BITH 211: OT Literature and Interpretation
Wheaton College
Spring Semester 2017
M/W/F 11:35-12:45 Room: BGC 136

Professor: Michael Graves, PhD
Office: BGC 547, x7119
e-mail: michael.graves@wheaton.edu
Office Hours: M 2:00-3:15, T 10:00-12:00
W/F 12:45-2:00

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description:
An overview of the Old Testament, tracing its teaching with respect to historical background and literary character.

Course Objectives:
The mission of the Department of Biblical and Theological Studies at Wheaton College is to help cultivate Christians who are biblically rooted and theologically formed. “OT Literature and Interpretation” contributes to this mission by enabling each student (a) to develop firm roots in the content, history, and literary shape of the Old Testament, and (b) to nurture a sophisticated theological appreciation for the Old Testament as a sacred Christian text with contemporary relevance.

The specific objectives for the course are that each student will be able to:
1. describe in broad outline the historical and geographical context in which the OT was written and the significance of this context for interpreting the OT.
2. recount the basic content, major theological themes and grand narrative of the OT, identifying key people, places, events and dates of the OT.
3. interpret OT texts as ancient literature with reference to genre and compositional features.
4. apply basic principles of hermeneutics to interpretation and application of the OT.
5. relate OT teaching to reflection in other courses and disciplines.

Required Texts:
A standard English translation of the Bible.

OT Lit and Interpretation Course Packet:
Worksheets 1-26

Academic and Disabilities Support:
Wheaton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to contact the Academic and Disability Services Office as early in the semester as possible. Please call 630.752.5941 or send an e-mail to jennifer.nicodem@wheaton.edu for further information.

Wheaton College policy on inclusive language:
For academic discourse, spoken and written, the faculty expects students to use gender inclusive language for human beings.
Academic Honesty:

The following is an official statement from Wheaton College regarding academic honesty:
"Academic dishonesty occurs when a student or any member of an academic community fails to represent the sources of their work, whether on tests, in papers, presentations and projects, or in any academic assignment. Academic dishonesty involves both stealing and lying, in that we steal the ideas and expressions of another contrary to their intent and, in representing them as our own, we lie regarding their authorship. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, any misrepresentation or deception related to assigned or voluntary academic work, any deliberate attempt to gain unfair advantage in completing requirements, and colluding, aiding or abetting the academic dishonesty of another student. The College-wide policy on Academic Honesty is presented in the Student Handbook, and in accord with that policy, incidents of academic dishonesty will be dealt with decisively. All academic work involves engagement with and presentation of the ideas of others, and so your professor would be very willing to assist students in learning how properly to use and give credit for the work of others."

Course Requirements:

The most important element of this course is reading the biblical text. The amount of secondary reading has been reduced in order to facilitate your direct encounter with the Old Testament. The primary textbook for this course is Introduction to the Old Testament by Bill T. Arnold (IntrOT), which will guide you through the individual books of the OT and also provide background information on the world of the OT. Other readings are assigned in support of the biblical text and in conjunction with the writing assignments. It is absolutely essential that all readings be done carefully and thoughtfully. The worksheets, exams, and writing assignments for this course are closely tied to the reading selections. The graded requirements for this course are:

1. WORKSHEETS 20%

The student will complete and turn in a worksheet for almost every biblical reading assignment (see Course Calendar). The purpose of the worksheets is to give focus to the reading. Usually, the worksheets will involve making special observations about the OT text that intersect with the corresponding material from IntrOT or class lectures. The worksheets themselves are not time-consuming—they generally follow the order of the biblical text, and they should be done in conjunction with the reading. In order to receive full credit, a worksheet must be turned in on time and must be complete, i.e., full answers with necessary details from the biblical text. The worksheets are due at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned. They cannot be turned in late without penalty (generally 10% penalty per day late), except due to illness (when the professor has been notified before class) or major emergency (e.g., family death or birth). Also, they may not be submitted in absentia. The worksheets are especially important in assisting the student to achieve course objectives (2), (3), and (4).

2. EXAMS 50%

Two exams will be given in accordance with the course calendar. The exams will cover (1) material from the main textbooks (Arnold, Introduction to the Old Testament, and Wright, Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament), (2) class lectures, (3) maps found in The Student Bible Atlas (Map 10 for the Midterm, Map 14 for the Final), and (4) the biblical text readings.
(1) The student should read the textbooks for major ideas at the paragraph level. Any information presented in the textbooks may be covered on the exams, with the following exception: Any dates or outlines of biblical books that you will need to know will be given in class, either written on the board or in a handout.
(2) If a student misses class, he or she should obtain lecture notes from a classmate.
(3) The Midterm will include multiple choice questions based on Map 10, "The Divided Kingdom," and the Final Exam will include multiple choice questions based on Map 14, "Persia about 450 BC."

(4) The worksheets will serve as study guides for the biblical text readings.

The Midterm may not be made up without penalty except due to illness (when the professor has been notified prior to class) or major emergency (e.g., family death or birth). The Final Exam must be taken at the scheduled time, apart from special permission from the Associate Dean. The two exams will aid the student in achieving course objectives (1), (2), and (3).

3. REVIEW OF LEVITICUS AND ANTHROPOLOGY READINGS 10%

Each student will write a two page single-spaced review of May Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus" and Michael P. Carroll, "One More Time: Leviticus Revisited." In your review, please address the following: (1) Identify one earlier explanation (prior to Douglas' view) as to why certain things are ritually unclean in Leviticus. Be sure to make clear how this older explanation accounts for the category of "uncleanness" in Leviticus. (2) Describe how Douglas' view of "holiness" explains why a blind person cannot serve as priest, why theft is unholy, and why camels are unclean? (3) Finally, describe Michael Carroll's view on why four-legged animals that walk upon their paws are unclean? (Lev. 11:27) Be sure to explain the conceptual basis for Carroll's view.

The review is due February 22. This assignment is especially helpful in aiding the student to achieve objectives (3), (4), and (5).

4. OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION PAPER 20%

Every aspect of this course contributes to the ultimate learning objective: that each student will be able to discern the implications of the Old Testament for Christian living and embrace what the Old Testament teaches. This discernment requires that students understand Old Testament texts in their original literary and historical contexts, and also as texts within the whole of sacred Scripture interpreted within a Christian theological framework.

With this objective in view, each student will write a 7-9-page paper in which they examine an Old Testament passage so as to discern its implications for Christian living, identifying what it teaches within the context of Christian Scripture.

We will be discussing this process of discernment throughout the course. We will be aided in our reflection by reading the essays by I. H. Marshall, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Stanley Porter in Beyond the Bible: Moving From Scripture to Theology. The phrase "beyond the Bible" means simply that we must learn to apply the teaching of biblical texts to new situations that are beyond what the original human writers of the Bible specifically had in mind when they wrote. This act of application requires that we ascertain as best we can the basic content of the text, interpret the text so as to identify a key facet of what it was fundamentally saying, and then apply the text coherently to our new life situation. Each step of this process requires interpretive discernment. Our goal will be to "move from Scripture to theology" in a way that takes its cues from Scripture itself.

In this paper, the student will select a passage from the list below to study. [If a student would like to write on a passage that is not on the list, he or she should speak with the professor.] The paper should (I) begin with a brief general description of the historical setting of the book: its narrative setting for a book such as Exodus; its historical backdrop for a book such as Isaiah; or, for some books (such as Ecclesiastes) its genre and cultural context. Then, the paper should (II) identify where in the book the passage occurs (= the literary context within the book), and how this is significant. After this, the paper should (III) explain the given passage succinctly, for example: What happens in the passage? What is the flow of the thought (or the logic of the story)? What are the key meaningful elements within the passage? What is the significance of this passage for the message of the book?
This is a concise summary explanation of the meaning of the text in its historical/literary sense (i.e., in its original setting). Finally, the paper should (IV) explain what we should understand this text to be teaching us within the context of the Christian Bible. This applied meaning should flow out of a key idea from the historical/literary sense, but it will also move into today's world by considering this idea in light of other biblical texts, biblical theological themes, a Christian sense of our place in God's redemptive history, and the cultural worlds of the Bible and today.


I am looking for clarity and brevity. The first sections must necessarily be concise so as to leave ample room for the final section. Successful papers will reflect literary and historical knowledge of the Bible and also competence in the theoretical issues surrounding the interpretation and application of Scripture. Moreover, this paper should interact with at least three academic sources (e.g., Biblical commentaries, Bible dictionaries, journal articles) that deal with the given passage. These sources should be listed in the Bibliography.

The paper is due on April 26. The paper will help the student in realizing all of the course objectives, but it will especially contribute to objectives (1), (3), and (4).

Grading:

1. Summary of Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Worksheets</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Exams</td>
<td>50% (25% each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>76-73</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>72-70</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-83</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>69-60</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-80</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>59-Below</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Calendar (tentative):

   ➔No reading due.
W: Jan. 11. Introduction, part 2: In what ways is the OT “about” Jesus?
   ➔Read: Read: IntrOT 1-15, 31-50.
M: Jan. 16. Martin Luther King Day
   ➔No reading due
   ➔Read: IntrOT 51-66.
        ➔Read: Gen 1-11; IntrOT 67-83; Matthews/Benjamin (M/B) 27-32; WKSHT #1 Due.
        ➔Read: Gen 12-26; IntrOT 84-98; WKSHT #2 Due.
        ➔Read: Gen 25:19-34; 27-28, 32-33, 35:1-15, 37, 39-50; WKSHT #3 Due.
F: Jan. 27. Exodus.
        ➔Read: Exod 1-7, 11-15, 19-24; skim 25-40; IntrOT 99-115; WKSHT #4 Due.
        ➔Read: Lev 1:1-6:7, 11, 16-20, 23-26; IntrOT 116-130; WKSHT #5 Due.
W: Feb. 1. OT Law in the ANE.
        ➔Read: Lang, "Introduction: Anthropology as a New Model for Biblical Studies," 1-17; M/B 101-114.
        ➔Read: Num 1, 5-6, 10-21; IntrOT 148-166; WKSHT #6 Due.
        ➔Read: Deut 1, 5-6, 12, 17-18, 22-24, 28-34; IntrOT 131-147; WKSHT #7 Due.
        ➔Read: Wright 184-251; Mt 5:17-20, 23:23-24; Rom 10:1-4; Gal 2:15-6:10; 1 Cor 9:3-12.
        ➔Read: Josh 1-12, 22-24, skim 13-21; IntrOT 167-183; M/B 97-98.
        ➔Read: Judg 1-16, skim 17-21; IntrOT 184-206; M/B 167-169; WKSHT #8 Due.
W: Feb. 15. 1-2 Samuel.
        ➔Read: 1 Sam 1-3, 8-20, 24, 26; IntrOT 207-225; WKSHT #9 Due.
        ➔Read: 2 Sam 1-7, 11-12, 22-24; M/B 170-171; Wright 63-108; WKSHT #10 Due.
M: Feb. 20. President's Day
        ➔No reading due
W: Feb. 22. Anthropology and the Old Testament
        ➔Read: 1 Kgs 1-12, 17-21; WKSHT #11 Due.
M: Feb. 27. 1-2 Kings.
        ➔Read: 2 Kgs 1-10, 17-25; IntrOT 226-243; M/B 190-192.
W: Mar. 1. 1-2 Chronicles.
        ➔Read: 1 Chr 15-22; 2 Chr 29-36; IntrOT 244-252; WKSHT #12 Due.
F: Mar. 3. Ezra-Nehemiah.
        ➔Read: Ezra 1-10; Neh 7-10; IntrOT 252-260; M/B 207-209; WKSHT #13 Due.
M: Mar. 6. Spring Break
        ➔No reading due
W: Mar. 8. Spring Break
        ➔No reading due
F: Mar. 10. Spring Break
        ➔No reading due
        ➔Read: Ruth 1-4; Esth 1-10; IntrOT 370-371, 373-375, 378-380.
**W: Mar. 15. Midterm Exam**  
→ No reading due

**F: Mar. 17. The Transmission of the OT: Text and Canon.**  
→ Read: IntrOT 16-30.

→ Read: IntrOT 261-274; Marshall 7-32.

**W: Mar. 22. Proverbs.**  
→ Read: Prov 1-9, 19-24; IntrOT 275-290; WKSHT #14 Due.

**F: Mar. 24. Job/Ecclesiastes.**  
→ Read: Job 1-7, 38-42; Eccl 1-3, 11-12; IntrOT 376-378; WKSHT #15 Due.

**M: Mar. 27. Song of Songs/Lamentations.**  
→ Read: Song 1-8; Lam 1-5; IntrOT 371-373, 375; M/B 321-326; WKSHT #16 Due.

**W: Mar. 29. Development in Theology.**  
→ Read: Marshall 33-54.

**F: Mar. 31. Psalms.**  
→ Read: Pss 1, 2, 8, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 32, 33, 42, 46, 51, 58, 59, 68, 72, 74; IntrOT 291-306; WKSHT #17 Due.

**M: Apr. 3. Psalms.**  
→ Read: Pss 82, 85, 88, 89, 91, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 100, 103, 106, 110, 112, 116, 118, 126, 132, 139, 1st verse of 146-149, 150, skim 119; WKSHT #18 Due.

**W: Apr. 5. Seeking to Apply the Bible in a Biblical Way.**  
→ Read: Marshall 55-79, 81-95.

**F: Apr. 7. Prophetic Literature. Minor Prophets of the 8th Century.**  
→ Read: Amos 1-9; Hos 1-3, 11-14; Joel 1-3; **WKSHT #24 Due.**

**M: Apr. 10. Isaiah.**  
→ Read: Isa 6-12, 19, 24-25, 34-39; IntrOT 307-325; WKSHT #19 Due.

**W: Apr. 12. Isaiah.**  
→ Read: Isa 40-55; Longman/Dillard 301-311; Wright 142-183; WKSHT #20 Due.

**F: Apr. 14. Good Friday**  
→ No reading due

**M: Apr. 17. Jeremiah**  
→ Read: Jer 1, 7-11, 18-20, 26, 28, 30-31, 36-45; WKSHT #21 Due.

**W: Apr. 19. Ezekiel.**  
→ Read: Ezek 1-3, 8-11, 18, 33-39, skim 40-48; IntrOT 326-341; WKSHT #22 Due.

**F: Apr. 21. Daniel.**  
→ Read: Dan 1-12; IntrOT 355-369; WKSHT #23 Due.

**M: Apr. 24. Minor Prophets.**  
→ Read: Mic 1, 4-5; Nah 1; Zeph 1; Obad; Hab; WKSHT #25 Due.

**W: Apr. 26. Interpreting and Applying the Bible.**  
→ Old Testament Interpretation Paper due.

**F: Apr. 28. Minor Prophets of the Post-Exilic Period.**  
→ Read: Hag 2:20-23; Zech 1-6, 9-14; Mal; IntrOT 342-354; WKSHT #26 Due.

**T: May 2. 10:30-12:30 am. Final Exam**  
→ No reading due