brown pp. 41-156 and NOAB, Essays, pp. 453-56

Write: Choose one rule of thumb that you consider especially important and write a paragraph explaining why you think it is important.

Thurs. 8/31 - Genre and Jonah

Read HRB pp. 1-21

Write: Make a list, with explanations, of five indications within Jonah that it was not intended to be read as history.

Terms: Nineveh, parody

PENTATEUCH

Tues. 9/5 - Read Genesis 1:1-2:4a + Intro. to Genesis, NOAB, pp. 9-10 Hebrew Bible + HRB 23-33 + *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation epic (on-line at www.cresourcei.org/enumaelish.html).

Write: Explain how careful analysis of Genesis 1 indicates that it was written, in part, to support the keeping of Sabbath.

Terms: etiology

Thurs. 9/7 - Read Genesis 2:4b-3:24 + HRB 33-36 + the Adapa myth (www.sacred-texts.com/ane/adapa.htm)

Write either: (1) list five differences between the story in Genesis 2 and the one in Genesis 1 or (2) list and explain three etiologies in the second creation story

Terms: Documentary Hypothesis, Yahwist (J), Priestly writer (P),

Tues. 9/12 - Read Genesis 4-11 + HRB 36-39, 51-53 + the Sumerian King List (www.earth-history.com/Sumer/sumer-sumer-kinglist.htm) and the Gilgamesh Epic, tablet XI (www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/gilgamesh/)

Write: Using the different names for God and similarities between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2-3 respectively, try to distinguish which parts of Genesis 6-9 are J and which are P.

Thurs. 9/14 - Read Genesis 12-22 + HRB 39-42, 53-54

Write a list of four obstacles that Abraham faces in his quest for an heir and describe how each is overcome.

Terms: foundation tradition

Tues. 9/19 - Read Genesis 25:19-34; 27-33 + *HRB* 42-46

Write: Explain how the word plays on the names of Jacob and Esau indicate that they are eponymous figures.

Terms: eponymous tradition

Thurs. 9/21 - Read Exodus 1-15; 20; Deuteronomy 5 + the Legend of Sargon's Birth

(www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/2300sargon1.html)

Write a paragraph on one of the following topics: (1) Why does Pharaoh order the killing of the Hebrew boys if he wants to hold down the population? (2) What is the meaning of Moses' name (check the NOAB notes) and what does it say about him? (3) Choose one of the Ten Commandments and explain what it meant in its ancient context.

Terms: apodictic, casuistic

FORMER PROPHETS

Tues. 9/26 - Read Joshua 1-12 + "Joshua" (available via on-campus computer network: acad_dept_pgm on Fileserver1 > Relig_Studies > McKenzie_Steven > Public > RS 101)

Write: The NOAB notes point out that "Ai" means "ruin." Explain how this fact might suggest that the story about Ai is an etiology?

Terms: Deuteronomistic History

Thurs. 9/28 - Read Judges 1-16 + *HRB* 54-58 + "Judges" (same path as "Joshua")

Write: Explain the role of Jephthah in the composition of the book of Judges.

Tues. 10/3 - Read 1 Samuel 8-12; 16-18; 24-31; 2 Samuel 1-4 + *HRB* 58-60 + "Who was King David?" (same path as "Joshua" and "Judges")

Write either (1) a paragraph summary of the explanation in the reading for how Saul the three versions of Saul's becoming king in 1 Sam 8-12 were tied together literarily or (2) a paragraph on what kind of man you think David was based on the readings.

Terms: apology, messiah

Thurs. 10/5 - Read: 1 Kings 1-2; 11-16; 21-22; 2 Kings 9-12; 17; 18-25 + *HRB* 60-62.

Write: Explain what the role of prophets in choosing and rejecting kings in the book of Kings indicates about the book's composition.

Tues. 10/10 - Review for exam.

Thurs. 10/12 - Mid-term exam

Tues. 10/17 - Fall recess

PROPHETS

Thurs. 10/19 - Read Amos and Jeremiah 1; 7; 26 + *HRB* 67-79

Write: Explain in a paragraph what the interpretation of Micah by the elders of Jeremiah's day suggests about the nature of biblical prophecy.

Tues. 10/24 - Read: Isaiah 1-11; 40-42 + *HRB* 79-89

Write: Define the following terms as they are used in Isaiah 7: house of David, son of Remaliah, Ephraim, Sheol, smouldering stumps of firebrands

Terms: Immanuel, Syro-Ephraimitic crisis, Aram

WRITINGS

Thurs. 10/26 - Read Proverbs 1-11; and Ecclesiastes + *HRB* 91-101, 109-117

Write: Choose one text from Proverbs and one from Ecclesiastes and explain why you find them meaningful. Also, write down one proverb that a parent or grandparent taught you.

Terms: Qoheleth

Tues. 10/31 - Read Job 1-14; 38-42 + *HRB* 101-109

Write: Citing examples, briefly explain the perspective of Job's friends as to why he is suffering.

Terms: Wisdom, theodicy

Thurs. 11/2 - Read Ruth and Esther + "Ruth & Esther" (same path as "Joshua" etc.)

Write three adjectives that you think best describe each of the main characters in these books – Naomi, Ruth, Boaz; Esther, Ahasuerus, Mordecai, and Haman

Terms: universalism, levirate marriage, Purim

NEW TESTAMENT

Tues. 11/7 - Read Mark 1-5; 11-16 + the introduction to Mark in the NOAB

Terms: Synoptics, two source theory, Q

Write: Identify the sites of Gerasa, Gedara, and Gergesa on a map and record the approximate distance of each from the Sea of Galilee. Briefly explain how the distances help or confuse your reading of the story in Mark 5.

Thurs. 11/9 - Read: Matthew 1-7 and Luke 1-4; 7; 10; 24 + *HRB* 64-65.

Write: Matthew is supposed written for Jews and Luke for non-Jews. Discuss two examples from each that illustrate these respective audiences.

Terms: Samaritan, Gentile

Tues. 11/14 - Read John 1-11 + the introduction to John in the NOAB.

Write a list of the seven miracles done by Jesus in John.

Thurs. 11/16 - Paul's letters

Read Philemon and Galatians + *HRB* 147-164

Write: Either give three examples of rhetorical "arm twisting" in Paul's letter to Philemon or Explain and evaluate Paul's argument about the word "offspring" in Galatians 3.

Tues. 11/21 - Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting.

No class

Thurs. 11/23 - Thanksgiving recess

Tues. 11/28 - 1 Corinthians

Read 1 Corinthians + *HRB* 164-169

Write a list of the problems in the church at Corinth that Paul addresses in this letter.

Thurs. 11/30 - Romans

Read Romans + *HRB* 169-176

Write: Explain two suggestions in the readings about the occasion for this letter.

APOCALYPTIC

Tues. 12/5 - Read the book of Daniel + Revelation 1-4; 17-22 + *HRB* 119-146

Write: Briefly explain in your own words how apocalyptic literature is (1) spatial, (2) temporal, and (3) what it is intended to do. Give examples

Terms: apocalypse, apocalyptic literature

Final exam: 9:30 section on Sat. 12/9 at 5:30 AM

11:00 section on Mon. 12/11 at 8:30 AM

Chronological Chart

2000-1500 BCE	Patriarchs and Matriarchs: Abraham & Sarah, Isaac & Rebekah, Jacob, Rachel, & Leah
1220 BCE	Exodus from Egypt
1000 BCE	Beginning of King David's reign
925 BCE	Division of the kingdom, beginning of separate kingdoms of Israel and Judah
721 BCE	Fall of Israel to the Assyrians
586 BCE	Fall of Judah to Babylonians, beginning of the Exile
539 BCE	Accession of Cyrus, beginning of Persian Empire
538 BCE	End of Exile, first wave of captives return
520-515 BCE	Temple rebuilt
333 BCE	Conquest of Palestine by Alexander, beginning of Hellenistic period
164 BCE	Climax of Maccabean revolt
63 BCE	Roman conquest of Judea
4 BCE	Birth of Jesus
29 CE	Crucifixion of Jesus
70 CE	Destruction of Jerusalem by Romans