

Old Testament Studies
Penn West Conference Academy for Ministry
Rev. Dr. Ruth E. Shaver, Instructor
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Textbook:

Collins, John J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.

Additional Required Texts:

Jewish Publication Society. *TANAKH: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Scriptures*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985.

Friedman, Richard Elliot. *The Bible with Sources Revealed*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2003.

Recommended Reference Text:

Knight, Douglas A., and Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Meaning of the Bible: What Jewish Scriptures and the Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011.

Seniors in the Academy will have the option to do a presentation on a relevant topic in the March session of this year in lieu of a written assignment on that same topic. Information on this option will be provided to students when appropriate.

Course Purpose:

To provide students with an appropriate understanding of the corpus of the Hebrew Scriptures and the exegetical skills necessary for the pastoral and educational leadership of a Christian congregation in the United Church of Christ tradition. This provides students with specific experience for the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers of the United Church of Christ for “Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions”:

- Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.
- Nurturing effective proclamation and preaching.
- Understanding the history of the Christian church, from biblical times forward.
- Bringing life to the sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness.
- Leading faith formation effectively across generations.

Assignments and expectations of participation reflect these specific Marks and are designed to help students discover how study of Scripture applies to other Marks, as well, as noted in this syllabus.

Course Expectations/Marks:

- That each student will be prepared for class to the best of his/her ability. If circumstances limit your ability to prepare, please notify me as soon as possible so that I can adapt or assist you to make the most of your class experience. Mark: Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the church.
- That each student will attend every class session. Again, if circumstances do not allow for this, please let me know as far in advance as possible so that we can make suitable alternate arrangements. Mark: Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the church.
- That written assignments will be the work of the individual submitting them, and that resources used in the preparation of assignments will be noted and referenced as appropriate (you may use footnotes, endnotes, parenthetical references, and/or bibliography as you see fit). Mark: Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity. This includes for published materials the author's name, the title of the book/article, the page number(s) for the reference, the publisher, and the date of copyright and publication *at a minimum*. For web-based resources, this includes the full url in addition to the author's name and any copyright notice published on the site as well as the date on which you viewed the website. You may also use video or audio resources; note the type of resource in the bibliographic information (these are not actual resources as given!):
 - Ehrman, Bart. *Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel of John*. Great Courses, 2007. Audio CD.
 - *The Lost Years of Jesus*. National Geographic Productions, 2000. Videotape.
 - "Paul's Ephesus," *The Naked Archaeologist*. Discovery Communications, 2009. Recorded broadcast, The History Channel, 18 May 2010.
- When a given number of pages is expected, that number is based on 12-point type, double spaced, with 1" margins all around. Generally speaking, this is 250 words/page. A 4-5 page essay is 1000-1250 words, give or take. You are welcome to use larger fonts; please do not use anything less than 12 point type or less than 1.5 spaces between lines..._Mark: Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.
- That help will be sought when needed and that questions will be asked. Learning takes place best when the instructor knows what the students need and questions are the best way to communicate this information. Marks: Attending to one's own spiritual and pastoral care and engagement in supervision, as appropriate. Demonstrating excellent communications skills. Practicing self-care and life balance.
- That opinions will be respected and that learning will take place in an environment of honest questioning. Each person's faith experiences are as individual as his or her fingerprints and thus we all encounter Christ differently. Marks: Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives. Practicing the radical hospitality of God. Identifying and working to overcome implicit bias in all ministry settings and in the life of the church.
- That there will be joy and laughter as we encounter God, Christ, and Spirit together. Mark: Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual nurture and development.

2016-2017: The Torah

September: Genesis

October: Exodus

March: Leviticus-Numbers

May: Deuteronomy

Session 1 (September):

Continuing students should prepare the following ahead of time; new students are encouraged to have materials before class if at all possible:

- Read Collins, chapters 2, 3, and 4 and be prepared to discuss the key points outlined at the beginning of each chapter.
- Read the book of Genesis.
- Prepare a sermon using Ruth, Esther, Jonah, Daniel 1-6, or Daniel 7-12 as your main text. Be sure to tell enough of the story in the sermon (or provide a copy of a synopsis used as the Scripture reading) that people will know the story. (New students are exempt from this assignment.)

We will discuss the Genesis narrative and its place in the Bible as well as in Christianity and the culture at large. Mark: Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives.

We will reflect on the process of teaching Biblical literature across different understandings of how the Bible is to be used by Christian believers. Mark: Understanding community context and navigating change with a community.

Homework for Flipped Classroom Session 2 (October):

- Prepare a 3-minute children's sermon on one of the following stories, taking into account what children at different ages are able to understand: Ishmael and Hagar in the desert; the sacrifice of Isaac; Judah and Tamar; Joseph's brothers leave him for dead; Joseph denies Potiphar's wife. You will be presenting this in class on October 8; no written material is necessary.
- Read Collins, chapters 5 and 6 and be prepared to discuss the key points outlined at the beginning of each chapter.
- Read the Book of Exodus.
- View the lecture before class (link to be sent in e-mail by September 25).
- NEW STUDENTS ONLY: Please read Collins, Introduction and chapter 1, and prepare a 3-5 page paper addressing the key points at the beginning of each chapter, written in your own words, to show that you have a basic understanding of the content.

Flipped Classroom Session 2 (October):

We hear the presentations by all students and reflect together on the problems associated with teaching difficult stories from the Bible to children.

We will work together to prepare an overview of the book of Exodus that can be taught with middle school students.

Homework for Session 3 (March):

- Read Collins, chapter 7 and be prepared to discuss the key points outlined at the beginning of the chapter.
- Read the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

- Using Friedman as a guide, prepare a teaching plan to introduce the Documentary Hypothesis to a group of adult newcomers to your church who have no Biblical background and want to know why and how Christians (and specifically members of the United Church of Christ) take the Bible seriously when it so obviously contradicts itself. Mark: Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, general welcome, and changing lives.

Session 3 (March):

In this session, we will discuss the Priestly theology in the books of Leviticus and Numbers and how that theology is or is not present in Christianity.

We will reflect on the assumptions that we who are knowledgeable about the Bible tend to make when teaching those who have no previous background.

Homework for Flipped Classroom Session 4 (May):

- Choose ONE “abomination” statements from Leviticus or Numbers and prepare a brief (4 minute) sermon on the passage. Be sure to address the context in which the statement was made and how it is thought of today, especially if there has been a change within the past century. You will be presenting this in class on May 13; no written material is necessary.
- Read Collins, chapter 8 and be prepared to discuss the key points outlined at the beginning of each chapter.
- Read the book of Deuteronomy.
- View the lecture before class (link to be sent via e-mail by April 23).

Flipped Classroom Session 4 (May):

We will hear the presentations by all students and reflect on the need to tread carefully with Biblical passages in multiple contexts, including textual, Christian historical, and modern societal. Mark: Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership.

We will work together to produce an outline of the book of Deuteronomy that could be used for a newsletter column, an adult study teaching plan, and/or the introductory sermon for a series on Deuteronomy.

(Proposed) Homework for Year 2, Session 1 (September):

- Read Collins, chapters 9 and 10 and be prepared to discuss the key points outlined at the beginning of each chapter.
- Read the books of Joshua and Judges.
- Choose any one of the topics following and prepare a 6-8 page essay on the theme as it is presented in the Torah. Be sure to use all five books, either as story examples or for laws/admonitions concerning the topic. (Note that the book by Knight and Levine could be an excellent source of information for this essay.)
 - Purity
 - Covenant
 - Obedience
 - Relationships
 - Festivals
 - Foreigners