

COURSE OUTLINE **Old Testament**

Course Description

RG 191. Old Testament. 3 hours credit. This course will enable the student to develop a critical perspective on the development of Judaism and its texts. To this end the student will identify and analyze the various factors that crucially impacted Judaism's foundation and historical development and the development of its literature. The student will apply methods and resources to the biblical texts and to the processes that produced them, thus increasing comprehension both of the literature and of the religion it represents. Such methods and resources also increase comprehension of the historical setting and of the contemporary significance of those texts, to which end the student will examine how Judaism's religious concepts are applied to and function in contemporary society.

Course Relevance

The academic, objective study of the Old Testament provides the student the opportunity to develop his or her skills in the areas of critical thinking, historical interpretation and written communication, all of which enhance the student's skill in understanding the complex issues of contemporary life. This course is designed to provide the student with a foundation for the development of a mature, global perspective which entails the improvement of his or her cross-cultural awareness and a deeper understanding of current world events.

Required Materials

Tullock, J. H. and McEntire, M. (2009). *The old testament story*. (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Sader, T. (2006). *Reading for interpretation: A brief guide to critically understanding religious exposition*. Mason, OH: Thomson Custom Publishing.

Supplemental Materials

The choice of a particular translation of an Old Testament book to be purchased/acquired by the student is left to the discretion of the individual instructor.

Learning Outcomes

The intention is for the student to be able to:

1. Formulate an historical, critical perspective in the study of a world religion and its texts
2. Develop an historical understanding of a world religion by analyzing the factors that impacted its foundation and development

3. Apply resources and analytical methods to religious texts that increase comprehension both of their historical setting and of their contemporary application and significance

Learning PACT Skills that will be DEVELOPED and/or documented in this course

Through the student's involvement in this course, he/she will develop his/her ability in the following PACT skill areas:

Analytical Thinking Skills

1. Critical thinking
 - Through the production of a research paper, the student will exercise his/her skills in gathering, analyzing and integrating data and applying a scholarly method in the study of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible.

Communication Skills

1. Creation and delivery of messages
 - Through a variety of types of written work, the student will practice his/her writing skills, including his/her use of standard English wording and phrasing and his/her knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation and grammar.

Technology Skills

1. General computer use
 - Through the production of a major summative assessment task that requires that the text document be word processed and that the student make use of the internet to find information useful to his or her purposes, the student will use a computer to do research on his/her topic, to create a complete document, to make revisions in the document until it is in its final form and to produce a hard copy of the document to be turned in to the instructor.

Major Summative Assessment Task(s)

These learning outcomes and the Learning PACT skills will be demonstrated by

1. Preparation of a computer-generated (T skill) four to six page written (C skill) comparison/contrast essay (A skill) of EITHER three Old Testament Judges OR three Kings OR three writing Prophets, taking into consideration the historical development, the social setting and both the historical and the current significance.

Course Content

- I. Skills/Competencies – Actions that are essential to achieve the course outcomes:
 - A. Formulate an historical, critical perspective on belief systems
 - B. Develop an historical understanding of belief systems by analyzing the factors that impact their foundation and development
 - C. Apply resources and analytical methods to texts that increase comprehension both of their historical setting and of their contemporary application and significance
 - D. Demonstrate his/her understanding of these issues in discussion and/or written work
- II. Themes – Key recurring concepts that run throughout this course:
 - A. The historically conditioned context of human life, including human thought and action

1. The deeply historical nature of the Old Testament and Judaism, including its social, geographical and religious aspects
 2. The historical development of the Old Testament literature from its origins to its final canonical form at the Council of Jamnia in 90 A.D.
 3. The crucial role played by significantly influential individuals and events, all of which were situated within their own historical context, on the development of Old Testament literature and upon Judaism
- B. The suprahuman conditioning of the historical context of the human world in the above three forms; that is, the Old Testament's primary concern to interpret
- C. God's workings within the events of Israel's history
- III. Issues – Key areas of conflict that must be understood in order to achieve the intended outcome:
- A. Personal interpretation versus varied interpretations of the Old Testament
 - B. The belief in an historically conditioned versus a suprahuman conditioned
 - C. context of the human world
- IV. Concepts – Key concepts that must be understood to address the issues:
- A. Biblical exegesis
 - B. Methods of research
 - C. Types of biblical interpretation/analysis

Learning Units

- I. Tools and methods of biblical study
 - A. Biblical exegesis
 - B. Methods of Research
 - C. Types of biblical interpretation/analysis

- II. Factors influencing the foundation and development of Judaism
 - A. The geographical influences
 - B. The social ideas and practices in that geographical environment
 - C. The religious ideas and practices in that geographical environment

- III. Persons and events of particular influence on the development of Judaism
 - A. The Patriarchs
 - B. The Exodus events
 - C. The Conquest and Confederacy
 - D. The Monarchy Era
 - E. The Prophets
 - F. The Babylonian Exile
 - G. The Postexilic Era

- IV. The divisions of the Old Testament writings
 - A. The Torah
 - B. The Prophets
 - C. The Writings

- V. Methods used to interpret the Old Testament

- A. Sociological/Anthropological criticism
- B. Literary criticism
- C. Textual criticism
- D. Historical criticism
- E. Other forms of criticism

VI. The formation of the canon of the Old Testament

- A. The origins of the texts
- B. Its final canonical form at the Council of Jamni in 90 A.D.

VII. The principal and distinguishing features of Judaism

- A. Its major customs, beliefs and practices
- B. Their function in contemporary society

Learning Activities

Independent and collaborative learning activities will be assigned to assist the student to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Learning activities will be geared toward practices that will be useful not only in the comprehension and critical analysis of assigned class readings but also in the analysis of other types of written communications. The learning activities will emphasize the importance of good writing skills which is a benefit to students both inside the classroom and outside the college classroom in a variety of situations. Examples of activities which contribute to the learning process include: instructor lectures, class discussions, panel discussions, audio-visual aids, films followed by group discussion, guest speakers, daily exercises, reading assignments, handouts, study guides, field trips and individual conferences with the instructor. Other activities include: tests, both essay and objective (including quizzes, chapter or unit tests and comprehensive examinations), writing assignments both inside and outside of class), research papers, student projects, student presentations, attendance and class participation. These methods and other methods deemed suitable may be used individually or in combination by all instructors.

Online course instruction is based on the use of the computer as a distance learning/communication tool. This course also may include other avenues to student learning as deemed suitable by the instructor.

Grade Determination

The student will be graded on assessment tasks as well as additional learning activities employed at the discretion of the individual instructor.