Sample syllabus for use with Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*, 3e (Fortress, 2011)

Sample A: Syllabus for *Introduction to the Old Testament* (15 week semester)

*Notes to Instructors are in red.*

**Course Description:**
This course is designed to introduce you to the literature, history, and messages of the Old Testament. The Old Testament provides its readers with a history of the people of Israel and a picture of Israel’s relationship with God. Yet, the Old Testament is far more than the story of ancient Israel. The material revealed in its pages functions as the theological and moral foundation for three of the world’s major religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As such, it has shaped the history of western civilization and continues to influence the world today. Thus, as we study the ancient text we will also consider its impact on ourselves and on people of other cultures today.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

The student will become familiar with the contents of the Old Testament. S/he will learn about the various types of writings therein and will become knowledgeable about the history and theology of ancient Israel (as assessed through unannounced quizzes and in-class writings and exams).

The student will develop effective skills in reading, thinking and listening by exploring (individually) and discussing (cooperatively) major themes and messages of the Old Testament within its historical and cultural context (as assessed through participation in group discussion and unannounced quizzes and in-class writings).

Through class lectures, readings, writing and discussion, the student will comprehend the significance of the Old Testament in shaping today’s societies – religiously, historically, economically, politically and socially (as assessed through participation in group discussion, unannounced quizzes, in-class writings and a formal paper).

The student will develop effective writing skills through both in-class and out of class writing assignments (as assessed through at least one validated session with a Writing Center tutor, in-class writings and the final draft of the formal paper).

Through all of the above, the student will develop an appreciation for the Judeo-Christian tradition and its commitment to social justice since ancient times and to develop and articulate his/her own beliefs and values regarding faith, freedom and personal responsibility toward him/herself and others (as assessed through participation in group discussion and the formal paper). *The rather repetitive lines regarding assessment are included as a requirement for Middle States College accreditation.*

“...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” – Micah 6:8.

**Required Texts and Materials:**


The following reading will be provided to you through the College Blackboard System (hereafter BB):
Sample syllabus for use with Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*, 3e (Fortress, 2011)


Time Magazine, Aug 9, 2010 – “Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban:”
http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2007238,00.html

Bob Simon, 60 Minutes -- Immaculee Ilibagiza’s experience in the 1994 genocide of Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda:

**Key Reference Works that you may find useful (you should also utilize the online Study Guide that accompanies the textbook):**


*Extra-Biblical writings* from the Ancient Near East (some BB readings are taken from this book):

**Methods of Instruction and Requirements:**

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Careful, thoughtful reading of all assignments prior to the class for which they are assigned.** You are expected to actively engage the texts and be able to discern key themes and viewpoints of the various writers. Material from the reading assignments will not necessarily be covered in class. It is essential that you read the material.

2. **Punctual attendance and active participation in all class sessions. Note that points are designated for both attendance and participation.**
   - It is generally not necessary to include the following detail for upper level students but it is useful for First-year students.
   - **Credit for attendance requires the following:**
     - Respectful behavior and proper classroom decorum at all times
     - Respectful behavior includes but is not limited to:
       - No improper use of computer (see below)
       - No cell phone use in class
       - No text messaging in class
       - No private discussions during class
       - No sleeping
     - Remain seated through the entire class period --unless a medical issue prevents this, in which case you need to share this with the professor privately.

   **If you are engaged in any of the misconduct listed above, you will be counted as absent!**
   - If you need to miss class due to illness or emergency, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor and to gather any missed information from another student. *More than three absences will significantly affect your grade.* You should assume a loss of two points for every absence.
   - **Credit for Participation requires the following:**
     - Having your text with you and being prepared to read aloud if asked.
Taking notes during lectures. Always bring a notepad and pen to class! You may use your computer in class for the purpose of taking notes. However, be aware that surfing the net, checking email, and any other non-class related computer use during class is not only rude and distracting to others but will also result in non-accumulation of participation points as well as the loss of attendance points (as above). Thoughtful contributions to class discussion. Ability to thoughtfully complete short unannounced in-class writing assignments related to the readings, lectures and class discussion. These will occur several times throughout the semester.

3. One formal writing assignment. You will be provided with specific instructions -- it will involve working with the Writing Center. Length required for this assignment may vary -- a longer research paper for a class of upper level students; a shorter research or topical paper for First-year students.

4. Three exams – spaced throughout the semester. The third is the final exam. These exams will involve a combination of multiple choice and essay questions.

NOTE: Academic integrity in all areas related to this class is absolutely expected. All students are expected to comply with the College’s Academic Policy (see student guide). Violations of the College’s policy are very serious and documentation will be forwarded to the Dean of Student’s office, where records are kept until a student graduates or withdraws from the college. Violation of the policy will result in a failing grade for the course. Examples of conduct which have been regarded as being in violation of the policy include (but are not limited to):

- Plagiarism in any form
- Copying from another’s quiz or examination
- Stealing an examination or key from the instructor

Grading (200 point total):
10 points -- Class Attendance (Note: These points can be lost – you begin with 10)
10 points – Class Participation (Note: These points must be earned – you begin with 0)
50 points – Formal writing assignment
80 points – First two exams (40 points each)
50 points – Third (final) exam

Grading Scale (based on points accumulated)
180-200  A range
160-181  B range
140-161  C range
120-139  D range
Below 120   F

Course Break-down:
This syllabus follows the sequence of the chapters in the text with the exception of chapter 9 which is used first because it describes who God is for Israel and lays groundwork for who God is for many people in western civilization.

Week 1: Syllabus Presentation and Introductions to one another
   Introduction to the Course:
Who or What is God?

History of Israel as a Journey – Theirs and Ours

Read:
Drane -- chapter 9

Week 2: Introduction to the Old Testament texts
Books of the Bible and types of literature
Jewish and Christian canons
Locating texts within the larger text -- Many students do not know how to figure out what to read from the Biblical text (how to interpret chapters and verses). It is necessary to show them.

Geographical area of the Ancient Near East
Time Frame of the Old Testament and designations of the periods -- In their readings, students come across various terms so it is helpful to tell them that the Bronze Age is roughly equivalent to the Patriarchal Period and that Iron Age I and II are roughly the time of the Settlement Period and the Monarchy.

Read:
Drane -- chapter 1
BB -- chart on Old Testament canons

Week 3: Here, the syllabus begins the actual history of the people of Israel. It generally takes two weeks to move through the patriarchs and matriarchs. It is tempting to assume that the students are familiar with many of these texts and thus, that it is unnecessary to spend much time on them. However, this is not usually the case.

Beginning the journey / Israel’s History: Who Am I? What is my relationship with God?
Covenant beginnings – being chosen – blessing and responsibility

Read:
Drane -- chapter 2
Gen 12 & Gen 15-35

Week 4: It is useful to really emphasize that Israel's God works in human history and with all kinds of people

What types are among the chosen? (Joseph, Judah, Tamar, Reuben, little slave girl . . .)

Read:
Gen 37-50
2 Kings 5:1-14

Week 5: Toward the Promised Land -- Oppressed but God Delivers and shows the people how to live (Moses, Joshua, Rahab . . . giving of the Law)

Read:
Drane -- chapter 3
Ex 1-24; Joshua 1-2 & 6
BB -- excerpt from Code of Hammurapi

Week 6: Readings for this week include two articles from the modern world, one illustrating genocide and the other the systematic oppression of women. The articles are used to help students see that the moral disintegration and subsequent call for return to justice that takes place in the time of the Judges is not a process limited to the ancient world but rather,
Journey/Life as Repetitive Cycle -- Falling away from God/Returning to God
Falling away/shaky alliances/disintegration (Judges)

Read:
Judges 4-5; 13-16; 19-21
BB – click on weblinks and go to the article from Time Magazine, “Afghan Women and the Return of the Taliban” and the article on Immaculee Ilibagiza (from Rwanda)

Exam #1 on Friday

Week 7: Tribal Confederacy to Monarchy: Saul, David and Solomon
Individual Portrait of Falling away and Returning (David and Family; Solomon and division of the Kingdom)

Read:
Drane -- chapter 4
1 Sam 1-3; 8-11; 15-19
2 Sam 1-6; 11-18; 1 Kings 2-6 & 11

Week 8: Falling away and the promise of Restoration (Focus on Northern Kingdom)

Read:
Drane -- chapter 5
1 Kings 12-21
Amos 3-7
Hosea 1-11

Week 9: Falling away and the promise of Restoration (Focus on Southern Kingdom)

Read:
Drane -- chapter 6
Isaiah 3-7
Jeremiah 1-4
Book of Lamentations
Micah 1-7

You must have visited the Writing Center with a rough draft of your formal paper by Friday!!

Week 10: Into the Promised Land -- (Return to Jerusalem)
Continuing questions of identity and assimilation – land and lineage/promise of salvation (Ruth, Jonah, Ezra & Nehemiah)

Read:
Drane -- chapter 7
Isaiah 40-45 & 49-53
Book of Ruth
Book of Jonah

Exam #2 on Friday

Week 11: A New Age -- (Hellenism and Resistance)
Read:
Drane -- chapter 8
Book of Esther
Daniel 3 & 6
II Maccabees 6-7

Week 12: Here, it is important to emphasize that this is now a very different type of literature -- universal in scope and containing concepts and ideas about God that were present very early in Israel’s history (even though the texts as a whole were compiled over a long period of time).

Primordial History and universal questions
Creation and Fall
Read:
Drane -- chapter 10; re-read article "The Pentateuch," p. 174-177
Gen 1-3
BB – excerpt from Enuma Elish

Formal paper due on Friday!!

Week 13: This may not take an entire week so one could gain a day to spend in the next section
Good, Evil and frameworks for justice
Read:
Drane -- chapter 11
Gen 6-11
BB – excerpt from Gilgamesh

Week 14: What is “wisdom”?/who is “wise”?
Folly of falling away and wisdom of returning (Wisdom lit)
Read:
Drane -- chapter 12 and re-read the article, "Wisdom and Faith," p. 276-277
Proverbs 9-10; Psalms 23; 41; 42; 43; 139; 144
Job
Ecclesiastes

Week 15: From the Ancient World to Our Day
Read:
Drane -- chapter 13

Final Exam – Date to be announced!