

## Biblical Foundations Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

<b>Professor</b>	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	<b>Course</b>	Version 3.2.1
<b>Phone</b>	902-425-7051	<b>Meets</b>	Thursdays
<b>Email</b>	<a href="mailto:ddriver@astheology.ns.ca">ddriver@astheology.ns.ca</a>	<b>Time</b>	2:00–3:00 PM
<b>Office</b>	Main Building, Room 106	<b>Room</b>	Online
<b>Hours</b>	Thursdays, 2:00–4:00 PM	<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://astheology.ns.ca">astheology.ns.ca</a>

### 1 Course Description

*From the Academic Calendar:* This course explores the First Testament of the Bible as a foundational element of Christian religious heritage. Students will be introduced to a progression of historical and literary data important to understanding the Old Testament in its originating cultural contexts and to considering its resonances in later cultural contexts, including our own.

The broad sweep of biblical tradition and related historical considerations will be presented in large part through guided study of the course textbook. Each week we will also give close attention in class to a particular textual instance, allowing students to develop their exegetical and interpretive skills in a process that moves towards integration of historical, literary and theological elements.

In addition, we will explore a range of practices—“things you can do with the Bible”—thus encountering the Hebrew Bible in the context of applications that have constituted much of its experienced liveliness within faith communities over millennia. The Bible’s historical and contemporary contributions to personal and communal spiritual formation and practice come into focus here, and students are given an opportunity to consider how the Bible might figure in formative ways within their practice of ministry.

## 2 Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to: name major Old Testament people and events; give key dates for Israel's history and summarize the succession of superpowers in the Ancient Near Eastern political theatre from the time of Egypt to Greece; locate a few important biblical sites on a map; classify prophetic literature relative to the exile; recognize genres of biblical literature and cite examples from the reading; understand the general shape of the Masoretic Text tradition and differentiate it from other canonical orders; defend a decision to pronounce or circumlocute the divine name; report on parallel and divergent material across the Law and the Prophets; articulate multiple rationales for sabbath observance; memorize and recite ten verses of a psalm.

Students should also be able to identify settings in which the scriptures of Israel are read (notably the synagogue, church, and academy), employ terminology appropriate to these communities, recognize where their own biographies place them in relation to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and its uses, and monitor and test their individual attitudes and assumptions. They should be able to extend their awareness of the Bible's contemporary readers to the Bible's long history of reception. Finally, students should begin to infer what Jesus meant in speaking of "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms" (Luke 24:44), and so learn to hear claims about New Testament fulfilment of scripture in light of the unique voice that the Old Testament retains along side of the New in Christian scripture.

## 3 Required Texts & Materials

The following texts are required. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase their own copies. Library copies that are not reference works have been placed on a 2-hour reserve.

- [NRSV] M. D. Coogan, ed. *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: NRSV*. 4th ed. Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0195289602.
- [HBFB] J. Kaminsky and J. Lohr. *The Hebrew Bible for Beginners: A Jewish and Christian Introduction*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1426775635.
- [Heschel] Abraham Heschel. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951 (repr. 2005). ISBN 978-0374529758.
- [Irenaeus] St Irenaeus of Lyons. *On the Apostolic Preaching*. Trans. John Behr. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997. ISBN 978-0881411744.

An acceptable alternative study Bible is the NJPS: Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition* (Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). A reference copy is available in the library, and it is well worth consulting. However, the instructor will cite the NRSV when writing quizzes and exams.

## 4 Supplementary Texts

Supplementary readings will be recommended throughout the semester. Excerpts from this literature, ordinarily an article or a book chapter per week, will either be placed on reserve or made available for download through the course website.

Students are not strictly required to read this additional material; then again, students who choose not to read it should not expect to receive an "A" for the course.

## 5 Course Outline

We will adhere to the schedule in [Table 1](#) as closely as possible, though the instructor reserves the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

§. Primary (total chapters)	Secondary	Supplementary	Date
I. LAW / TORAH / PENTATEUCH			
1. Genesis 1–11	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 1–26]	C. Seitz	20 Oct.
2. Genesis 12–50	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 27–64]	G. Anderson	27 Oct.
3. Exodus 1–18	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 65–75]	C. Mathews McGinnis	3 Nov.
4. Exodus 19–40	[ <a href="#">Heschel</a> , all]	Intro to Heschel	10 Nov.
5. Deuteronomy (34)	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 77–99]	J. Levenson	17 Nov.
II. PROPHETS: FORMER & LATTER			
☞ <i>First paper is due at the start of class six</i>			
6. Joshua, Judges (45)	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 103–121]	P. Tribble	24 Nov.
7. 1 & 2 Samuel (55)	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 123–143]	R. Alter	1 Dec.
8. 1 & 2 Kings (47)	[ <a href="#">Irenaeus</a> , all]	Intro to Irenaeus	8 Dec.
9. Isaiah 1–12, 36–66	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 145–168]	N. MacDonald	15 Dec.
~. No Class: Term Break			22, 29 Dec.
10. Hosea–Nahum (41)	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 169–184]	J. Nogalski	5 Jan.
III. WRITINGS: WISDOM & PRAISE			
☞ <i>Second paper is due at the start of class eleven</i>			
11. Psalms 1–19, 72–74, 89–106	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 187–202]	G. Sheppard	12 Jan.
12. Ecclesiastes (12)	[ <a href="#">HBFB</a> , pp. 203–246]	M. Fox, K. Dell	19 Jan.
☞ <i>End of Directed Study: Final marks are due for this course</i>			31 Jan.

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

See the AST website for a list of other [important dates](#).

## 6 Evaluation

### 6.1 Grade Structure for BF 1001

- I will announce **reading quizzes** throughout the semester, as often as once a week. They are designed to ensure that you have read the assigned material carefully. Students should be able to answer the questions without consulting a Bible.
- Students are to **memorize ten verses from the Psalms** in the King James Version and recite it to me privately, in my office, by the last day of class. You may select ten verses from one psalm, one verse from ten psalms, or any combination in between.
- Two **short papers** will facilitate student reflection on the two extended works of biblical interpretation, by [[Heschel](#)] and [[Irenaeus](#)]. Each should be about 3,000 words long. They are due at the start of classes six and eleven, respectively.
  - The **first paper** will articulate and evaluate multiple rationales for sabbath observance by interacting with biblical and post-biblical traditions. The latter must include, but need not be limited to, Heschel's *The Sabbath*.

- (b) The **second paper** will explore Irenaeus' use of the Old Testament as Christian scripture by: succinctly summarizing *On the Apostolic Preaching*, selecting a characteristic example of biblical interpretation in that work, and then developing and defending a coherent thesis about that instance of interpretation.
4. To facilitate our interaction at a distance, the student will submit a **one page response to the reading every week**. It should be submitted to me by email on Thursdays, and it will form the basis for one of two things: (a) my comments back by email, or (b) our discussion via phone or video chat.

The breakdown for the semester's total work is shown in [Table 2](#).

Reading Quizzes	20%
Memorization	10%
First Paper	25%
Second Paper	25%
Response Pages	20%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

## 6.2 Grading System at AST

AST's [Academic Calendar](#) provides guidelines and detailed criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using the benchmarks in [Table 3](#).

A+	94–100	Exceptional
A	87–93	Outstanding
A–	80–86	Excellent
B+	77–79	Good
B	73–76	Acceptable
B–	70–72	Marginal
C	60–69	Unsatisfactory
F	0–59	Failure
FP	0	Failure due to Plagiarism

Table 3: Summary of Grading System

## 7 Other Policy

Late work will not be accepted, except in genuinely extenuating circumstances.

Essay submissions must be typewritten, double-spaced, and free from error. In this course they should follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd Edition (refer to the free, online [Student Supplement](#)). [Plagiarism](#), if [detected](#), will result in failure of the course.

Students should request permission to record a class. If permission is granted, I stipulate that the recording be for personal use only. It may not be shared or distributed.

Finally, as [cognitive psychologists have demonstrated](#), “laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers.” I therefore discourage the use of laptops in the classroom, except to facilitate presentation.