

Bergen Community College
Division of Arts and Humanities
Department of Philosophy and Religion

Course Syllabus

PHR-125 The Hebrew Scriptures

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:
Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

PHR-125 The Hebrew Scriptures is an introductory study of traditional and modern perspectives on the Hebrew Bible. The relationship between the Bible and the Talmud will also be discussed.
3 lectures, 3 credits
General Education Course – Humanities Elective

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. identify the major events and major figures of the Hebrew Bible and explain their historical and theological significance;
2. identify the cardinal tenets of the religion of the Hebrew Bible and the various rituals and practices pertaining thereto;
3. identify the major similarities and differences between various interpretations of the biblical text;
4. identify and summarize the major developments in, and the major strengths and weaknesses of, modern biblical scholarship and criticism;
5. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;
6. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on issues in Judaic studies; and
7. participate actively in discussions of ideas and issues in Judaic studies (re: SLOs 1-4).

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of the Hebrew Bible and portions of the Talmud; the basic principles and methods of critical thinking are introduced; students are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

Learning Assessment

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Philosophy Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through various means of assessment, such as the "Suggested Means of Assessment" listed below.

Student Learning Objective	Suggested Means of Assessment
1. identify the major events and major figures of the Hebrew Bible and explain their historical and theological significance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments
2. identify the cardinal tenets of the religion of the Hebrew Bible and the various rituals and practices pertaining thereto;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
3. identify the major similarities and differences between various interpretations of the biblical text;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
4. identify and summarize the major developments in, and the major strengths and weaknesses of, modern biblical scholarship and criticism;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Quizzes and objective tests • Writing assignments • Graded class presentations
5. locate, evaluate, and use effectively information from a variety of relevant sources;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing assignments* • Graded class presentations
6. state and support in clear, logical, and concise writing their own views on issues in Judaic studies; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essay examinations • Writing assignments
7. participate actively in discussions of ideas and issues in Judaic studies (re: SLOs 1-4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graded class discussions

*Writing assignments for the purpose of assessing student success on SLO 5 will include research and writing projects, possibly including term papers, in which a student identifies an information need, accesses and evaluates appropriate resources, and uses the information effectively and ethically for a specific purpose.

Course Content

As with all BCC religion courses, "The Hebrew Scriptures" (PHR-125) is designed to be an academic study of its subject matter and not to advocate particular sectarian views. The course should survey current scholarly opinion on the Hebrew Bible, as well as various ways in which diverse traditions construe the authority and meaning of the Bible.

The instructor need not hesitate to challenge the preconceptions of students in the course, especially since many such tend to cluster about the Hebrew Bible. By the same token, however, care should be taken never needlessly to affront the sensitivities of students, since such sensitivities may be keen and deeply held. If all goes well, the course will furnish students with many new tools and much information to enrich any interest they may already have (or may gain) in the study of the Hebrew Bible. Just as important, the course ought to impart a firm sense of the plurality of perspectives and a new understanding and tolerance of perspectives other than one's own.

Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, web enhancement via a parallel course website, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy learning in the course; etc.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

The **required texts** for this course are *Tanach, The Holy Scriptures* (paperback, 1985, ISBN 0827603665), the Jewish Publication Society's edition of the Hebrew Bible, and selections from the Talmud (e.g., Cohen and Neusner, *Everyman's Talmud*; Stern, *Perke Avot: Wisdom of the Jewish Sages*; Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*) (specific edition to be designated by the instructor).

Useful Secondary Sources – most recent editions of the following:

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*
Bloom, Harold. *The Book of J*
Brenner, Athalya. *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*
Buber, Martin. *On the Bible*
Goldberg, Jonathan. *Reclaiming Sodom*
Goldin, Judah. *The Living Talmud*
Gottwald, Norman K. *The Holy Bible: A Sociological Introduction*
Hammer, Reuven. *The Classic Midrash*
Kaufmann, Yehezkel. *The Religion of Israel from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*
Katz, Michael, and Gershon Schwartz. *Swimming in the Sea of Talmud*
Knight, Douglas and Gene Tucker. *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*
Kvam, Kristen, et al. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*
Neussner, Jacob. *The Mishnah*
Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai*
Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror*
Visotzky, B. *Reading the Book*

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

PHR-125 requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the students' final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

Attendance Policy in this Course:

[To be designated by the instructor]

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u> Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty. ADA statement. Sexual Harassment statement. Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology. Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>

Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/4787.aspx
The Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/pages/2192.aspx
The Writing Center	Room L-125	201-447-7908 http://www.bergen.edu/pages1/Pages/1795.aspx
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-131	201-612-5270 http://www.bergen.edu/oss
BCC Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Special Note on the Tutoring Center

The Henry and Edith Cerullo Learning Assistance Center encompasses the Tutoring Center, the English Language Resource Center, and the Writing Center. The website of the Learning Assistance Center is located at www.bergen.edu/pages/2192.asp. Tutoring services are available for this course in the Tutoring Center. I strongly recommend that you make use of those services as we progress through the course. As listed above, the Tutoring Center is located in Room L-125, and its phone number is 201-447-7908.

Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos – The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the Philosophy & Religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Professor Jennifer Lyden (L-326, 201-493-3540, jlyden@bergen.edu). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

Include a Course Outline and Calendar [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")
- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.
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• **Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar**

- **Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.
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Week(s)	Date(s)	Topics & Assignments	Learning Objectives
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			

Departmental Policy Syllabus

4/29/05; revised, 1/27/14; updated, 2/3/14, 2/7/14

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See the Sample Course Outline and Calendar below.

SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Learning Objectives
1		The Nature and Basic Principles of Biblical Interpretation Reading: Hand-Out Materials First Paper Assigned	2, 3, 4 1-6
2		The Historical Origins and Development of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud Reading: Hand-Out Materials	1, 6-7
3		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – Torah Reading: Selections from the Torah	1-7
4		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – Torah, continued Reading: Selections from the Torah	1-7
5		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – Torah, continued Reading: Selections from the Torah First Paper Due	1-7 1-6
6		Mid-Term Examination	1-4, 6
7		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Prophets Reading: Selections from the Prophets Second Paper Assigned	1-7 1-6
8		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Prophets, continued	1-7
9		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Prophets, continued Reading: Selections from the Prophets	1-7
10		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Writings Reading: Selections from the Writings	1-7
11		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Writings, continued Reading: Selections from the Writings	1-7
12		The Hebrew Bible and the Talmud Reading: Selections from the Talmud	1-7
13		The Hebrew Bible and the Talmud Reading: Selections from the Talmud Second Paper Due	1-7 1-6
14		Biblical Thought and Scholarship in the Contemporary World Reading: Hand-Out Materials	4-5, 6-7
15		Final Examination	1-4, 6