

Syllabus

EASTERN COLLEGE
Department of Christian Studies
Fall 2008

BIB 101-Honors
The Nature and Meaning of the Old Testament
Class Schedule: T/Th 1:00-2:20 p.m.

Instructor: Kent Sparks
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Office Hours: T/Th 2:00-3:30 pm
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Course Prerequisites: None

Course Description: This course will introduce us to the literature of Ancient Israel and to the world that produced it. Special attention will be given to the interpretative enterprise in general, to the authors and historical background of the individual books in the Old Testament, and to the relationship between the Old Testament and its broader cultural milieu in the Near East. We will also explore the theological dimensions of these ancient works, moving from theoretical issues to the practical concerns of life and faith.

Course Objectives

1. To become familiar with the ancient context within which the Hebrew Bible was written.
2. To become familiar with the content of the Hebrew Bible, including historical events, persons included, and the various types of literature represented in the corpus.
3. To develop a familiarity with the issues and problems that scholars face as they read and seek to understand the Hebrew Bible.
4. To develop a capacity to utilize the materials in the Hebrew Bible within a theological framework that allows its message to speak with relevance to our place and time.

Texts: T. Dowley, *The Kregal Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids: Kregal, 2003), in syllabus referred to as Dowley.

K. L. Sparks, *Introduction to Scripture* (manuscript).

K. L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

Coursepack, with Position Papers

Blackboard Site: Our deliberations will be facilitated by a web-based Blackboard site, which provides ready access to electronic copies of all documents used in the course. This includes the syllabus, assignments, unpublished reading materials, and other supporting documents. Preparation for exams is facilitated by several pretests, by which students can assess the progress of their studies. To access the site, point your browser to "eastern.blackboard.com" and provide your Eastern ID and password. If you have any difficulties accessing the site, please contact the professor.

Attendance Policy: This course includes extensive in-class discussion and review. It will not be possible to do well if you miss in-class activities. Moreover, I assign 5% of introductory level class grades to class attendance and participation. I take this portion of your grade very seriously. And remember, according to college policy, nine hours of absence in any core course results in an automatic failure.

Student Disability Policy: If you have any documented special educational needs, please advise me at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made for you.

College Policies: Please note that all college policies pertaining to academic dishonesty, drop/add procedures, and grade appeal should be followed by students enrolled in this class. Consult the undergraduate college catalog or ask me if you have questions about these college policies.

Evaluation

1. Grading Scale is as follows: A (100-93%), A- (92-90%), B+ (89-88%), B (87-82%) B- (81-80%), C+ (79-78%), C (77-72%), C- (71-70%), D+ (69-68%), D (67-62%), D- (61-60%), F (59% and below).
2. Evaluation of each student is based on three components: (a) mastery of material; (b) ability to synthesize and integrate material; (c) rhetorical ability to communicate ideas orally and/or in writing. Grading is weighted toward the first two of these components.

“A” work: Clear mastery of material, unusual ability to synthesize, draw conclusions, integrate with other disciplines, and ability to very clearly communicate these ideas orally or in writing.

“B” work: General mastery of material, good ability to synthesize, draw conclusions, integrate with other disciplines, and sound ability to clearly communicate these ideas orally or in writing.

“C” work: Basic familiarity with material, adequate ability to synthesize, draw conclusions, integrate with other disciplines, and adequate ability to communicate these ideas orally or in writing.

“D” work: Limited familiarity with materials, some general appreciation of issues and their significance, inadequate ability to communicate these ideas orally or in writing.

“F” work: little or no familiarity with materials.

3. Grading components are as follows:

25 points:	Class Attendance, Participation and Position Papers
20 points :	Exam 1
20 points:	Exam 2
30 points:	Comprehensive Final Exam
5 points:	Critical Book Review

Explanations of Grading Components

Attendance and Class Participation

See above.

Exams

Each exam is cumulative, covering all material discussed in class or read up to that point during the semester. I will help you prepare for these exams by providing review materials and online pretests via Blackboard.

Position Papers

You have 18 position papers to prepare. These are not mini term papers; they are reading and thinking assignments that prepare you for class. These papers should be no longer than it takes to complete the assignment, usually no more than a few pages. Each position paper is to be completed *before* the class in which it is due. Always bring a hard copy of your paper to class—no exceptions. For each paper that you miss, 1.5 points will be deducted from the position paper portion of your grade. *Remember, this we be 1.5 points off of your final grade.* If you believe that your paper is late for a valid reason, please turn it in with a note of explanation.

Critical Book Review

You will read and then prepare a review of your professor's book, *God's Word in Human Words*, in which you will evaluate the cogency of its arguments and the theological appropriateness of its viewpoints; in doing so, you will consider the book reviews that have been done of the book at the time of writing (these will be available mainly on blogs and other internet sites). Conclude your work by briefly describing how, in your opinion, Christians should respond to the problematic evidence presented by modern biblical criticism. The paper should be about ten double-spaced pages and is due the last day of class; a highlighted copy of the book should accompany the submitted paper.

Late Work, Missed Exams, etc.

Assignments, term papers cannot be submitted late nor can exams be made up. Exceptions to this rule include personal illness or family emergency.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Aug 28-** **Syllabus and Class Introduction; Introducing the History of Israel**
- Sep 2-** **Discussion: "The Nature and Meaning of the Old Testament?" (Movie: EE-Taow)**
Preparation: Read Sparks ch. 2, p. 1-14 (use Dowley as directed); Begin memorizing outline of Israel's history; begin memorizing books of the Old Testament from Genesis to Esther.
- Sep 4-** **Introducing the Hebrew Bible**
Preparation: Read Sparks ch. 2, p. 14-29 (use Dowley as directed); read Dowley 1-15; Do Position Paper 1.
- Sep 9-** **Introduction to "The Writings" and to Wisdom; The Book of Proverbs**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 6, p. 1-3, 11-13 [on Proverbs] (2) Do Position Paper 2; (3) Continue to review the history of Israel and books of the Bible from Genesis to Esther.
- Sep 11-** **The Wisdom Debate: Job and Ecclesiastes**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 6, p. 13-19; (2) Do Position Paper 3. Continue to review the history of Israel; extend your mastery of the list of Old Testament books to Song of Songs.

- Sep 16- The Book of Psalms, Song of Songs, Lamentations**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 6, p. 3-11, 19-24. (2) Read Song of Songs and Lamentations; (3) Do Position Paper 4; (4) Continue to review the history of Israel and biblical books from Genesis to Song of Songs.
- Sep 18- Introduction to the Pentateuch & Genesis 1-12**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks, ch. 3, introduction and portions on Genesis; (2) Read Gen 1-12; (3) Do Position Paper 5.
- Sep 23- Catch-up**
Preparation: (1) Do Position Paper 6; (2) Review what we have studied so far.
- Sep 25- Exam 1**
- Sep 30- Genesis 12-26: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**
Preparation: (1) Read Gen 12-26; (3) Do Position Paper 7.
- Oct 2- Gen 37-50: The Story of Joseph; Introduction to Exodus**
Preparation: (1) Read Genesis 37-50; (2) Do Position Paper 8.
- Oct 7- Hebrew Law & The Books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks, ch. 3, on Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; (2) Read Exodus 1-18, 32-34, then scan the rest of the book so that you understand what is in it; (3) Do Position Papers 9 and 10.
- Oct 9- The Book of Deuteronomy**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 3 on Deuteronomy; (2) Do Position Paper 11.
- Oct 14- The Deuteronomistic History and the Books of Joshua and Judges**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 4, introduction and discussion of Joshua and Judges; (2) Read Joshua 1-12, 23-24; (3) Do Position Paper 12.
- Oct 16- No Class—Fall Free Day**
- Oct 21- 1 & 2 Samuel**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 4 on 1-2 Samuel; (2) Do Position Paper 13.
- Oct 23- 1 & 2 Kings**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 4 on 1-2 Kings. (2) Read 1 Kings 1-19, 2 Kings 2, 4, 15-17, 21-25. As you do, note the following items: What happened to Solomon’s last competitor for the throne? How is Solomon’s life characterized? Who are Elijah and Elisha, and what are they like? What happened to the Northern Kingdom (see 2 Ki 17), what happened during King Josiah’s reign (see 2 Ki 22-23), and what eventually happened to the Southern Kingdom (see 2 Ki 25)? Who does the historian blame for these tragic events (see 2 Ki 24:3-4)?
- Oct 28- Catch-up**
- Oct 30- Exam 2**
- Nov 4- Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets: Movie, Jeremiah, pt. 1**
Preparation: Read Sparks ch. 7, introduction.
- Nov 6- Movie, Jeremiah, pt. 2; “The Book of the Twelve,” Hosea and Amos**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch.8. (2) Read Hosea and Amos; (3) Do Position Paper 14.
- Nov 11- Isaiah 1-39 and Jeremiah**
Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 7 on Isaiah and Jeremiah; (2) Read Isaiah 1-6, 13-24, 28, 39;

Jeremiah 1-4, 7, 13, 28-32; (3) Do Position Paper 15

Nov 13- Ezekiel and Isaiah 40-66

Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 7 on Ezekiel; (2) Read Isaiah 1-6, 13-24, 28, 39; Read Ezekiel 1-2, 8, 9, 11:16-25, 43:1-5. As you read the texts from Ezekiel, take note the Glory of the Lord and what it does/where it goes. Read also Isaiah 40, 46-47, 56-58, 65-66; (3) Do Position Paper 16

Nov 18- Introduction to Apocalyptic Thought and Literature. Haggai, Zechariah, and Daniel

Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 9; (2) Read Zechariah; (3) Do Position Paper 17.

November 20-Nov 30, No Classes SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE MEETING and THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec 2- 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah (Course Evaluations)

Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 5; (2) Read Ezra and Nehemiah 1-3, 5, 13; (3) Do Position Paper 18

Dec 4- The Stories of Ruth and Esther

Preparation: (1) Read Sparks ch. 10; (2) Read Ruth, Esther; (3) Critical book review due.

FINAL EXAM: See Exam schedule.

Supplement 1: Three Christian Creedal Texts

The Apostles Creed, 2nd cent. AD

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ his only son, our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Married, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed, AD 325, revised AD 381

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Definition of Chalcedon, AD 451

Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul {meaning human soul} and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before time began he was begotten of the Father, in respect of his deity, and now in these "last days," for us and behalf of our salvation, this selfsame one was born of Mary the virgin, who is God-bearer in respect of his humanness.

We also teach that we apprehend this one and only Christ-Son, Lord, only-begotten -- in two natures; and we do this without confusing the two natures, without transmuting one nature into the other, without dividing them into two separate categories, without contrasting them according to area or function. The distinctiveness of each nature is not nullified by the union. Instead, the "properties" of each nature are conserved and both natures concur in one "person" and in one reality {hypostasis}. They are not divided or cut into two persons, but are together the one and only and only-begotten Word {Logos} of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus have the prophets of old testified; thus the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us; thus the Symbol of Fathers {the Nicene Creed} has handed down to us.