

I. Stillman College
Department of Religion and Theology
REL 131-A – Introduction to the Old Testament
3 Credit Hours
Fall 2020

II. Instructor Information:

David T. Ngong, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor and Chair,
Department of Religion and Theology

Office Location: Wynn 131A
Campus Phone: 205-349-4240; Ext. 3224
Email: Dngong@stillman.edu

Office Hours: Tues/Thur 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

We May Meet at other times by Appointment

Class Meeting Time: MWF, 8:00 – 8:50 a.m.

Class Meeting Room: Stinson 104/106

III. Course Description

REL 131 is an introductory course designed to provide an understanding of the Old Testament and of biblical faith; its basic concepts, values, terminology, literary styles and/or forms, principal personalities, places, and events. Emphasis is placed in terms of the interpretive implications, meaning and history of the use of this literature for guidance in daily living and personal decision-making. The method of instruction will include class lecture, written assignments, class discussions, films, and use of new media.

IV. Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Describe the canons of the Old Testament and state their distinguishing characteristics;
- Discuss at least three theories/methods of studying the Bible and three ways of using the Bible in ethics
- List the three major groups of ancient manuscripts that support English translations of the Bible;
- Identify the cultures and civilizations in antiquity and samples of the literature that influenced biblical writers;
- Identify the different genres and grouping in the OT literature;
- Identify the main characters and events of the biblical narrative and their roles;
- Critically review select texts in the Old Testament
- Demonstrate proficiency in using technology as an academic tool

V. Course Units and Calendar (Tentative)

Week 1: Wednesday, August 19 – Friday, August 21

- Introduction: Canvas sign up and general information about the course. Syllabus, Orientation to Canvas and REL 131 – **Extra Credit Syllabus Quiz** (20 Multiple Choice Questions)
- Why Study the (Hebrew) Bible - as non-theology and theology students?

UNIT 1: Background for Biblical Study

Learning Objectives: Students will 1) describe the history of translation and canonical arrangements for the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; 2) identify ancient cultures and illustrate their influence on biblical literature; 3) list the major ancient manuscripts that serve as sources for translations of modern English Bibles; 4) explain the general history of translation of the Bible into English; describe three theories/methods of studying the Bible and three ways of using the Bible in ethics

WEEK 2: Monday, August 24 – Friday, August 28 (**Last Day to Drop/Add, 26th**)

What Is the Bible?: Names, Manuscripts, Versions

READING: Rogerson, 1-18

Canonization and Translation

READING: Rogerson, 112-121

Quiz #1: Names, Manuscripts, Versions, canonization, translation (10 Multiple Choice Questions for each Quiz. **Open Book Quiz**)

Discussion Question 1 Due by Midnight on Tuesday

WEEK 3: August 31 – Friday, September 4

Ancient Civilizations and their influence

READING: Online at: <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/ask-a-scholar/cultural-exchange-in-the-ancient-near-east>; <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics/how-does-the-hebrew-bible-relate-to-the-ancient-near-eastern-world>

Quiz #2

Discussion Question 2 Due by Midnight on Tuesday

Monday, September 7 – Labor Day – No Class

WEEK 4: Wednesday, September 9 – Friday, September 11

How to Study the Bible

READING: Rogerson, 122-131, 135-145

The Use of the Bible in Ethics

READING: Rogerson, 146-161

Quiz #3 (Friday)

Discussion Question 3 Due by Midnight on Tuesday**UNIT 2: The Torah**

Learning Objectives – Students will 1) identify the contents of the Torah (Pentateuch), 2) recognize and evaluate the main characters and events narrated in the Torah, 3) explain the themes that interconnect the narratives of the Torah, and 4) identify the legal collections in the different books of the Torah; 5. Critically review select texts in the Torah

WEEK 5: Monday, September 14 – Friday, September 18

Torah Background: Composition theories

READING: Rogerson, 19-34; 61-63

Genesis I -- Primeval Story

READING: Rogerson, 35-38; Genesis 1-11

Genesis II – Ancestral stories (Abraham-Sarah, Isaac-Rebekah, Jacob-Leah-Rachel and Joseph and his brothers)

READING: Rogerson, 38-40; Genesis 12-50

Quiz #4 (Friday): Torah Background and the Book of Genesis

Discussion Question 4 Due by midnight on Tuesday

WEEK 6: Monday, September 21 – Thursday, September 25

Exodus I – Deliverance

READING: Rogerson, 38-40; Exodus 1-18

Exodus II – Covenant Making and Breaking

READING: Exodus 19-4

Quiz #5**Discussion Question 5 Due by midnight on Tuesday**

WEEK 7: Monday, September 28 – Friday, October 2

Leviticus and Numbers – From the Mountain to the Wilderness

READING: Rogerson, 43-47; Leviticus 1; 17-26; Numbers 14; 22-24

Deuteronomy -- The Torah of Moses

READING: Deuteronomy 1; 4; 6; 12; 18; 28-31

Quiz 6 – Friday**Discussion Question 6 Due by midnight on Tuesday**

UNIT 3: The Prophets

Learning Objectives – Students will 1) describe the contents and development of the narrative in the Former Prophets, 2) identify intersection of Former and Latter Prophets historically, 3) recognize the basic characteristics of the Latter Prophets and their theological and ethical arguments; 4) identify the three periods of crisis that give rise to prophetic activity and to composition of the historical narratives; 5. Critically review select texts in the Prophets

WEEK 8: Monday, October 5 – Friday, October 9 (**Mid-Semester Exam Week**)

Background: History and the Bible

READING: Rogerson, 40-42

Joshua's story of Conquest

READING: Joshua 1-24

Judges: Settlement and the transitional leadership

READING: Judges 1-21

Friday, October 9 - Midterm Examination will be based on UNIT 1, UNIT 2 and the Former Prophets – Weeks 1-8. 60 Multiple Choice Questions

WEEK 9: Monday, October 12 – Friday, October 16

Samuel and the Transition to the King: Samuel, Saul and David

READING: 1 Sam 1; 2:12-36; 8-13:15; 15-17; 24-25;
28; 31; 2 Sam 1-2:7; 3:1-7; 4:1-5:5; 11-12:25; 13; 15-18

Kings: Division of the kingdoms and the Prophetic Legends

READING: 1 Kings 1-3; 8:1-11; 11-12; 17-20; 2 Kings 10; 17-25

Quiz #7: Samuel and Kings (Friday)

Discussion Question 7 Due by midnight on Tuesday

WEEK 10: Monday, October 19 – Friday, October 23

Introduction to the Latter Prophets: Background and Organization

READING: Rogerson, 47-49

Amos and Hosea: Prophecy in the North

READING: Amos 1-9; Hosea 1-14

Isaiah of Jerusalem and Micah of Moreshah

READING: Isaiah 1-2; 5-7; 36-39; Micah 1-2; 4:1-4;
6:1-8

Quiz #8 (Friday)

Discussion Question 8 Due by midnight on Tuesday

WEEK 11: Monday, October 26 – Friday, October 30

Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk

READING: Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk

Jeremiah and Obadiah

READING: Jeremiah 1; 7; 15:1; 18:18-23; 20:7-18;
26-29; 36; 44; Obadiah

Ezekiel

READING: Ezekiel 1; 8-10; 18:1-9; 37; 40

Quiz #9**Discussion Question 9 Due by midnight on Tuesday**

WEEK 12: Monday, November 2 - Friday, November 6

Second Isaiah: End of the Exile; A New Exodus

READING: Isaiah 40-55

Haggai and Zechariah

READING: Haggai and Zechariah

Quiz #10 (Friday)**Discussion Question 10 due by midnight on Tuesday**

WEEK 13: Monday, November 9 – Friday, November 13

Third Isaiah: Restoring Jerusalem

READING: Isaiah 56-66

Joel, Malachi, and Jonah

READING: Joel, Malachi, Jonah

Quiz 11 - Friday**Discussion Question 11 due by midnight on Tuesday****UNIT 4: The Writings**

Learning Objectives – Students will 1) identify the contents and genres of the Writings, 2) identify the historical circumstances of the composition of the Writings, 3) describe the relationship of the Writings to the Torah and Prophets, 4) compare the theology of the historical literature in the Writings with that found in the Prophets.

WEEK 14: Monday, November 15 – Friday, November 20

Introduction to the Writings: Genre and ContextPsalms

READING: Rogerson, 49-51; Selections from the Psalms

Wisdom Literature: Proverbs and Job

READING: Rogerson, 51-54; Selections from Proverbs and Job

Quiz #12**Discussion Question 12 Due by midnight on Tuesday****THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY** – Monday, November 23 – Friday, November 27**WEEK 15:** Monday, November 30 – Friday, December 4 (**last day of class**)The Five Scrolls

READING: Rogerson, 57-61; Selections from Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations; Ruth; Esther

Rewriting Israel's History: The Chronicler

READING: Rogerson, 42-43; 1 Chronicles 10; 20-21 (cf. 2 Samuel 11 and 24); 2 Chronicles 20 (cf. 2 Kings 3:4-27); 33 (cf. 2 Kings 21:10-17)

Reinterpreting Israel's History: Ezra-Nehemiah

READING: Ezra and Nehemiah

Daniel and apocalyptic literature

READING: Rogerson, 55-57; Selections from Daniel

Final Exam – Saturday, December 5 – Thursday, December 10**Final Examination = 100 Multiple Choice Questions. Study Questions will be provided.****VI. Course Evaluation Methods:**

- a. **Discussion Questions:** There shall be one Discussion Question each week, as stated in the syllabus. Students must respond to each of these questions and to any follow-up question the instructor raises. In addition, students must respond to at least two of the posts of their classmates on two different days. In other words, the two responses to the classmates must not be done on the same day. Students will lose 2 points if their responses are done on the same day. There will be 10 points for Discussion each week. Each response to the initial question shall be 3 points. Student response to the instructor's follow-up question(s) shall be 3 points. Each response to a classmate's post shall be 2 points. $3+3+2+2 = 10$ points. There will be 12 Discussion Questions for a total of **120 points**.

NOTE: A response to a classmate must be substantive. This means that a response cannot be "I agree" or "I disagree". No points will be awarded for such a response. Students must clearly explain, giving good reasons, why they agree or disagree. You cannot say "I disagree because I do not like the idea." You must state why you do not like the idea. Responses must therefore be substantive.

VERY IMPORTANT: If you miss the Discussion Question for a week, that

Discussion Question cannot be made up. Students will have a zero for that week. Quizzes can be made up but Discussion Questions cannot be made up.

- b. **Weekly Quizzes:** There will be **12 weekly quizzes** as stated in the syllabus. Each quiz shall be 10 points and shall be taken from the relevant reading in the textbook and the PowerPoint presentation slides. 120 points.
NOTE: There will be Study Guides only for the Midterm Exam and Final Exam. There will be no Study Guides for the Quizzes. This means that students must read the textbook carefully for major ideas which are often signaled using this sign (*). The PowerPoint slides are also important in these quizzes.
- c. **Midterm Exam:** The Midterm Exam shall consist of 60 Multiple Choice Questions. A Study Guide shall be provided. **60 Points**
- d. **Final Exam:** The Final Exam shall consist of 100 Multiple Choice questions. A Study Guide will be provided for the final Exam.

Discussion Questions (12 @ 10 points)	120 points
Midterm	60 points
Final	100 points
<u>Quizzes (11 @ 10 points each)</u>	<u>120 points</u>
Total	400 points

NOTE: ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE DONE ON CANVAS

Final Letter Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

- A = 360-400 points
- B = 320-359 points
- C = 280-319 points
- D = 240-279 points
- F = below 240 points

VII. Course Textbooks: The required textbook for this course is **J. W. Rogerson, *An Introduction to the Bible*, third edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2014).** This book is available for free online and embedded in this course. To access the book, contact Ms. King at eking@stillman.edu or 205-349-4240 extension 8850

She will provide you with a **username** and **password**. You will also need a **Bible** translation in modern English (NRSV, RSV, ESV, NIV). These are all readily available on the internet (**Google it!**), so the purchase of a Bible is not required, though it is strongly encouraged.

VIII. Course Reading List. See the “Notes” on each chapter in the textbook for recommended reading.

Also see the Bible Odyssey Site: <http://bibleodyssey.org/>

IX. Other Matters:

Technology: Course information is distributed using Canvas Course Management System and the Stillman Email System. Every student must have both an email and a Canvas account and must maintain them in order to facilitate the professor's ability to communicate course information using these media. **Also, every student is expected to have an electronic device to access Canvas and to maintain it in good working order.** Since the quizzing and testing for this course are electronic in format, access to an electronic device that can access Canvas is indispensable. It also provides the student with consistent access to course material anywhere on campus. Making immediate plans to acquire the necessary accounts and the notebook computer will greatly enhance student success in this course. **Students must be able to access the Internet, given that all the work in this course is done online.**

Attendance Policy: This course follows the College policy on class attendance. If you are unfamiliar with this policy, please consult the Student Handbook, which you received during orientation. In addition, **prompt and regular class attendance and participation in class activities are required.** Participation means regularly asking and answering questions and making other contributions that are relevant to the subject under discussion in class. After **five (5)** absences, **one (1)** point shall be subtracted from the student's participation points for further absences. I take roll at the beginning of each class. If you come to class **five (5)** minutes late, you will be counted as absent. If you fail to stay in class to the end of the class, you will be counted as absent. If you come to class after I have taken the roll, inform me of your presence, else you will be counted as absent.

Note:

1. **Disability: Any learner with documented or undocumented medical disability that may affect the quality of their work in this course should contact the instructor immediately.**
2. Learners must **make up** any missed assignment within **one week** after the missed assignment. Learners will **lose 10%** of the points for each assignment, for each day of the missed assignment, unless there is documented reason why the assignment was missed.
3. Learners have the responsibility to check their emails and Canvas preferred message system daily.
4. **Cell phone and laptop use in class must be limited to class work only.**
5. Students have the responsibility to read this syllabus, in its entirety, carefully and take note of which assignment is due when.