

**Reading Sacred Texts: The Hebrew Bible  
REL 3360**

**Spring Semester 2010**

**Professor Frederick L. Downing**  
**Office: Ashley Hall, Room 107**  
**Office Hours: MWF 11-12**  
**Phone: 249-2776 or 244-4681**  
**Email: [fdowning@valdosta.edu](mailto:fdowning@valdosta.edu)**

**Course Description:**

An advanced reading of the Hebrew Bible utilizing recent methods and interpretative frameworks found in current scholarship. Emphasis is given to historical, literary, and cultural approaches to major texts.

**Course Objectives:**

To identify some of the major texts which have been the focus of both ancient and modern interpreters; to gain the necessary skills for reading these texts in a pluralistic environment; become acquainted with the views of ancient and current scholarship including recent historical, literary, and cultural approaches to the Hebrew Bible; to learn to think critically about religion and religious texts.

**Required Texts:**

Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination  
Abraham J. Heschel, The Prophets  
James L. Kugel, How To Read The Bible

**Supplementary Texts:**

Richard J. Clifford, The Wisdom Literature  
Richard Elliott Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?  
James L. Kugel, The Bible As It Was  
Richard D. Nelson, The Historical Books  
W. Randolph Tate, Biblical Interpretation  
Elie Wiesel, Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends

**Course Requirements:**

You are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in class discussions in a mature and courteous manner. The university policy on class attendance will be followed: **AA student who misses more than 20% of the scheduled classes of a course will be subject to receiving a failing grade.** In addition, you will be allowed one excused absence during the term. For each unexcused absence after that, you will be subject to losing a percentage point from your final grade. There will be three major exams plus a term project required during the term. Each will

count 25% of your final grade. The grading scale is as follows: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=below 60.

### **Special Needs:**

Students requiring classroom accommodations or modifications because of a documented disability should discuss the need with me at the beginning of the semester. If you are such a student, but are not registered with the Special Services Program, you should contact the Special Services office in Nevins Hall, Room 1115. The phone numbers are 245-2498 (voice) and 219-1348 (tty).

### **Course Schedule**

Week 1: Introduction to the course:

The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship  
The Creation of the World & Adam and Eve  
Cain and Abel

Reading the Hebrew Bible: History & Literature  
Reading the World Behind the Text: Historical & Cultural Background  
Reading the World of the Text: The Bible as Literature

Reading: (Handouts); Kugel, 1-68; Genesis 1-4

Week 2: The Great Flood  
The Tower of Babel  
The Call of Abraham

Reading: Kugel, 69-106; Genesis 6-15

Week 3: Two Models of God  
The Trials of Abraham  
Jacob & Esau

Reading: Kugel, 107-151; Genesis 12-28

Week 4: Jacob and the Angel  
Dinah  
Joseph and his Brothers

Reading: Kugel, 152-197; Genesis 32-50

Week 5: Moses in Egypt  
The Exodus  
A Covenant with God

Reading: Kugel, 198-249; Exodus 1-19

**Exam # 1**

- Week 6: Moses and the Alternative Community  
Reading: Brueggemann, 1-125; Exodus 20-24
- Week 7: The Ten Commandments  
A Religion of Laws  
Worship on the Road  
Reading: Kugel, 250-295; Exodus 20; 32- 34; Leviticus 10, 16, 19, 23; Dt. 5.
- Week 8: P & D  
On the Way to Canaan  
Moses Last Words  
Reading: Kugel, 296-363; Exodus 25-40; Leviticus 1-27; Dt. 32-34.
- Week 9: Joshua and the Conquest of Canaan  
Judges and Chiefs  
The Other Gods of Canaan  
Reading: Kugel, 364-435; Joshua 1-24; Judges 1-21; Ruth;
- Week 10: Samuel and Saul  
The Psalms of David  
David the King  
Reading: Kugel, 436-492; 1 Samuel 1-3; 8-11; 15-17; ( Selected) Psalms; 1 Samuel 18-2 Samuel 12.
- Week 11: Solomon=s Wisdom  
North and South  
**Exam # 2**  
Reading: Kugel, 493-537; 2 Samuel 13-1 Kings 4; 5-12; 17-19; 21; 2 Kings 2-4
- Week 12: The Prophets:  
The Book of Isaiah(s)  
Jeremiah  
Ezekiel  
Reading: Kugel, 538-398; Isaiah 1-12; 40; 53; Jeremiah 1-7; Ezekiel 1-4; 37.  
Heschel, 1-26; 61-97; 103-144.
- Week 13: The Prophetic Literature continued:  
The Twelve Minor Prophets

Reading: Kugel, 617-635, Amos 1-5; Hosea 1-4; Jonah  
Heschel, 27-60.

Week 14: Job and Post-Exilic Wisdom  
Daniel the Interpreter  
After Such Knowledge. . .

Reading: Kugel, 635-690; the Book of Job; the Book of Daniel

Week 15: Reports and Review  
**Term Project Due: April 29**

**Final Exam (May 7 @ 9:30)**