

The Hebrew Bible as Literature
REL 3213 / JST 3930, Spring 2021
Tu 8-9 (3:00-4:55) MAT 105 / Th 9 (4:05-4:55) ONLINE

Professor: Robert Kawashima
office hours: online by appointment
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Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the literary study of the Hebrew Bible within its ancient Near Eastern context. It contains some of the great literary works to come down to us from antiquity, on par with the Homeric epics. And biblical narrative constitutes the oldest prose literature that we know of at present. Our primary focus will be on a wide and varied reading of biblical narrative — along with a bit of poetry — but students will also be introduced to the scholarly study of the Bible from a literary perspective. More generally, this course will introduce students to the scholarly, interdisciplinary study of literature. That is, if the solutions and interpretations proposed will be specific to the Bible, the problems and ideas raised will have relevance for the study of literature in general.

Required Texts:

HarperCollins Study Bible — or other approved translation
Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, second edition
Secondary readings, course materials, and other information will be made available through **Canvas** at e-Learning.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory

Participation — 10%

2 Writing Exercises (3 pages) — 30%

2 Exams — 60%

Make-up exams and late papers must be approved by instructor beforehand, or justified afterward by providing appropriate documentation (medical, etc.).

Grade scale:

87–89 = B+ 77–79 = C+ 67–69 = D+ below 60 = E			
93–100 = A	83–86 = B	73–76 = C	63–66 = D
90–92 = A-	80–82 = B-	70–72 = C-	60–62 = D

Class Etiquette During a Pandemic

If you have enrolled in a face-to-face section, you have committed yourself to wearing a **MASK PROPERLY** in class and to getting **TESTED** regularly, etc. UF's COVID and other policies regarding this class are provided at the bottom of this syllabus. If you have enrolled in an on-line section, you may not attend this class in person. But I do encourage you to

pretend that we are all sitting in a single classroom this semester. In particular, I urge all of you to turn on your webcams throughout the semester. It would be nice, after all, to be able to see each other's faces when we talk to each other. I understand that you may have some privacy concerns. First, you should know that our classes will NOT be recorded. Second, you can also use a virtual or blank background on Zoom. Please let me know if you have other concerns regarding our virtual classroom this semester.

Schedule:

Week 1

- 1/12 **Introduction:** syllabus; aims of course; general background
- 1/14 **Adam and Eve:** Genesis 1-3; Kawashima, "Literary Analysis," 83-89; Kawashima "Sources and Redaction," 47-61

Week 2

- 1/19 **The Literary Approach:** Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, ch. 1
- 1/21 **Cain and Abel; the Giants and the Tower:** Genesis 4-11; Kawashima, "Violence and the City"; Kawashima, "Homo Faber in J's Primeval History"

Week 3

- 1/26 **Sodom and Gomorrah:** Genesis 12-24; Alter, "Sodom as Nexus"; Kawashima, "Literary Analysis," 89-104
- 1/28 **How to Read Biblical Narrative I:** Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, chs. 3-4

Week 4

- 2/2 **The Binding of Isaac:** Genesis 22; Homer, *Odyssey*, excerpt; Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar"; Kawashima, "Biblical Narrative and the Birth of Prose Literature"
- 2/4 **How to Read Biblical Narrative II:** Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, chs. 5-6

Week 5

- 2/9 **Jacob and Esau:** Genesis 25-27; Alter, "Literature"
- 2/11 **Jacob and Laban:** Genesis 28-36; Hendel, "Cultural Memory"

Week 6

- 2/16 **Joseph and his Brothers:** Genesis 37-50; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, ch. 8
- 2/18 **Moses and Pharaoh:** Exodus 1-13

Week 7

- 2/23 **From Egypt to Sinai:** Exodus 14-24; Pardes, "Imagining the Birth of a Nation"; PAPER 1 due in class
- 2/25 **Recharge Day:** Class Cancelled

Week 8

- 3/2 **Aaron and the Gold Calf:** Exodus 32-34; 1 Kings 11-12; Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 3

3/4 **EXAM 1** (1/12-3/2)

Week 9

3/9 **In the Wilderness:** Numbers 11-17; Pardes, "The Spies in the Land of the Giants"

3/11 **Song and Story:** Judges 4-5; Exodus 14-15; Kawashima, "From Song to Story"

Week 10

3/16 **Jephthah and his Daughter:** Judges 1-12; Alter, "Allusion and Literary Expression"

3/18 **The Levite and his Concubine:** Judges 13-21

Week 11

3/23 **The Ark and the Philistines:** 1 Samuel 1-7

3/25 **David and Saul:** 1 Samuel 8-23; Alter, "Imagining History in the Bible"

Week 12

3/30 **David and Abigail:** 1 Samuel 24-31; 2 Samuel 1-10; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, excerpts

4/1 **David and Bathsheba:** 2 Samuel 11-24; 1 Kings 1-2

Week 13

4/6 **Biblical "Period Pieces":** Jonah; Esther; Funkenstein, "Biblical and Postbiblical Perceptions of History"

4/8 **Biblical "Period Pieces":** Esther; Ruth; Pardes, "The Book of Ruth: Idyllic Revisionism"

Week 14

4/13 **Job:** Job 1-27; Alter, "Truth and Poetry in the Book of Job"; **PAPER 2 due in class**

4/15 **Job:** Job 28-42

Week 15

4/20 **EXAM 2** (3/9-4/15)

HyFlex Instruction Details

For students enrolled in face to face (F2F) sections: We will have face-to-face instructional sessions to accomplish the student learning objectives of this course. In response to COVID-19, the following policies and requirements are in place to maintain your learning environment and to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions.

- You are required to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings. Following and enforcing these policies and requirements are all of our responsibility. Failure to do so will lead to a report to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.
- This course has been assigned a physical classroom with enough capacity to maintain physical distancing (6 feet between individuals) requirements. Please utilize

designated seats and maintain appropriate spacing between students. Please do not move desks or stations.

- Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.
- Follow your instructor's guidance on how to enter and exit the classroom. Practice physical distancing to the extent possible when entering and exiting the classroom.
- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. For UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms, see: <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/screen-test-protect-2/frequently-asked-questions/covid-19-exposure-and-symptoms-who-do-i-call-if/>
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. Find more information in the university attendance policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/scct/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments: For more information, please see:

<http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html>