

Hebrew Bible The Book of Genesis

Professor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 2.1.1
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Hours	Tuesdays, 1:30–3:30 PM	Website	astheology.ns.ca

1 Course Description

From the Academic Calendar: In the modern period an enormous amount has been written about the genesis of Genesis, the history *behind* the first book of the Bible. Prior to the critical era, however, perhaps even more has been written in commentary upon the Book of Genesis, forming a history *before* the text (the history of the book's reception). These two approaches to the history of Genesis can seem radically different. Indeed, some commentators today still hold that the dawn of the historical-critical era marks a definitive break with traditional interpretation, for good or for ill. Then again, others now seek to combine what can be known about worlds behind and before the Book of Genesis into a more comprehensive theological vision. In this course we will explore histories of Genesis in parallax, seeking above all to let them shape our understanding of the Book of Genesis as a core part of Jewish and Christian scripture from antiquity down through the present day.

2 Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to: remember and summarize events from the Genesis narratives in detail, locating them approximately by chapter; name and differentiate the most important ancestors (patriarchs and matriarchs) of Israel; explain different major models for the interpretation of Genesis, illustrating them with particular texts; use a variety of commentaries on Genesis from a number of different historical eras; distinguish text and interpretation by focusing on the afterlives of Adam and Eve; analyze claims made by different faith communities on the legacy of Abraham; critique specific arguments put forward by scholars about the meaning of select parts of Genesis; generate questions relevant to the interpretation of short passages from Genesis; construct an original argument in aid of the exposition of short passages from Genesis.

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 will be 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.
- [Anderson] Gary A. Anderson. *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. ISBN 978-0664226992.
- [Levenson] Jon D. Levenson. *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0691163550.
- [Provan] Iain Provan. *Discovering Genesis: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN 978-0802872371.

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.

4 Supplementary Texts

Supplementary readings will be recommended throughout the semester. Excerpts from this literature may either be placed on reserve or made available for download through the course website. Outstanding students will also pursue leads on their own, making maximum use of notes and bibliographies in the required textbooks.

Major modern commentaries on Genesis include:

M. M. Kalisch (1858)	O. Procksch (³ 1924)	G. von Rad (ET ² 1972)
J. P. Lange (ET 1868)	B. Jacob (1934)	R. Davidson (1973)
F. Delitzsch (⁵ 1899)	A. Richardson (1953)	C. Westermann (1974)
A. Dillmann (⁶ 1892)	A. Clamer (1953)	B. Vawter (1977)
H. Holzinger (1898)	U. Cassuto (1961–64)	N. Sarna (1989)
S. R. Driver (1904)	E. A. Speiser (1964)	J. Ebach [37–50, HthKAT] (2007)
J. Skinner (1910)	W. Zimmerli (³ 1967, 76)	T. Longman (2016)
H. Gunkel (⁴ 1917)	D. Kidner (1967)	C. Dohmen [1–11, KB] (2017)

Commentaries on Genesis in the AST library include:

Targums: BS 709.2 B5 1987 VV. 1A, 1B, 6 (c. 150-?)	Leibowitz, Nehama: BS 1235.3 L413 1981
Didymus the Blind: BS 1235 D4913 2016 (d. 398)	Wenham, Gordon : BS 491.2 W67 1982
Augustine of Hippo: BS 1235 A8413 1991 (d. 430)	Brueggemann, Walter: BS 1235.3 B78 (1982)
Bede, the Venerable: BS 1235 B43 2008 (d. 735)	Maher, Michael: BS 1235.3 M346 1982
ACCS, Genesis 1–11: BS 1235.3 G46 2001	Westermann, Claus: BS 1235.3 W43213 1986, 1987, 1994
ACCS, Genesis 12–50: BS 1235.53 G46 2002	Sarna, Nahum: BS 1235.3 S325 1989
RCS, Genesis 1–11: BS 1235.53 G455 2012	Hamilton, Victor: BS 1235.3 H32 1990, 1995
Luther, Martin: BR 330 E5 1955 VV.1–8 (d. 1546)	Scullion, John: BS 1235.3 S37 1992
Calvin, John: BS 1235 C293 1948 (d. 1564)	Fox, Everett: BS 1223 A3 F68 1995
Patrick, Simon: BS 1235 P36 1695	Hamilton, Victor: BS 1235.3 H323 1995
Henry, Matthew: BS 490 H4 1961 (d. 1714)	Hartley, John: BS 1235.3 H37 2000
Hershon, Paul Isaac: BS 1235 H47 (1883)	Towner, Sibley: BS 1235.3 T69 2001
Delitzsch, Franz: BS 1235 D4 (1888)	Walton, John: BS 1235.53 W35 2001
Skinner, John: BS 1235 S45 1917, 1963 (1930)	Cotter, David: BS 1235.52 C68 2003
Richardson, Alan: BS 1235 R66 1959	Briscoe, Stuart: BS 1151.2 C66 2004
Cassuto, Umberto: BS 1235.3 C3 (1961)	McKeown, James: BS 1235.53 M35 2008
Herbert, Arthur: BS 1235.3 H4 (1962)	Arnold, Bill: BS 1235.53 A76 2009
Speiser, E. A.: BS 1233 S64 1964	Goldingay, John: BS 1235.53 G65 2010
Kidner, Derek: BS 1235.3 K47 (1967)	Reno, Russell: BS 1235.53 R46 2010
von Rad, Gerhard: BS 1235.3 R3213 1972	Cook, Joan: BS 1235.53 C66 2011
Plaut, Gunther: BS 1225.3 P55 V. 1 (1974)	De La Torre, Miguel: BS 1235.53 D4 2011
Vawter, Bruce: BS 1235.3 V38 1977	Coleson, Joseph: BS 1235.53 C64 2012
Davidson, Robert: BS 1235.3 D3 1973, 1979	Longman, Tremper: BS 1235.53 L66 2016

5 Course Outline

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

§. Primary	Anderson	Levenson	Provan	Date
1. Genesis 49				6 Jan.
2. Genesis 9	Intro–1		1–3	13 Jan.
3. Genesis 1	2–3		4	20 Jan.
4. Genesis 2	4–5		5	27 Jan.
5. Genesis 3	6–7		6	3 Feb.
6. Genesis 4–5	8–End		7	10 Feb.
☞ First paper is due at the start of class seven				
7. Genesis 6–11		Intro	8	17 Feb.
~. No Class: Term Break (Monday to Friday)				24 Feb.
8. Genesis 12–15		1–2		3 Mar.
9. Genesis 16–25		3–4	9	10 Mar.
10. Genesis 26–36		5	10	17 Mar.
11. Genesis 37–45		6	11	24 Mar.
☞ Second paper is due at the start of class twelve				
12. Genesis 46–50				31 Mar.
☞ End of Term: Final marks are due for all courses				12 Apr.

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

See the AST website for a list of other **important dates**.

6 Evaluation and Grade Structure

1. The professor will set **reading prompts** throughout the semester, as often as once a week. Prompts will consist of questions drawn from the secondary reading, and so presuppose that students have read the assigned material carefully. Points may be deducted if it becomes evident that the reading has not been taken seriously.
2. Students must lead **two 30-minute seminars** on single chapters from the Book of Genesis. They should take the lead by briefly outlining the chapter in question, situating it relative to the rest of Genesis, and reporting on their research into at least seven different commentaries. Then, in the balance of the time, they should helping the class elaborate, reflect on, test, challenge, or extend a central idea or two. Students are encouraged to align their seminar preparations with their choice of texts for their exegetical papers.
3. Two **exegetical papers** will facilitate extended exercises in biblical interpretation. Each should focus on a short passage from Genesis and should be 3–4,000 words long. They are due at the start of classes seven and twelve, respectively.
 - (a) The **first paper** will focus on a passage from Genesis 1–11 and should interact carefully with [Anderson], among others.
 - (b) The **second paper** will focus on a passage from Genesis 12–50 and should interact carefully with [Levenson], among others.

The breakdown for the semester’s total work is shown in Table 2.

Reading Prompts	20%
First Seminar	15%
Second Seminar	15%
First Paper	25%
Second Paper	25%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

AST’s **Academic Calendar** provides guidelines and detailed criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using these benchmarks. Note that, at AST, a grade of “C” is deemed “Unsatisfactory.”

7 Other Course 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 encourage the conscientious use of laptops, tablets, and other technology in the classroom. Please do your part to foster an environment of open dialogue by honouring the presence of your classmates.