

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

Sample B: 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:

Drane, John, *Introducing the Old Testament*, Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2011.

Bruce Metzger and Roland Murphy, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books*, NRSV, New York: Oxford University Press.

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The following reading will be provided to you through the College Blackboard System (hereafter BB).

The following links are also available on BB:

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 Illibagiza’s experience in the 1994 genocide of Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/11/30/60minutes/main2218371.shtml>

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

Freedman, David Noel, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Keck, Leander E., ed. *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vols 1-7. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994-2001.

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

Arnold, Bill T. & Bryan E. Beyer, *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study*, Grand Rapids. MI: Baker Academic, 2002.

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 to 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 not generally 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 may 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:

In this syllabus, I have chosen to weave the chapters that are more theologically oriented and universal in scope into the earlier part of the semester. This is done in an attempt to help students more readily make connections between themselves and the history of the people they will soon study. Thus chapter 9 is used here 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 – Borowski—Daily Life, “The Land and Its People.”

BB -- chart on Old Testament canons

Week 3: ***As mentioned above, in this syllabus the material that is universal in scope is treated early in the semester. Doing so with the primordial history assists some students who think linearly and who thus have difficulty moving backward (so to speak) in time to creation after they have discussed the history of the people. Of course, care must be taken to ensure they understand that the creation of the texts themselves did not follow this neat chronology. Treating the primordial history early, however, also has the advantage of helping students grasp that these ideas regarding universality and justice were present in Israelite thought and life long before they were actually written down.***

Primordial History and universal questions

Creation and Fall

Read:

Drane -- chapter 10

Gen 1-3

BB – excerpt from Enuma Elish

Week 4: ***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 -- p. 285-288

Gen 6-11

BB – excerpt from Gilgamesh

Week 5: ***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 6: ***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

Exam #1 on Weds!!

Week 7: Toward the Promised Land -- Oppressed but God Delivers and shows the people how to live (Moses, Joshua, Rahab . . . giving of the Law)

Read:

Drane -- chapters 3 and 11

Ex 1-24; Joshua 1-2 & 6

BB -- excerpt from Code of Hammurapi

Week 8: ***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, continues to occur in our day. One day of the week is set aside for small group discussion of this topic. Other readings could easily be substituted.***

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

Illibagiza (from Rwanda)

Week 9: 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 -- chapter 12 could also be read this week. However, it is listed for the next in order to even out the amount of reading assigned

1 Sam 1-3; 8-11; 15-19

2 Sam 1-6; 11-18; 1 Kings 2-6 & 11

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

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Week 10: ***The above material takes more than one week so continue with it and then move to "Wisdom"***

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

Exam #2 on Friday!!

Week 11: 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 12: 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

Formal paper due on Friday!!

Week 13: 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

Week 14: A New Age -- (Hellenism and Resistance)

Read:

Drane -- chapter 8
Book of Esther
Daniel 3 & 6
II Maccabees 6-7

Week 15: From the ancient World to Our Day

Read:

Drane -- chapter 13

Final Exam – Date to be announced!

