



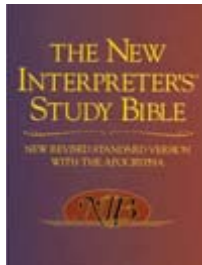
Course of Study

Experiential and Collaborative Learning

COS_211: The Hebrew Bible I COURSE SYLLABUS

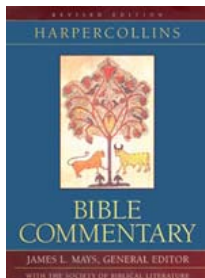
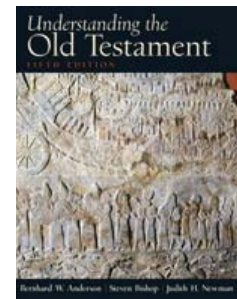
Required Texts

Books can be ordered through Cokesbury online at cokesbury.com, by telephone at 800-672-1789 or through Amazon online at amazon.com. Other major booksellers, like Barnes and Noble (bn.com) and Borders (bordersstores.com), may also carry these books in stores and online.



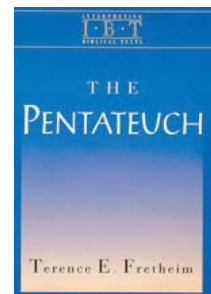
The New Interpreter's Study Bible. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Walter J. Harrelson, General Editor. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-0-68727-832-9.

Understanding the Old Testament. Fifth Edition. Bernhard W. Anderson, Steven Bishop and Judith H. Newman. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-13092-380-6.



The HarperCollins Bible Commentary. Revised Edition. James L. Mays, General Editor. N.Y.: HarperCollins, Harper San Francisco, for The Society of Biblical Literature, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-06065-548-8.

The Pentateuch. (Interpreting Biblical Texts). Terence E. Fretheim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. ISBN: 978-0-68700-842-1.





Course of Study

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Introduction

This course interprets the developing institutions and traditions of Israel and examines the varying ways in which the Hebrew people understood critical events of their history as acts of God. Attention is given to the earliest covenants, the Exodus, the rise of the monarchy, and other events up to the eighth-century prophets.

Objectives:

- Formation of a historical overview of the life and faith of ancient Israel.
- Exegesis of selected passages that illustrate crucial turning points in the history of Israel.
- Correlation of exegesis with its utilization in preaching and other pastoral functions.
- Reflection upon ways in which God has been at work in the lives of people in these biblical materials.
- Ongoing development of an exegetical methodology.
- Application of these studies to the concerns and issues of the present day.

Module 1: Methodology

- ***The HarperCollins Bible Commentary***
"Reading and Interpreting the Bible" by John Barton, pp. 65–71.
- ***The Pentateuch***, pp. 19–38.
- ***Understanding the Old Testament***, pp. xv–xvii.

Assignment 1.1: Read John Barton's article, "Reading and Interpreting the Bible," on pages 65-71 of ***The HarperCollins Bible Commentary***. Then write a three-to-five-page paper in which you:

1. List and discuss the "three processes" that "are involved in reading and interpreting any book."
2. Summarize the various methods of biblical interpretation or "criticism" that Barton discusses. (Our English word "criticism" is derived from the Greek verb *krino*, meaning "to pass judgment on," "decide," "determine," "consider," "regard," "think."¹ So, when the word "criticism" is used to refer to methods of Biblical analysis, it refers to the process of making judgments about, deciding on, considering, or determining interpretations of the Biblical text.)

¹A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament, Prepared by Barclay M. Newman, Jr. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Parsons Technology, Inc., 1998.

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Assignment 1.2: Read Fretheim, Chapter 1 pages 19-38, focusing especially on pages 34-36, where Fretheim discusses the reader-response approach to the Bible. Then read Anderson, pages xv-xvii. After reading the assigned pages from Fretheim and Anderson, write a five-page paper in which you:

1. Summarize the approach to the Bible that Fretheim uses and the approach to the Bible that Anderson uses.
2. Compare and contrast Fretheim's approach with Anderson's approach.
3. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the different methods of biblical interpretation.
4. Indicate which method you find most appealing.

Total Value: 6 points

Module 2: When It Happened

- ***Understanding the Old Testament***, pp. 598–604.

Assignment 2.1: When did it happen? Using the Comprehensive Chronological Chart on pages 598-604 of Anderson, as your guide, create your own timeline of the Old Testament.² (Do not photocopy or download from the Internet someone else's timeline!) Mark off your timeline by listing the centuries from 1800 B.C.E. or B.C. to 800 B.C.E. or B.C. Then, recognizing that most dates will be approximate, begin marking the following significant persons and events in Old Testament history on your timeline:

1. Abraham.
2. The move of the family of Jacob from Canaan into Egypt.
3. The exodus out of Egypt.
4. The Israelite conquest of, or settlement in, the land of Canaan.
5. The period of the Judges.
6. Samuel and Saul.
7. The United Kingdom.
 - a. David.
 - b. Solomon.
8. The division of the Kingdom after the death of Solomon.
9. The Dynasty of Omri (In the Northern Kingdom of Israel).
 - h. The reign of Omri.
 - i. The reign of Ahab.
10. The ministry of the prophet Elijah.

Your completed timeline should be one or two pages long.



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²Or, if you prefer, you can use the Chronological Charts on pages 47, 166, 237, 246 of Anderson, Bishop and Newman, *Understanding the Old Testament*.

Total Value: 6 points

Module 3: Overview of the Pentateuch

- ***Understanding the Old Testament***, pp. 9–15.
- ***The Pentateuch***, Chapter 2.

Assignment 3.1: Read Anderson, pages 9-15. Then write a five-page paper in which you answer the following questions and discuss the following points:

1. What event does Anderson consider to be “the crucial event,” “the decisive event,” “the great watershed of Israel’s history”?
2. Why does Anderson consider this event to be so crucial?
3. Anderson quotes the ancient historic creed found in Deuteronomy 26:5-9 then discusses how each worshiper identified with the story that is affirmed in the ancient creed. What role do you think the great historic creeds of the Christian faith (The Apostles’ Creed and The Nicene Creed) play in helping individual worshipers develop a sense of identity and a spirit of connectedness with Christians of every time and place?
4. What do you think Anderson means when he says that, “biblical faith is fundamentally historical in character” (page 13)? What does this “fundamentally historical faith” say about God?

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 3.2: Read Fretheim, Chapter 2 (pages 39-63). In this chapter, Fretheim offers his readers “A Proposal for Reading the Pentateuch.” In his reading of the Pentateuch, “the basic images of God that readers will encounter in the rest of the Pentateuch” are introduced in the opening chapters of the Pentateuch, in Genesis 1-11 (Fretheim, page 44). After reading Fretheim, Chapter 2, write a five-to-seven-page paper in which you:

1. List “the basic images of God” that Fretheim identifies in the Pentateuch.
2. Summarize Fretheim’s discussion of each image.
3. Indicate how each image of God speaks to the concerns and issues of the Church and the world today.

Total Value: 6 points



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Module 4: Exodus

- **The Book of Exodus**
Chapters 7–12; 14–15; 19:1–24:11.
- **The HarperCollins Bible Commentary**
“Commentary on Exodus” pp. 128–132, 133–135, 136–138.
- **Understanding the Old Testament**, pp. 60–68, 68–75, 89–93, 98–100.
- **The United Methodist Hymnal**
“A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition, #607.

Assignment 4.1: Read the narrative of the plagues in Exodus 7-12, the commentary on these chapters of Exodus in **The HarperCollins Bible Commentary** (pages 128-132), and Anderson’s discussion of the plagues (pages 60-68). Then write a five-page paper in which you compare the narrative of the plagues in Exodus with the poetic summaries of the plague tradition found in Psalms 78:42-51 and 105:26-36. Discuss the significance of the similarities and differences. **Total Value: 6 points**

Assignment 4.2: Read Exodus 14-15, the commentary on these chapters of Exodus in **The HarperCollins Bible Commentary** (pages 133-135), and Anderson’s discussion of Exodus 14-15 (pages 68-75). Then write a five-page paper in which you compare the prose and poetic versions of the crossing of the Red Sea (Hebrew, yam suph, “Sea of Reeds”), discussing the significance of the similarities and differences between the two accounts of the event. **Total Value: 6 points**

Assignment 4.3: Read Anderson, pages 98-100. Then write a three-page paper in which you:

1. List and summarize the “main aspects of the Mosaic faith.”
2. Discuss how each of these “main aspects of the Mosaic faith” speak to the concerns and issues of the Church and the world today.

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 4.4: Read and study the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:1-21. Then, using **The HarperCollins Bible Commentary**, Anderson’s **Understanding the Old Testament**, a study Bible, and any other resource that you might find helpful, write a ten-page paper in which you compare and contrast the two parallel versions of the Ten Commandments. Be sure to include the following in your paper:

1. A summary of the most important differences between the two versions of the Ten Commandments.
2. A discussion of the significance of these differences?



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3. A discussion of what each of the Ten Commandments meant in Old Testament times and how each commandment speaks to the concerns and issues of the Church and the world today.

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 4.5: Read Exodus 19:1-24:11, Anderson, pages 89-93, and the commentary on Exodus 19:1-24:11 in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary* (pages 136-138). Then write a ten-page paper in which you:

1. Explain what a covenant is and, specifically, how the concept of a covenant was and is used in the Old Testament.
2. Explain how the political idea of a treaty seems to have been adopted and adapted as a way of describing God's relationship with the people of God.
3. Explain the two kinds of Hittite treaties, the parity treaty or covenant and the suzerainty treaty or covenant, and why the parity treaty was an inappropriate model for the covenant between God and the people of God while the suzerainty treaty was an appropriate model.
4. Outline the various parts of the Hittite suzerainty treaty and, based on your reading of Anderson and Exodus 19:1-24:11, discuss how the biblical covenant does and does not conform to the Hittite suzerainty treaty. In the instances where the biblical covenant does not conform to the Hittite suzerainty treaty, explain why.
5. Discuss how the John Wesley Covenant Prayer (# 607 in The United Methodist Hymnal, "A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition") fits into the biblical understanding of the covenant between God and the people of God. The text of the Wesley Covenant Prayer follows:

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.



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6. Discuss the ways in which you see baptism and/or Church membership as being comparable to participation in the biblical covenant.
Total Value: 6 points

Module 5: Joshua and Judges

- ***The Book of Joshua***
Chapters 10:40–43; 16:10; 17:12–13; 21:43–45.
- ***The Book of Judges***
Chapters 1:27–36; 2:6–3:8.
- ***Understanding the Old Testament***, pp. 119–129, 169–170.

Assignment 5.1: Read Joshua 10:40-43; 16:10; 17:12-13; 21:43-45; Judges 1:27-36. Also, read Anderson, pages 119-129. Then, write a five-to-seven-page paper in which you:

1. Summarize what you read in the biblical passages, indicating the two different viewpoints that stand side-by-side in the biblical texts.
2. Discuss, based on your reading of Anderson, the various “models” or views that have been proposed by scholars to account for the differences in the biblical texts and to explain Israel’s settlement in the land of Canaan.
3. Indicate which “model” or view makes the most sense to you.
Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 5.2: Anderson describes a four-step pattern that is repeated time after time in the book of Judges (bottom of page 169 onto the top of page 170). The pattern is outlined in Judges 2:6-3:8. This four-part cyclical pattern is the key to the structure and interpretation of the book of Judges. Write a two-to-three-page paper in which you:

1. List the four parts in the pattern.
2. Show how each part of the pattern is present in the narrative pertaining to each of the following Judges: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. Be sure to give the specific scriptural citations, chapter and verse, for all four steps in the narrative pertaining to each Judge.
3. Reflect on what the four-step pattern or cycle has to say to the concerns and issues of the Church and the world today. Note well Anderson’s comment that, “History teaches that the downfall of a people often begins not with external military pressure, but with internal moral and spiritual degeneration” (page 170).
Total Value: 6 points



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Module 6: 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings

- **The Book of 2 Samuel**
Chapter 7.
- **The Book of 1 Kings**
Chapters 1–11; 17–19, 21.
- **Understanding the Old Testament**, pp. 213–217, 217–227, 228–234, 248–255.
- **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary**
“Commentary on 2 Samuel 7”.
John Barton’s “three processes” pp. 65–68.
“Commentary on 1 Kings 1–11” (pp. 281–287).
Interpretation of 1 Kings 17–19, 21.

Assignment 6.1: Read 2 Samuel 7, Anderson, pages 213-217, the commentary on 2 Samuel 7 in **The HarperCollins Bible Commentary**, and the interpretation of 2 Samuel 7 in any other resource that you find helpful. Then write a five-to-seven-page paper in which you discuss the significance of the Davidic covenant as presented in 2 Samuel 7 for David’s life, for the history of the nation of Israel, for Old Testament theology, and for Christian theology. Use John Barton’s “three processes” for “reading and interpreting” the Bible as a guide in writing your paper (HarperCollins Bible Commentary, pages 65-68). Be sure to include in your paper:

1. Any historical and/or geographical information.
2. Any literary notes that help us to understand the passage being studied. A discussion of the theological issues that surface in the passage being studied.
3. The significance or application of the passage for the life of the Church today.

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 6.2: Based on your reading of 1 Kings 1-11, Anderson, pages 217-227, and the commentary on 1 Kings 1-11 in **The HarperCollins Bible Commentary** (pages 281-287), write a five-page paper in which you summarize the reign of Solomon and discuss Solomon’s role in the history of ancient Israel, focusing on the consequences of his major achievements and weaknesses. **Total Value: 6 points**

Assignment 6.3: Read 1 Kings 11:1-13 and Anderson, 223-225 (the section entitled “Solomon’s Broadmindedness”). Reflect on Anderson’s observation that “Solomon’s weakness was seen as an excessive broadmindedness.” Then write a five-page paper in which you interpret 1 Kings 11:1-13. Use John Barton’s “three processes” for “reading and interpreting” the Bible as a guide in writing your paper (**The HarperCollins Bible Commentary**, pages 65-68). **Total Value: 6 points**



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Assignment 6.4: Read Anderson, pages 228-234. Then write a three-to-five-page paper in which you discuss:

1. The meaning of the word "prophet" as it is used in the Bible.
2. The primary role of prophets and prophecy in the Bible.
3. The background of biblical prophecy.
4. The roles of the biblical prophets in the affairs of government and politics in ancient Israel.

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 6.5: Read 1 Kings 17-19, 21, Anderson, pages 248-255, the commentary on 1 Kings 17-19, 21 in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, and the interpretation of 1 Kings 17-19, 21 in any other resource that you find helpful. Then write a seven-to-ten-page paper in which you discuss issues related to the interpretation of the ministry of the prophet Elijah. Use John Barton's "three processes" for "reading and interpreting" the Bible as a guide in writing your paper (HarperCollins Bible Commentary, pages 65-68). Be sure to include in your paper:

1. Any historical and/or geographical information.
2. Any literary notes that help us to understand the passage being studied.
3. A discussion of the theological issues that surface in the passage being studied.
4. The significance or application of the passage for the life of the Church today.

Total Value: 6 points