REL 140: Old Testament / Hebrew Bible

MWF 0920–1020  PH 108  Fall 2017

It is not so very important for a person to learn facts. For that he does not really need a college. He can learn them from books. The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks. (Albert Einstein, 1921, in response to Thomas Edison’s opinion that a college education is useless)

The growing precision of our understanding should enhance, and not diminish our sense of wonder. (Alfred Brendel)

In much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase in sorrow. (Ecclesiastes 1.18)

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. (William Butler Yeats)

You must unlearn what you have learned. (Yoda, Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back)

The unexamined life is not worth living. (Socrates [Plato, Apology, 38a])

ΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ ΟΤΙ ΟΥΔΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ. (= ἕν οἶδα δείξει οὐδέν οἶδα. — Socrates)

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ. (= Γνῶθι σεαυτόν. — Temple of Apollo at Delphi)

Welcome to 140: Old Testament / Hebrew Bible. This course is a general introduction to and an exploration of the Old Testament. If you do the required work, by the end of the semester you will be able to:

• identify and explain what the Old Testament is as well as its significance for Western culture, for the world, and for us
• identify and explain the main contents of the OT, e.g., major themes and issues
• read carefully and critically passages from a variety of OT books as well as from extra-canonical sources
• explain the meaning(s) of OT passages in their historical contexts (e.g., cultural, geographical, literary, political contexts) as well as in relation to other areas of knowledge and to contemporary thought
• identify and explain methodological issues involved in OT interpretation
• demonstrate exegetical skills using modern methods of interpretation
• demonstrate an appreciation of OT texts that is both critical and creative

Achieving these goals will require hard work on your part, which will bring many challenging, enlightening, exciting, frustrating, and rewarding experiences.

Caveat

This course is designed so that anyone, religious or not, who does the required work can attain the goals mentioned above. This course is not designed to persuade you to a particular faith or religious point of view. Nor is it intended to build up or disparage existing faith, although an informed understanding of the Old Testament can lead to a deeper appreciation of Judaism and Christianity. Students who consider themselves to be followers of any religion, or of no religion at all, are welcome on this semester journey to become better acquainted with the Bible, to learn to appreciate it better, and to become informed and responsible interpreters of it.

Requirements and evaluation for the course

• evaluation

For my criteria for evaluation go to my Evaluation page and read the information carefully.

• If you have any questions about any assignment, ask in class or make an appointment to see me.
• If you have any questions about any evaluation or how you are doing in the course, make an appointment to see me.
• If you miss an assignment or exam, call or make an appointment to discuss any makeup work.

Due dates for submitting assignments are on D2L (click on the “Dropbox”).

• assigned readings

Assigned readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned—use your best judgment to divide the readings evenly for each week. You must come to class with at least 2 written questions or comments in response to the readings (see Participation).

The primary focus throughout the course will be on the biblical texts and on cultivating the ability to ask informed questions about all the assigned readings based on the knowledge you gain along the way; the demonstration of your ability to formulate questions will affect the evaluation of your semester grade. Keeping notes on the readings is highly recommended. I would encourage you to use this form for the reading assignments (also on D2L).

Not all assigned readings may be covered in class or on exams, but they are assigned for your edification in achieving the goals of the course. The more you refer to them in class and in your work, the better your mastery of the readings will be. Your use of them in class discussion and in your work will affect the evaluation of your semester grade.

Occasionally I may assign additional readings, but these will ordinarily be short.

• presentation

You will give a 5-minute presentation of assigned texts consisting of:

• the main ideas or arguments of the reading assignments (see the course schedule below for the texts to be presented)
• your critique or response to it (including references to previous readings)—this should be the focus and main portion of the presentation
  • Include in your report critical questions, challenges, discoveries, insights, etc. that you encountered while, or after, reading the assignment.
  • Avoid mere summaries or paraphrases of the assigned reading(s).

You are expected to have read the text(s) thoroughly and be able to share the penetrating questions or issues you dealt with in your reading, preparation, and further research. You do not have to understand everything before class, but you should demonstrate that you prepared and that you can discern and are familiar with the major issues in the text(s). Remember that questions are more valuable than answers.

All students are expected to do the preparatory work described above, not just the presenter.

See my Evaluation page under Presentations for evaluation criteria (do not be concerned about the “Communication Skills” section of the presentation evaluation page). If you wish to use a PowerPoint presentation or any AV equipment, let me know in advance.

• map paper

You will draw a map of the United Monarchy at the height of Solomon’s reign and write a paper on David’s conquest.

• You must draw (or trace) the map by hand (on a letter-size paper). How colorful or artistic the map is will not affect the grade.
  • The map must show important boundaries, territories, and cities of the United Monarchy.
• The paper, which is the main part of this assignment, should consist of 500–800 words.
  • It should identify and explain reasons for David’s conquest of the territories that made up his empire.
    • Avoid mere summaries or paraphrases of biblical narratives. Avoid mere theological reasons (e.g., “because God told David to do so”). Consider what advantages David's conquests and accomplishments brought for his kingdom, or consider what a non-religious historian might see as reasons for what David accomplished.
• Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.
• Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the Chicago Manual of Style. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor. No bibliography or works cited.
• Besides the textbook, the Oxford Bible Atlas is a good place to start.
• Scan and insert the map at the end of your paper file.

• exegesis paper option

You may choose to write an exegesis paper instead of the final exam (written or oral—see below). You must meet with me as soon as possible before October 15 to discuss your preference. If you decide to write the paper, follow the directions below:
You will submit on D2L an exegesis paper on one of the biblical passages assigned in the syllabus schedule below. If you wish to work on a different passage, make an appointment to discuss your passage of choice. In choosing a specific part or theme within the passage of your choice, consult critical commentaries and academic journals, i.e., scholarly books and articles with lots of (foot)notes. For help with exegesis, see my Exegesis guidelines page. You may also find the Tips for writing papers helpful.

Make an appointment as early as you can in the semester to discuss (1) your paper idea and (2) your preliminary bibliography (bring a hard copy). The narrower and more specific your thesis—i.e., the argument you plan to make in your paper—the better.

- The paper should consist of 1,000–1,300 words.
- Include at least a historical-critical understanding of the text(s) and present possible meanings in it (them).
- If possible (or appropriate) include an analysis of the structure of the text(s).
- The paper should represent original work (i.e., your own thoughts), not a mere digest of other people’s opinions. Your own reading and re-reading of the relevant texts, as well as review of other materials, are fundamental to the task. I want to know what you discover in your engagement with the biblical text, whether or not you agree with the assigned readings, commentaries, or opinions presented in class, including mine.
  - Focus on honing your ability to argue for your opinions and conclusions by supporting them with evidence from texts (especially primary texts) and other relevant sources.
- Your final bibliography (not just “works cited”) must contain at least 8 sources used in your paper, including at least 4 academic journal articles (articles in newspapers or magazines are acceptable if appropriate for your paper).
- Electronic sources count only if you provide evidence that they are scholarly sources (usually in print).
- Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the Chicago Manual of Style—for help: NoodleTools. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor.
- Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.

• terms
Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for learning significant terms used in our texts or in class (see the “terms” file on D2L). You will be responsible for finding the definitions. Your knowledge of significant terms may constitute a part of a quiz or exam.

• exams
The midterm exam will cover all the materials in the course we will have covered by the time of the exam (e.g., the reading assignments and terms). The final exam will cover the entire sweep of the course. There may be pop quizzes, the results of which will affect the evaluation of your participation. See my Evaluation page under Quizzes and examinations.

In lieu of the final exam (or the exegesis paper), you may take an oral exam (30–45 minutes). You must meet with me as soon as possible before Oct 15 to discuss this option.

• grades
Grades will be determined as fairly as possible. See my Evaluation page under Grades for more information. The final grade for the course will consist of the following:
  - final exam / exegesis paper — 35%
  - midterm exam — 25%
  - map paper — 20%
  - presentation — 10%
  - participation (including pop quizzes) — 10%

Participation is a significant part of this course. See my Evaluation page under Participation for more information and instructions.

• extra credit
You may earn extra credit any time during the semester.
  - Submit a paper consisting of 700–1,000 words relating something from popular culture (e.g., movie, play, TV show, book, any performance) to an OT text or theme (consult the instructor).
  - The paper should be mostly critique (not mere description or summary).

The instructor reserves the right to make the final determination concerning any extra credit. You can earn a maximum of 5% toward the final grade. You may write more than one, if you wish, but you will not receive more than 5% total in extra credit.
Required books

A Bible. The *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (NOAB) using the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) will be the common text for class assignments and discussions. N.B.: the table of contents, introductions, essays, tables, glossary, maps, etc. are all very helpful. In all cases, you are encouraged to use (1) other English translations besides the NRSV, e.g., NIV, and (2) Bibles in other languages.

Coogan, Michael D. *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible in Its Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. See also Coogan online resources (e.g., quizzes).

**Recommended books (\* = highly recommended)**


**Resources to consider**

Online resources for the Coogan textbook (e.g., practice quizzes).

My Resources page.

Course materials on D2L; online resources, e.g., study guides

Bible concordances (also in McGill library)


**Keeping in touch**

During the semester check your e-mail regularly for messages regarding course matters (e.g., changes in the syllabus). Visit and reload (refresh) this page for updates to the syllabus; see also my home page for other information and resources related to the course. Please feel free to make an appointment any time about any course matters.

**Tips from former students**

For some practical advice from former students, see the tips page.

**One last word . . .**

Regardless of how demanding all of this is, I promise to be as fair as possible. I recognize that you will be very busy this semester pursuing various obligations and passions. I understand. I have my passions too, e.g., my family, music, philosophy, nature, mountain biking, fixing things, food. But I am also very passionate about education, both yours and mine—I mean not just the business of acquiring knowledge but more importantly the total development of honorable human beings. I do not require you to share my excitement about all the things we will cover, but I do expect you to do your best to complete the requirements for the course. To help you do that, I will make myself available outside the class time and the office hours. I will be glad to help you when you are struggling with an assignment. Or if you have any questions,
concerns, complaints, and even compliments, I will do my best to take the time to listen and offer my response. Keep in mind that I am here to help you learn. So again, welcome to Religion 140: Old Testament / Hebrew Bible.

**Schedule**

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<th>Week 1 Aug 28 M, 30, Sep 1</th>
<th>General orientation: terms, concepts, approaches</th>
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<td>What is the Bible? What is the Old Testament? • (How) can or should Christians read the Jewish scriptures?</td>
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- Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)
- Westminster College: [Mission statement](#)
- Fisher: [Effective Learning](#)
- University of Chicago: [letter to the class of 2020](#) (2016)
- Gen 7.1–5; 6.11–22
- Coogan: v–xxi, 428–48 (skim); chs. 1–2
- Hazony: “The God of Independent Minds”
+ Brooks & Collins: “Introduction” to *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament?*

- Translation comparison
- Memorize the books of the [Protestant canon](#) in order (learn correct spelling). [also: comparison chart; canons; some early NT canons](#)
- Remember: bring your written Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation).
- Copy all relevant Web pages and resources to your hard disk or flash drive, etc. for easy access. Keep the copies updated.

> notes in class
> NOAB: 453–66 ES; 543–73 Index
> New evidence of flood?
++ Brown, *Responses*, Q1–4: Translations of the Bible
> Bible Contradiction & Responses
> maps and world(view)s; also this
> Reading guide

**Week 2 Sep 4 M, 6, 8**

**Creation myth:** ethical & scientific relevance? • stories and histories • [anachronism](#)

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**Sep 7: movie night at the Nas 7:46 PM-ish**

Feel free to bring DVDs of movies you think your classmates should see. For directions [click here](#).

- Coogan: chs. 1–2; 3–4
- Gen 1–11
  - Gen 1.1–2.4a; *Gen 2.4b–3.24* (cf. Enuma Elish; also cf. Job 26.8–14; 38; Ps 8, 74.13–17, 89.5–10, 136, 148; Prov 8.22–31; Isa 27.1, 51.9–10): ethical & scientific relevance?
  - Gen 1.26–27: Is God alone? (cf. Ps 82; Ex 15.11; 1 Kgs 22.19–23; Dt 32.8–9)
  - Gen 9.1–17
  - Gen 11.1–9
- Review the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling).
- Reminder: bring your Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation)
++ Brown, *Responses*, Q5–10: Genuine and apocryphal books of the Bible
++ Brown, *Responses*, Q11–14: How to read the Bible

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- [God's name](#)
- Myth
- [Blogging the Bible](#) (an interesting viewpoint that might resonate with your life)
- Translation comparison
- Transmission errors
- [The Greeks](#) (interactive site): read about Socrates, Plato, etc.
- Do you know how to think? (a self-exam)
- What we think we know: the (hi)story of the thumb.

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### Week 3 Sep 11 M, 13, 15

**Genesis:** YHWH's providence • God's absent presence • soap opera or Jerry Springer Show?  
History of the universe & story of a family • Abraham's story: the many and the one • They call me Ishmael

- Coogan: ch. 5  
- Gen 12–50  
  - Gen 12–18  
  - Gen 22.1–19: sons & sacrifices (cf. Judg 11.29–40)  
  - Gen 25.19–34  
  - Gen 26.1–11  
  - Gen 29–30  
  - Gen 37: E & J confusion?  
  - Gen 38: Judah & Tamar (v. Dt 25.5–10)  
- **Translation comparison**  
- Review the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling).

> + Pritchard: vol.1: 12–16, 31–39 & vol.2: 1–5; vol.1: 40, 65–75 (also “read” the pictures)

> + Brown, *Responses*, Q15–17: Church guidance; Q18–22: Why read the Bible

> Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)

### Week 4 Sep 18 M, 20, 22

**Mosaic tradition:** the exodus

- Coogan: chs. 6–8  
- Exodus 1–15; 16–20; 24  
  - Ex 1–2  
  - Ex 3: 6: What's your name?  
  - Ex 15.1–18  
  - Ex 19–24; 32–34  
  - Ex 20.1–17 (cf. Dt 5.6–21): ten (?) words of YHWH  
- Exodus 20.22–23.33; 25–40  
- Ex 21: cultural relativism (cf. federal or state laws)  
- Ex 23.1–3: justice for all  
- Leviticus  
  learning to be the people of YHWH  
  - Lev 11.44  
  - Lev 25.10  
- Ps 78, 105, 106, 135, 136 (skim)  

> + Pritchard: vol.1: 85–86; 138–67; vol.2: 42–53 (skim prudently; check for OT parallels)


> Greek NT: 1st page

> Manuscript

> Interpreting Ancient Manuscripts (very helpful)

> Transmission errors

### Week 5 Sep 25 M, 27, 29

**Mosaic tradition:** the law (teaching)

- Coogan: chs. 8–9  
- Exodus 20.22–23.33; 25–40  
  - Ex 21: cultural relativism (cf. federal or state laws)  
  - Ex 23.1–3: justice for all  
- Leviticus  
  - Lev 11.44  
  - Lev 25.10  
- Numbers  
  - Num 11–14; 22; 32  
  - Num 12: Moses—he's my man  
  - Num 22: the talking donkey  

> + Pritchard: vol.1: 231


### Week 6 Oct 2 M, 4, 6

**Deuteronomistic History & Theology**

- Coogan: chs.10–11
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<th>Week 7</th>
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<td><strong>Settlement</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Oct 13: midterm exam</strong></td>
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<td>• Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations &amp; criteria for grading—ask Qs, if any)</td>
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<td>• Coogan: chs.11–12</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Joshua</td>
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<td>• Josh 2, 6: conquest (?) of Canaan</td>
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<td>• Josh 24: birth of the Tribal Confederacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Judges (esp. 2.6–16.31)</td>
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<td>• Judg 8.22–23: theocracy &amp; monarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;+ Brown, Responses, Q38–44: The Gospels; Q45–51 Jesus' words and deeds</td>
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<th>Oct 16 M, 18, 20</th>
<th>Oct 21–24 (break)</th>
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<td><strong>The united kingdom • prophecy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 20: last date for the map paper</strong></td>
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<td>• Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations &amp; criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)</td>
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<td>• Coogan: chs. 13–15</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 1 Samuel (skim)</td>
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<td>• 1Sam 8.10–18 (“ways of the king”) cf. Dt 17.14–20 (cf. 1Kgs 11.1–13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 1Sam 9.1–10.16; 11: Saul Tradition (monarchic)</td>
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<td>• 1Sam 10.5–13; 16.13–23; 19.18–24: ecstasy?</td>
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<td>• 1Sam 18.10</td>
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<td>• 2 Samuel (skim)</td>
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<td>• 2Sam 6.6–11: portrait of YHWH?</td>
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<td>• 2Sam 7.(cf. Ps 132): YHWH's deal with David</td>
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<td>• Ps 132; 2.5–9</td>
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<td>• 2Sam 11.1–12.23 (cf. 1Kgs 15.4–5): monarchical &amp; theocratic issues? David falls?</td>
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<td>• 1 Kings 1–11</td>
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<td>• 1Kgs 11.1–13 (cf. 1Kgs 15.4–5): monarchic &amp; theocratic issues? David falls?</td>
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<td>• Ps 89</td>
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<td>• Dt 12.1–32: centralization of YHWH cult</td>
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<td>&gt; 1Chr 10–2Chr 9 (skim)</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;+ Brown, Responses, Q61–68: Mary (esp. of interest to Roman Catholics); Q69–76: Jesus' knowledge</td>
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<th>Week 9</th>
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<td><strong>The divided kingdom • prophecy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Oct 27: no class (keep working on the assignments)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coogan: chs. 16–17</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 1 Kings 12–2 Kings 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 1Kgs 12 (cf. 2Kgs 17.20–23): apostasy or restoration?</td>
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<td>• 1Kgs 18–19: prophet on the run</td>
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<td>• 1Kgs 22.1–28: Can prophets lie? (cf. Dt 13.1–3; 1Sam 16.14; Ezek 14.1–11; Am 7.10–17)</td>
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<td>• 2 Kings 14–17</td>
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<td>• 2Kgs 9.11</td>
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<td>• 2Kgs 21–23 &amp; 2Chr 33–35: last hope for Judah? Will the real Menasseh stand up?</td>
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<td>• Prayer of Manasseh (cf. Ps 51)</td>
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<td>• Amos</td>
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<td>• Am 9.7: What?!?</td>
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<td>• Hosea</td>
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<td>• Hos 11: YHWH's will &amp; grace</td>
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**Week 10  Nov 1 W, 3, 6**  

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<th>The divided kingdom</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Coogan: chs. 18–19</td>
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<td>• 2 Kings 15–20; 2 Chronicles 29–32; Isaiah 1–39; Micah</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;&gt; Brown, Responses, Q77–78: Foundation of the church; Q79–85: The sacraments</td>
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**Week 11  Nov 8 W, 10, 13**  

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<th>The Exile: crisis to (new) covenant</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations &amp; criteria for grading—ask Qs, if any)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coogan: chs. 20–21</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lamentations; Psalm 137; Obadiah; Ezekiel</td>
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<td>&gt;&gt; Brown, Responses, Q93–96: Who celebrated the eucharist; Q97–100: Peter and the popes</td>
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**Week 12  Nov 15 W, 17, 20**  

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<th>From exile to Judaism</th>
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<td>• Ezra 3–10; Nehemiah; Haggai; Zechariah; Isaiah 24–27, 56–66; Joel; Malachi</td>
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<td>&gt;&gt; Brown, Responses, Q101: How much has the church changed; 137–42 (esp. of interest to Roman Catholics)</td>
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<td>&gt; NOAB: 721–25 HB</td>
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**Week 13  Nov 27 M, 29, Dec 1**  

**Wisdom literature: getting wiser?**

**Nov 30:** last date for the exegesis paper option (in lieu of the final exam)

- Coogan: chs. 24–25; Appendix
- Proverbs; Job; Ecclesiastes; Song of Songs
  - Job 1–2; 42.7–17: What went wrong?
  - **Job 7.11–21** (cf. Ps 39): "God, leave me alone!"
  - Job 9.14–24; 19; 23.1–7 (cf. 1–2; 32.1–5)
- **Eccl 1**
- Eccl 12.9–14: huh?
- Ruth; Jonah; Esther; Daniel
  - **Ruth:** a foreigner?
  - Jon: prophet on the run (cf. Amos 9.7–8)
- **Dan 7:** weird dreams

**Week 14  Dec 4 M, 6, 8**  

**Faith, history & text • Final thoughts**  
(Or: Anything and everything you wanted to ask Prof. Na but were too afraid or busy to ask)

**Dec 8:** last date for extra credit

- Coogan: Appendix
- 1Macc (skim prudently)
  - 1Macc 1–3: dying for the faith
- **Bel**
- Tobit: spiritual entertainment
- Ps 1; 32; 34; 37; 49; 112; 128
  > See the movie "Fallen" (cf Tobit)

- **Gabler:** "On the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each" (Scottish Journal of Theology 33 [1980]: 133–58)
- **Meyer:** "Faith and History Revisited" (Princeton Seminary Bulletin 10
- Gabler & Meyer: bring your Qs & Cs (esp. on the distinction between biblical theology & dogmatic theology)
  ++ Brown, *Responses*: Q1–10, 19–27
  > **O Little Town of Nazareth**?
  > Xmas Carol Quiz
  > Xmas Quiz
  > What is this?

**Final week  Dec 14 R  0800–1030**

**Final exam**

- exegesis guide • evaluation • resources • Na home • D2L

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously. (G. K. Chesterton)

Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die. (Anonymous)