

Easter/Spring Semester 2017  
Tuesday 8:10-9:40 a.m.  
11-12:30P.m.

Alison Acker Gruseke  
Alison.gruseke@yale.edu  
Office hours: Seabury, 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
3-4 p.m. *and* by appointment or drop-in

## OT2 Introduction to the Old Testament: Latter Prophets, Writings and Apocrypha

*Where were you when I laid the  
foundations of the earth?*  
--Job 38:4

### **Course Description and Aims**

The second semester of Introduction to the Old Testament continues the first semester's introduction to the Torah and the Former Prophets (Genesis-2 Kings) with a survey of the Prophets and the Writings. The Hebrew Scriptures covered this semester range chronologically from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. during the Neo-Assyrian period to the Neo-Babylonian period, the fall of Jerusalem and Judean exile, the return of the exiles during the Achaemenid era and construction of the Second Temple under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, then finally to the Hellenistic period, in which the later portions of the Book of Daniel were composed. The Apocryphal writings, including the Wisdom of Solomon, bring the course into the early first century C.E.

The primary purpose of the course is to read the Old Testament closely, with attention to the contexts of biblical composition and of modern interpretation. As in the previous semester, the course introduces a range of exegetical methods, encouraging students to consider the social, geographical and historical locations of biblical writers, of modern scholars, and of themselves as critical readers and interpreters of the Bible in the modern world and particularly in the context of Church ministry.

Our study unfolds in an environment intentionally geared toward matching *content* with *encouragement*, creating, as we proceed through the year, a community of learners who are committed to their own and their classmates' scholarship. Lectures and class discussions invite the participation of all, aiming to prepare students for a lifetime of thoughtful engagement with the Hebrew Bible.

### **Course Requirements**

Grading will be based on the following evaluative measures:

- 1) designed to encourage regular Hebrew Bible reading, a series of bi-weekly, ungraded quizzes in which students will identify the speaker, addressee and significance of biblical quotations, with biblical material added cumulatively as the semester progresses (to be graded with a partner in class);
- 2) on **March 7<sup>th</sup>**, a graded, 20-minute Bible quotations quiz (closed-book), followed by an open-book mid-term (20% of final grade);
- 3) for community-building and practice in “holy listening” (the late Margaret Gunther’s lovely phrase), one *Humans of GTS OT* interview with a member of the GTS community, edited (not more than 2 pages total) and presented to the class, with accompanying snapshot of the interviewee, if possible (10% of final grade, with additional credit for subsequent interviews);
- 4) an exegesis paper of 6-8 pages **due April 25<sup>th</sup>** (30% of final grade);
- 5) an open-book final examination (25% of final grade);
- 6) thorough preparation of class readings and conscientious, courteous engagement in class discussions, **including leading one class discussion (with a partner)**, with written handout for the class, on a scholarly article and/or interpretive method, plus a **second class discussion**, with handout, **individually**. The student(s) preparing the handout and presentation should present, in brief, the author’s scholarly background or research interests, summarize the article, understand and define key terms or concepts, and provide questions for discussion. ***Please note that if discussions are not marked as led by a student or student team, students should nevertheless come to class with a copy of the article (either electronic or print) and written notes, comments or questions for discussion, to be handed in at the end of class. These need not be formal (or even typed) but are designed to encourage active engagement with assigned readings and facilitate discussion (15%).***

All written work must be your own and secondary sources thoroughly credited. Please refer to the GTS Catalog for policies on plagiarism, and by all means consult the instructor if you have any questions on proper formatting of footnotes or when and how properly to credit outside sources. Please refer to the Fall-Michaelmas syllabus for online resources for writing, including the online resources on bibliographic formatting at the Society for Biblical Literature website. Please also refer to the Fall-Michaelmas syllabus for a fuller description of and rationale for the *Humans* project.

Attendance at all class discussions and lectures is required. Please let me know, in advance if possible, if, for any reason, you will be absent from class. Because all classes are interactive and important content is conveyed in each, a student who misses more than two classes (that is, one day of class, both sessions) will be asked to acquire notes from a classmate and provide a written summary of the readings for those sessions to the instructor and classmates. *Unless otherwise noted, all class readings are available on the class site.*

Deadlines: Because all of us have busy lives, both the exegesis paper and *Humans* deadlines are flexible, with no penalty for late work *as long as* (for the exegesis) a

*new deadline has been discussed with the instructor in advance.* Please consult the GTS Registrar for final term deadlines. I will provide a list of passages for exegesis and am happy to discuss ideas and bibliography during office hours. I will provide feedback on written drafts of exegesis papers up to 2 weeks before (April 11<sup>th</sup>) the deadline (April 25<sup>th</sup>). Papers turned in after April 25<sup>th</sup> will receive abbreviated written comments but no penalty in the grade.

### **Required Books:**

John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

Carolyn J. Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.

### Highly Recommended

*The HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV), including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books with Concordance*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006 -OR- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: with the Apocrypha*. Fully revised 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, rev. and enl., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996 [electronic resource at Keller Library]

James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier, *Interpreting the Prophets*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987 [on reserve at Keller Library]

***N.b.:If you detect an omission or an error on this syllabus (i.e. necessary pages from the Sharp and Collins missing) please draw it to my attention immediately and I will make the necessary corrections. Thank you!***

-----Schedule of Class Meetings and Readings-----

**Jan. 31 [A]: “The Last Four Verses in the Book of Kings:” The Fall of Jerusalem and An Introduction to Biblical Prophecy**

*Discussion:* A class visit to our first GTS OT interviewee

**[B] “A Double Portion of Your Spirit!” Elijah and Elisha**

*Discussion: Childist Criticism*

- Julie Faith Parker (2013), “The Israelite Slave Girl (2 Kg 5: 1-14)” from her *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in the Hebrew Bible, Especially the Elisha Cycle* and, for background, please skim “Concepts of Children and

Childhood: A Theoretical and Historical Framework” pp. 21-40 and 157-74.

Questions to consider as you read:

Why is childist criticism necessary or helpful?

Why might it be particularly useful in church settings?

In what ways could you envision making use of it in the various aspects of church life?

Required

1 Kg 17-22 and 2 Kg 1-9; 2 Kg 24-25

Collins, 294-95; 299-302

Parker, *above*

J.D. Levenson, “The Last Four Verses in Kings,” *JBL* 103.3: 353-61

Sharp, 1-32

Recommended

Gene M. Tucker, “Forms of Prophetic Speech,” pp. 27-40 in Mays and Achtemeier, *Interpreting the Prophets* [Keller, reserve]

---

**Feb. 7 [A]”No Prophet Nor The Son of a Prophet:” Amos**

***Bible Quotations Quiz #1, ‘graded’ with a partner in class***

**[B] “The Holy One in Your Midst:” Hosea**

Discussion (Student –led): Postmodern Criticism

- A.M.K. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism*, pp. 1-23 (for background)
- D.J. A. Clines (1995), “Metacommenting Amos” (the handout need only cover this, plus a bullet points on major topics from Adam)

Required

Books of Amos and Hosea

Collins, 205-23

Adam and Clines, *above*

Sharp, 33-48

---

**Feb. 14 [A] “I Am a Man of Unclean Lips:” Isaiah 1-39 (except 24-27)**

Discussion

- J. Shannon Clarkson and Letty M. Russell (2006), “North American Women Interpret Scripture”

**[B] “Before I Formed You in the Womb I Knew You:” Jeremiah 1-26**

Discussion (Student-led): Womanist Criticism

- Renita Weems, “Gomer: Victim of Violence or Victim of Metaphor?”

Required

Isaiah 1039

Jeremiah 1-26

Clarkson/Russell and Weems, above

Collins, 325-45; 349-67

Sharp, 57-69, 70-78

**Feb. 21 [A] “A New Covenant:” Jeremiah 27-52**

*Bible Quotations Quiz #2, 'graded' with a partner in class*

**[B] “Eat this Scroll:” Ezekiel 1-23**

Discussion (Student-led): Trauma Theory

- Kathleen M. O’Connor (2011), “Terror All Around: Confusion as Meaning-Making”

Required

Jeremiah 27-52

Ezekiel 1-23

O’Connor, *above*

Collins, 371-80

Sharp, 79-88

**Feb. 28 [A] “Mortal, Can These Bones Live?”: Ezekiel 24-48**

Discussion

- Laurie Pearce (2016), “Cuneiform Sources for Judeans in Babylonia in the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Periods” *and* midterm preparation

**[B] “Comfort ye, my people”: Second Isaiah (40-55)**

Discussion (Student-led): Anthropological Criticism

- Margaret S. Odell, “You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll”

Required

Ezek 24-48

Isa 40-55

Pearce and Odell, *above*

Collins, 395-410

---

**March 7 [A] Closed-book Bible Quotations Quiz and Open-Book Midterm Examination**

**[B] “Is it Time for You Yourselves to Live in Paneled Houses While This House is Desolate?”: Haggai and Zechariah**

Discussion: Postcolonial Criticism

- Fernando Segovia (1999), “Notes Toward Refining The Postcolonial Optic”

Required

Haggai and Zechariah

Collins, 417-30

Segovia, *above*

Sharp, 98-100

---

*ENJOY SPRING BREAK*

---

**March 21 [A] “A House of Prayer for All The Peoples”: Isaiah 24-27; 56-66**

*Exams returned; discuss results and rubric*

**[B] “I Am a Hebrew...I Worship the LORD, the God of Heaven:” Jonah and the Book of the Twelve**

Discussion: Jonah and Prophecy

Eckart Frahm, “The Great City: Nineveh in the Age of Sennacherib” and a question to consider: Why did God choose Nineveh? Is the portrait of Jonah sympathetic or not? What is the purpose of the Book of Jonah in the context of the prophetic corpus overall?

Required

Isa 24-27; 56-66

Jonah

Collins, 437-41

Sharp, 92-94

Frahm, *above*

Plus, *recommended*, James Ackerman (1981), “Satire and Symbolism in the Book of Jonah”

Christopher B. Hays, “Isaiah as a Colonized Poet: His Rhetoric of death in Conversation with African Postcolonial Writers”

---

**March 28 [A] “In the First Year of King Cyrus:” Ezra-Nehemiah and Malachai**

*Bible Quotations Quiz #3*

**[B]”These Are the Heads of the Ancestral Houses of the Levites, According to Their Generations:” Chronicles**

*Discussion (Student-led): Space-critical Interpretation*

Jon L. Berquist (2008) “Spaces of Jerusalem” in *Constructions of Space II*  
*Optional* Steven James Schweitzer (2007), “Exploring the Utopian Space of Chronicles: Some Spatial Anomalies”

Required

Ezra-Nehemiah

Malachai

Berquist, *above*

Collins. 431-37; 447-81

Sharp, 100-03

---

**April 4 [A] “How Lovely is Your Dwelling Place...”: Psalms, part 1**

Discussion

David L. Peterson and Kent Harold Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*, pp. 1-14, 21-35, 49-63

**[B]...”O, LORD of Hosts, to Me...”: Psalms, part 2.**

Discussion (Student-led)

Jon D. Levenson, “The Horrifying Ending to Psalm 137, or, The Limitations of Ethical Reading”

Required

The Book of Psalms

Peterson and Richards, *above*

Levenson, *above*

Collins, 483-500

**\*\*\*DRAFTS OF EXEGESIS PAPERS DUE TODAY FOR\*\*\*  
**EARYL COMMENTS, IF YOU WISH****

**April 11 [A]: “Wisdom Cries Out in the Street:” Proverbs**

*Brief Bible Quotations Quiz #4*

-and-

A selection of our favorite proverbs

**[B] “There Was a Man From the Land of Uz...”: Job**

Discussion (Student-led): Theological interpretation

- K.-J. Illman (2003), “Theodicy in Job,” pp. 304-33 in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible: The Goodness of God*; eds., A. Laato and J.C. de Moor

OR

- Larry L. Lyke (1999), “The Song of Songs, Proverbs and the Theology of Love” (Theological Interpretation), pp. 208-23

Required

Proverbs

Job

Illman, above, or Meyers or Lyke

Collins, 500-03;507-22;525-37

-----

*HAPPY EASTER!*

---

*FINAL EXAM STUDY GUIDES WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TODAY IN CLASS*

*\*\*\*Suggestion\*\*\*: Divide the guide among study groups or individuals who will be particularly responsible for preparing specific materials for our 5/2, **student-led** review in class.*

**April 18 [A] “That Which Is, Is Far Off, And Deep, Very Deep:” Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes)**

Discussion (Student-led):

- Carolyn J. Sharp (2004), “Ironic Representation, Authorial Voice and Meaning in Qoheleth,”

**[B] “The Possession of Me is Sweeter Than the Honeycomb:” Ben Sira (Sirach) and the Wisdom of Solomon**

Discussion: The Ancient Near Eastern Sapiential Tradition

- A selection of Mesopotamian wisdom texts to read together in class, including the wise women of Gilgamesh

- For those who are very keen, Benjamin R. Foster’s “Wisdom and the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia,” considering especially the interconnection of natural environment, antiquity, authority and wisdom in both Mesopotamia and Israel

Questions to consider as you read:

How do Israelite and ANE traditions resemble each other (or not) in each particular case?

How are they related to matters of status, antiquity and power?

How and why do you think they are sometimes placed in connection with kingship?

What is the relationship of religion to wisdom in each instance?

How does the Israelite tradition grapple with wisdom, gender and the principle of monotheism?

Required

Qoheleth

Ben Sira

Wisdom of Solomon

Sharp, *above*

Foster, *above* (optional)

R. Harris (1997), “Images of Women in the Gilgamesh Epic”

Collins, 537-44; 593-608

---

**\*\*\*EXEGESIS PAPERS DUE TODAY\*\*\***

**April 25 [A] “Where You Go, I Will Go:” The Short Story Form in Ruth, Tobit and Judith**

*Bible Quotations Quiz #5*

**{B} “If I Perish, I Perish:” The Diaspora Experience in Long Form: Esther and The Court Tales of Daniel (1-6)**

Discussion (Student-led)

- Madipoane Msenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) (2005), “Their Hermeneutics Was Strange! Ours is A Necessity! Rereading Vashti as African-South African Women”

Required

Ruth

Tobit

Judith

Esther

Daniel 1-6

Collins, 547-562; 565-74

Msenya, *above*

-----

**May 2 [A] “One Lie the Son of Man”: Daniel, part 2; Maccabees**

Discussion

- Walter Brueggemann (2015) “Preaching the Old Testament”

Please come prepared with a list (in writing) of *five* favorite or problematic passages from the OT (fall and spring semesters) for preaching, and consider how both these categories may be necessary for a healthy, robust Church, fully present in the world.

Required

Daniel, part 2

Maccabees

Collins, 574-90; 611-15

**[B] Canon Formation *and* (Student-led) Final Exam Preparation**

- Please have your study guide prepared in advance, with appropriate page numbers, lecture dates, and any information that will be helpful to your classmates.

*AN OPEN-BOOK FINAL EXAMINATION WILL BE GIVEN DURING THE WEEK OF 5/14*