

BITH 211: OT Literature and Interpretation
Wheaton College
Spring Semester 2022
M/W/F 11:35-12:45 Room: BGC 134

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Office Hours: M 2:00-3:30, T 10:00-12:00
W/F 12:50-2:15

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description:

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

Course Objectives:

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.
Arnold, Bill T. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Cambridge, 2014.
Graves, M. *How Scripture Interprets Scripture*. Grand Rapids, 2021.
OT Lit and Interpretation Course Packet: Worksheets 1-26.

Academic and Disabilities Support:

Wheaton College is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities, inside and outside the classroom. Students are encouraged to discuss with their professors if they foresee any disability-related barriers in a course. Students who need accommodations in order to fully access this course's content or any part of the learning experience should connect with Learning and Accessibility Services (LAS) as soon as possible to request accommodations <http://wheaton.edu/las> (Student Services Building - Suite 209, las@wheaton.edu, phone 630.752.5615) The accommodations process is dynamic, interactive, and completely free and confidential. Do not hesitate to reach out or ask any questions.

Wheaton College policy on inclusive language:

For academic discourse, spoken and written, the faculty expects students to use gender inclusive language for human beings.

Writing Center:

The Writing Center is a free resource that equips undergraduate and graduate students across the disciplines to develop effective writing skills and processes. This academic year, the Writing Center is offering in-person consultations in our Center in Buswell Library, as well as synchronous video consultations online. Make a one-on-one appointment with a writing consultant at: <https://wheaton.mywconline.com>.

Academic Integrity Policy:

The Wheaton College Community Covenant, which all members of our academic community affirm, states that, "According to the Scriptures, followers of Jesus Christ will...be people of integrity whose word can be fully trusted (Psalm 15:4; Matt. 5:33-37)." It is expected that Wheaton College students, faculty and staff understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and take full personal responsibility and accountability for their work. Wheaton College considers violations of academic integrity a serious offense

against the basic meaning of an academic community and against the standards of excellence, integrity, and behavior expected of members of our academic community. Violations of academic integrity break the trust that exists among members of the learning community at Wheaton and degrade the College's educational and research mission.

Title IX and Mandatory Reporting:

Wheaton College instructors help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Each instructor in the college has a mandatory reporting responsibility related to their role as a faculty member. Faculty members are required to share information with the College when they learn of conduct that violates our Nondiscrimination Policy or information about a crime that may have occurred on Wheaton College's campus. Confidential resources available to students include Confidential Advisors, the Counseling Center, Student Health Services, and the Chaplain's Office. More information on these resources and College Policies is available at: <http://www.wheaton.edu/equityandtitleIX>.

Covid-19 Syllabus Statement:

In accordance with the Wheaton College Face Covering Policy, CDC-approved face coverings are required while attending class. Failure to comply with wearing a face covering will result in dismissal from the class session and an unexcused absence. Multiple violations can lead to dismissal from the class. Student Health Services will officially communicate when a student must be absent from class due to quarantine or isolation. Remote learning will not be automatically offered for the spring semester. The student is encouraged to coordinate with the instructor any needed adjustments to tests or deadlines. Learning & Accessibility Services will also provide assistance for students in quarantine if necessary.

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.

1. WORKSHEETS

20%

Each student should complete and turn in a worksheet for almost every biblical text 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 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 (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 textbook (Arnold, *Introduction to the Old Testament*), (2) material covered in class lectures, (3) key maps, and (4) the biblical text readings.

(1) The student should read the textbook 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 the map of Canaan-Israel, and the Final Exam will include multiple choice questions based on the map of the Ancient Near East (these will be distributed in class).

(4) The worksheets will be returned in class and serve as study guides for the biblical text readings.

No other study guides will be provided. Diligent effort on the worksheets, careful reading of the textbook, and solid class notes are the best preparation for the exams.

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 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 Mary Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus." In your review, please address the following: (1) Identify one earlier explanation (as described in Douglas' essay) as to why certain things are ritually unclean in Leviticus. Be sure to make clear how this older explanation attempts to account for the category of "uncleanness" in Leviticus. (2) Describe Douglas' view of "holiness." According to Douglas, What ideas are associated with the category of "holiness" in Leviticus? (3) Explain how Douglas' view of holiness (according to her argument) accounts for (i) why a blind person cannot serve as a priest, (ii) why theft is unholy, and (iii) why camels are unclean?

The review is ***due February 23 at the start of class*** (submitted through Schoology). A late review will be reduced in grade by half a letter grade per day late. This assignment is especially helpful in aiding students in achieving objectives (3), (4), and (5).

4. OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION PAPER

20%

Each student will write a 7-10-page paper (12-font, one-inch margins) in which he or she examines an Old Testament passage in its literary and historical contexts so as to discern its implications for Christian living. For this paper, the student will select a passage from the following list: Genesis 11:1-9; Genesis 38:1-30; Exodus 16:1-36; Numbers 15:32-36; Deuteronomy 24:19-22; Joshua 2:1-24; 1 Samuel 21:1-9; 1 Kings 18:20-46; 2 Kings 22:1-20; Ezra 9:1-15; Isaiah 5:8-10; Jeremiah 10:1-10; Obadiah 15-21; Jonah 4:1-11; Malachi 2:1-9; Proverbs 1:8-19; Psalm 23:1-6; Ecclesiastes 3:18-22; Esther 9:1-17. The paper should have the following sections:

(I) A brief general description of the historical setting of the book. This may be its place in Israel's history and possible context of composition (for a book such as 1 Samuel); its historical backdrop and possible context of composition (for a book such as Isaiah); or its genre and cultural context (for books such as Ecclesiastes and Psalms). This brief summary of the historical setting can be completed in approximately one to one-and-a-half pages.

(II) A brief explanation of the literary context of your passage within the book. What is the overall literary structure of the book? Where in this overall structure does your passage appear? What comes right before and right after your passage? How does the location of your passage within the book give insight into its meaning? This brief explanation of the literary context can be completed in approximately one to one-and-a-half pages.

(III) A concise exposition of the passage against the backdrop of its historical and literary contexts. First, you should give a succinct overview of the passage (one paragraph): What happens in the passage? What is the flow of thought (or the logic of the story)? Then, work through the passage in order (sentence-by-sentence, verse-by-verse, or section-by-section, depending on the size and nature of your passage): What are key details in the passage that the reader should be sure to notice? How are they significant? What details in the text are not immediately clear and require explanation? Finally, you should sum up one or two key ideas that this text communicates. This concise exposition can be completed in roughly three to four pages.

(IV) A thoughtful reflection on one specific application that we can learn from this text within the context of the Christian Bible as a whole. This applied meaning should flow out of a key idea from section III, but it should also move into today's world by considering this idea in light of (a) other biblical texts, (b) the cultural worlds of the Bible and today, and (c) Scripture's core values as exemplified in Jesus.

Regarding (a) other biblical texts, you should identify at least five other biblical passages that address the topic of your applied meaning. You can do this by consulting commentaries, Bible dictionary articles, journal articles, or a concordance (see the 'Library Guide OT Lit' in Schoology). In terms of (b) the cultural worlds of the Bible and today, you should consider how your text's key idea was expressed in its ancient context and think about how a concrete application to today's world might look. As for (c) Scripture's core values as exemplified in Jesus, the applied meaning should be rooted in our post-New Testament Christian context and reflect the core values that Jesus exhibited in his life and teaching (e.g., see Graves, pp. 18-19). Be humble in how you articulate your applied meaning, but suggest an application that is specific. This section can be completed in roughly two to three pages.

I am looking for clarity and brevity. 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. *This paper should interact with at least three academic sources* (e.g., commentaries, journal articles) that deal with the given passage. An academic source bases its explanations on relevant primary sources and coherent reasoning, and typically reflects a process of peer review (see the 'Library Guide OT Lit'). These sources should be listed in the Bibliography.

The paper is **due on April 27** (submitted through Schoology). A late paper will be reduced in grade by half a letter grade per day late. 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 Scale:

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

Course Calendar (tentative):

M: Jan. 10. What is the Old Testament, and does it still matter?

→No reading due.

W: Jan. 12. Old Testament Overview. Biblical Interpretation

→Read: IntrOT 1-15; Graves 1-15.

F: Jan. 14. In what ways is the OT 'about' Jesus?

→Read: Graves 16-24; Luke 24:13-49.

M: Jan. 17. Martin Luther King Jr. Day
 →No reading due.

W: Jan. 19. The Pentateuch: Introduction.
 →Read: IntrOT 51-66.

F: Jan. 21. Genesis. Creation & Origins.
 →Read: Gen 1-11; IntrOT 67-83; Gilgamesh in M/B (in Schoology); WKSHT #1 Due.

M: Jan. 24. Genesis.
 →Read: Gen 12-26; IntrOT 84-98; WKSHT #2 Due.

W: Jan. 26. Genesis.
 →Read: Gen 25:19-34; 27-28, 32-33, 35:1-15, 37, 39-50; WKSHT #3 Due.

F: Jan. 28. Exodus.
 →Read: Exod 1-7, 11-15, 19-24; skim 25-40; IntrOT 99-115; WKSHT #4 Due.

M: Jan. 31. Leviticus.
 →Read: Lev 1:1-6:7, 11, 16-20, 23-26; IntrOT 116-130; WKSHT #5 Due.

W: Feb. 2. OT Law in the ANE.
 →Read: Lang, "Introduction: Anthropology as a New Model for Biblical Studies," 1-17 (in Schoology); Code of Hammurabi in M/B (in Schoology).

F: Feb. 4. Numbers.
 →Read: Num 1, 5-6, 10-21; IntrOT 148-166; WKSHT #6 Due.

M: Feb. 7. Deuteronomy.
 →Read: Deut 1, 5-6, 12, 17-18, 22-24, 28-34; Graves 113-127; WKSHT #7 Due.

W: Feb. 9. Jesus and the Law of God.
 →Read: Graves 127-138; Mt 5:17-20, 23:23-24; Gal 2:15-6:10; 1 Cor 9:3-12.

F: Feb. 11. Historical Books: Introduction. Joshua.
 →Read: Josh 1-12, 22-24, skim 13-21; IntrOT 167-183; M/B for Joshua (in Schoology).

M: Feb. 14. Judges.
 →Read: Judg 1-16; IntrOT 184-206; M/B for Judges (in Schoology); WKSHT #8 Due

W: Feb. 16. 1-2 Samuel.
 →Read: 1 Sam 1-3, 8-20, 24, 26; IntrOT 207-225; WKSHT #9 Due.

F: Feb. 18. 1-2 Samuel. Davidic Covenant.
 →Read: 2 Sam 1-7, 11-12, 22-24; M/B for David (Schoology); WKSHT #10 Due

M: Feb. 21. President's Day
 →No reading due.

W: Feb. 23. Anthropology and the Old Testament
 →Read: Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus," 100-116 (in Schoology); Review of 'Leviticus and Anthropology' readings due (submit through Schoology).

F: Feb. 25. 1-2 Kings.
 →Read: 1 Kgs 1-12, 17-21; WKSHT #11 Due.

M: Feb. 28. 1-2 Kings.
 →Read: 2 Kgs 1-10, 17-25; IntrOT 226-243; M/B for 2 Kings (in Schoology).

W: Mar. 2. 1-2 Chronicles.
 →Read: 1 Chr 15-22; 2 Chr 29-36; IntrOT 244-252; WKSHT #12 Due.

F: Mar. 4. Ezra-Nehemiah.
 →Read: Ezra 1-10; Neh 7-10; IntrOT 252-260; Decree of Cyrus (Schoology); WKSHT #13 Due

M: Mar. 7. Spring Break
 →No reading due

W: Mar. 9. Spring Break
 →No reading due

F: Mar. 11. Spring Break
 →No reading due

M: Mar. 14. Ruth/Esther. Review.
 →Read: Ruth 1-4; Esth 1-10; Graves 45-76.

W: Mar. 16. Midterm Exam
 →No reading due

F: Mar. 18. The Transmission of the OT: Text and Canon.
 →Read: IntrOT 16-30.

M: Mar. 21. Old Testament Poetry. Biblical Interpretation & Application.
 →Read: IntrOT 261-274; Graves 175-187.

W: Mar. 23. Proverbs.
 →Read: Prov 1-9, 19-24; IntrOT 275-290; WKSHT #14 Due.

F: Mar. 25. Job/Ecclesiastes.
 →Read: Job 1-7, 38-42; Eccl 1-3, 11-12; IntrOT 376-378; WKSHT #15 Due.

M: Mar. 28. Song of Songs/Lamentations.
 →Read: Song 1-8; Lam 1-5; IntrOT 371-375; M/B for SoS (Schoology); WKSHT #16 Due

W: Mar. 30. Development in Theology.
 →Read: Graves 139-173.

F: April 1. 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: April 4. 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: April 6. Seeking to Apply the Bible in a Biblical Way.
 →Read: Graves 77-112.

F: April 8. Prophetic Literature. Minor Prophets of the 8th Century.
 →Read: Amos 1-9; Hos 1-3, 11-14; Joel 1-3; WKSHT #19 Due.

M: April 11. Isaiah.
 →Read: Isa 6-12, 19, 24-25, 34-39; IntrOT 307-325; WKSHT #20 Due.

W: April 13. Isaiah.
 →Read: Isa 40-55; Longman/Dillard 301-311 (Schoology); WKSHT #21 Due

F: April 15. Good Friday
 →No reading due.

M: April 18. Jeremiah.
 →Read: Jer 1, 7-11, 18-20, 26, 28, 30-31, 36-45; WKSHT #22 Due.

W: April 20. Ezekiel.
 →Read: Ezek 1-3, 8-11, 18, 33-39, skim 40-48; IntrOT 326-341; WKSHT #23 Due.

F: April 22. Daniel.
 →Read: Dan 1-12; IntrOT 355-369; WKSHT #24 Due.

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

W: April 27. Interpreting and Applying the Bible.
 →**Old Testament Interpretation Paper due (submit through Schoology).**

F: April 29. Minor Prophets of the Post-Exilic Period.
 →Read: Hag 2:20-23; Zech 1-6, 9-14; Mal; IntrOT 342-354; WKSHT #26 Due.

R: May 5. 10:30 am-12:30 pm. Final Exam
 →No reading due