

**COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES  
RELIGION PROGRAM: RELI 2121B**

**HEBREW BIBLE**

**Instructor:** Shawna Dolansky

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**Office hours:** 2a35 PA, Tu/Th 10:20am – 11:20am

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**Lectures:** Tu/Th 8:35am-9:55am, Loeb Building B146

Our **focus** in this course will be to view the variety of texts contained in the Hebrew Bible of ancient Israel within the historical, cultural, and religious contexts within which these texts developed. The history of the ancient Near East provides an important backdrop for the movement from polytheism to monotheism, from Israelite religion to Judaism, as well as the themes of covenant and theodicy and the ancients' understanding of the nature of the divine and its relationship with humanity. Although the Hebrew Bible continues to be a sacred text for the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, our goal will be to understand it from the perspective of its original authors and audiences, rather than adopting the lenses of the later history of interpretation.

Our **objectives** are: (a) to develop an academic approach to the study of religious texts, using the tools of literary study, anthropology, history, and archaeology; (b) to understand the history, culture, and worldview of ancient Israel as separate from and prior to the historical development of Judaism and Christianity; (c) to understand the variety of genres and source texts contained within the Hebrew Bible and appreciate the ways in which they operate both independently of and in combination with each other; and (d) to understand and appreciate the interaction between text and context, culture and history, in determining religious meaning.

**Required Texts:**

1. You will need a Bible. I have ordered the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh* (in English) for this class, but other modern Bible translations are acceptable. Modern translations include anything produced after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls such as the Revised Standard and New Revised Standard Versions (RSV and NRSV), New English, Jerusalem, New International Version. Check the title page of any Bible you own to check the translation. Though poetic, the King James Version is not an accurate translation and won't work for this class.
2. I will be uploading several articles to CULearn. These are required reading, as noted in the schedule below.
3. Richard E. Friedman's bestselling *Who Wrote the Bible?* Friedman offers an engaging look at how biblical scholarship works, and a very accessible introduction to how and when the Hebrew Bible was put together. This is also required reading, as noted on the schedule below (WWTB).
4. Stephanie Dalley's *Myths from Mesopotamia*; also required reading.

**Evaluation:**

1. Bi-weekly quizzes on reading material, worth 5% each, total of 30%.
2. Final examination, date TBA (during finals week), worth 30%.
3. Exegetical paper assignment, details TBA, due beginning of class April 8th, worth 30%.
4. Attendance and Participation, worth 10%.

## Schedule

Tues. Jan. 7	Introduction to the course
Thur. Jan. 9	The Ancient Near East READ: Dalley pp. xv-xxii
Tues. Jan. 14	Creation: Enuma Elish READ: Dalley pp. 228-277
Thur. Jan. 16	Gilgamesh READ: Dalley pp. 39-135
Tues. Jan. 21	Intro to the Hebrew Bible READ: WWTB ch. 1 [other readings to be posted on CULearn] <i>Quiz 1</i>
Thur. Jan. 23	Worlds & Worldviews READ: Genesis 1-3
Tues. Jan. 28	Primeval History READ: Gen 4-11; WWTB Intro & ch. 2 & 3
Thur. Jan. 30	Myth, History, & Covenant READ: Gen 12-27; Deut 28 <i>Quiz 2</i>
Tues. Feb. 4	Matriarchs & Patriarchs READ: Gen 28-50; Prov 31
Thur. Feb. 6	Exodus READ: Exodus 1-18
Tues. Feb. 11	The 10 Commandments READ: Exodus 19-40
Thur. Feb. 13	Biblical Religion: Leviticus READ: Lev 1, 6-7, 10-20, 22, 25 <i>Quiz 3</i>
Tues. Feb. 18	BREAK WEEK
Thur. Feb. 20	BREAK WEEK
Tues. Feb. 25	Biblical Religion: Deuteronomy READ: Deut 1-7, 10-14, 17-18, 22, 26-32
Thur. Feb. 27	Archaeology and the Bible READ: Judges 1-5; "Pagan Yahwism" <i>Quiz 4</i>
Tues. Mar. 4	The Deuteronomistic History READ: WWTB ch. 4-9
Thur. Mar. 6	The Documentary Hypothesis READ: WWTB ch. 10-14

- Tues. Mar. 11           The Bible's Buried Secrets  
READ: 1 Samuel (all)
- Thur. Mar. 13           The Rise of Ancient Israel  
READ: 2 Samuel (all)  
*Quiz 5*
- Tues. Mar. 18           The Fall of Ancient Israel  
READ: 1 Kings (all); 2 Kings 1-10, 17-25
- Thur. Mar. 20           Intro to the Prophets: Isaiah  
READ: Isa 1-11, 36-40, 42, 45, 48-53, 59-63, 65-66
- Tues. Mar. 25           Jeremiah  
READ: Jer 1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 16, 19-21, 23, 25-30, 36-45
- Thur. Mar. 27           Ezekiel and Jonah  
READ: Ezek 1-5, 18, 23, 37; Jonah (all)  
*Quiz 6*
- Tues. Apr. 1            Song of Songs  
READ: [on cuLearn: "Egyptian Love Songs" (ANET pp. 467-9); "Sumerian Sacred Marriage Texts" (ANET pp. 640-645) ]
- Thur. Apr. 3            Intro to the Wisdom literature  
READ: Proverbs 1-10, 22-23; Ecclesiastes (all)
- Tues. Apr. 8            Job  
READ: Job (all)  
***Exegetical paper due at BEGINNING of class.***