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UST School of Theology at Saint Mary's Seminary
Theology and Themes of the Old Testament/CG 5302 N

Course Description:
This course is an introduction to the major theological themes of the Pentateuch, Prophets, and Writings. Major areas of exploration will include Creation and Exodus, Covenant and Prophecy, Law and Wisdom. This course will emphasize the effects of the political, historical, cultural and social milieu upon the development of Old Testament theology.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of Theology and Themes of the Old Testament a student will be able to:

1. Differentiate between and discuss the various depictions of God in the Old Testament.
2. Explain the meaning of the four main covenants in the Old Testament (Noachic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic).
3. Discern the importance of the entry of the Greeks and Hellenistic culture into the time of the Bible.
4. Discuss the relevant documents of the Roman Catholic Church in regards to Sacred Scripture and Divine Revelation.

Thoughts to Keep in Mind While You Read:
As we are covering a time period of roughly a millennium in the literature before us, one must be cognizant of the variety of interpretations and viewpoints in the text. When you read, therefore, it is important to keep track of the following:

- How is God depicted?
- What is the theological thrust of the material?
- How is Israel depicted, when it is depicted at all?
- Who is/are the main characters in the stories?
- What type of literature are we reading?

I have always found it helpful to keep track of the above material as I read, constructing a one page summary for each work as a handy reference guide for the future. This is a not so subtle hint which will undoubtedly help you on the mid-term and final.

Online Content
The main entry point for online content for Theology and Themes of the Old Testament is the UST Blackboard system which can be found here: https://blackboard.stthom.edu
Once you log in you will have access to all course content for CG 5302 N to include lectures, videos, discussion groups as well as all course announcements.
I will also utilize the School of Theology Polycom system to allow students to access our class sessions via video conferencing. Students wishing to attend class from home must let me know the first week of class and I will supply them with the online setup instructions for this service.

Guardian Angel Librarians
We are lucky to have a specific librarian assigned to help us with any research or informational needs related to Theology and Themes of the Old Testament. Her name is Ms. Ashley Pitts who can be reached via e-mail at pittsa@sthom.edu. Student’s utilizing the online option for CG 5302 N will find her particularly helpful.

Grading:
Your grade for this class will be determined by performance on 5 (five) quizzes. The quizzes will be entirely objective in nature and represent the “facts” that all who purport to be familiar with the Old Testament must know such as date of composition, reason for writing, major theological themes, language and genre. What material will you be responsible for when taking a quiz?

1. All material from the previous lectures. You will not be asked a question on a topic that has not been first presented in class.
2. All material from the relevant Sacred Scripture.
3. All material from Harris with a special emphasis on the words in bold as well as “Terms and Concepts to Remember” sections at the end of each chapter of Harris.

There will be no surprise examinations of any kind with at least one week prior notice given before a quiz.

Required Texts:
Stephen L. Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, Any Edition, preferably the cheapest. NOTE: As we may be working with various versions of Harris (I told the bookstore to buy used copies to pass on the savings to you), we will have to play the reading assignments by ear, i.e. all our page numbers may not align perfectly. The Chapter titles should, however, keep us all on the same page.


Laptop Policy: The use of a laptop in class is a privilege, and a privilege that can be revoked for any activity other than note-taking such as:

1. Web surfing
2. Games of any sort
3. Text messaging/e-mail
4. Any non-class related activity

Students With Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will need to
also contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 3162.

26MAY2015: Introductory Lecture
1. Preparation Required: None
3. Theological Concerns: Origins of the Bible
4. Preparation for next class:
   A. Sacred Scripture: None
   B. Harris’, Understanding the Bible: Chapter One-The Bible: An Overview, and Chapter Two-History and Geography of the Ancient Near East.
   C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.
   D. Questions for Discussion: Given the history of how the bible was formed, what does it mean to say that the Bible is inspired?

28MAY2015: The Lay of the Land (Intellectual and Geographic)
1. Preparation and Required: Harris, Chapter Two
2. Material to Cover: The Historical Critical Method of Interpretation, Textual, Source, Form and Redaction Criticism, Other Methods: Literary, Ideological and Canonical Criticism.
3. Theological Concerns: Faith and Understanding, Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation.
4. Preparation Required for next class:
   A. Sacred Scripture: Genesis, Chapters 1-4
   B. Harris’, Understanding the Bible: Chapter Two.
   C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in today’s class, write about two or three things that you consider the most important and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.
   D. Questions for Discussion for Class Three: How do you think that your approach to the Bible will be changed by reading the Bible against its’ historic background AND What do you understand by revelation and inspiration, how is this understanding affected by a historical critical approach to interpretation of the Bible?

02JUN2015: The Lay of the Land Part II (Intellectual and Geographic)
1. Preparation and Required: Harris, Chapter Two-History and Geography of the Ancient Near East.
2. Material to Cover: The Historical Critical Method of Interpretation, Textual, Source, Form and Redaction Criticism, Other Methods: Literary, Ideological and Canonical Criticism.
3. Theological Concerns: Faith and Understanding, Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation.

4. Preparation Required for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: Genesis, Chapters 7-11
B. Harris’, Understanding the Bible: Chapter Three, The God of Israel, Chapter Four-up to but not including the section on Genesis.
C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in today’s class, write about two or three things that you consider the most important and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.
D. Questions for Discussion for Class Three: How do you think that your approach to the Bible will be changed by reading the Bible against its’ historic background AND What do you understand by revelation and inspiration, how is this understanding affected by a historical critical approach to interpretation of the Bible?

04JUN2015: The Two Creation Accounts of Genesis (QUIZ 1)
1. Preparation Required:
A. Sacred Scripture: Genesis, Chapters 1-11
B. Harris’, Understanding the Bible: Chapter Three, The God of Israel, Chapter Four-up to but not including the section on Genesis.
3. Theological Concerns: God’s relationship to the world, Humanity’s relationship to God and to the world, Sin and grace.
4. Preparation for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: Genesis 12-36
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Four, just the section on Genesis.
C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.
D. Question for Discussion: If you were going to write a story about the creation of the world what things would you take into account in writing that story and why? What is the relationship between story and truth?

09JUN2015: The Patriarchal History of Genesis
1. Preparation Required:
A. Sacred Scripture: Genesis 12-36
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Four, just the section on Genesis.
2. Material to cover: The Patriarchal Narratives, The nature of Saga, Historical Background, Abraham: A Person of Faith, Jacob: Whom God Chooses
3. Theological Concerns: Biblical Faith and Doing God’s Will, Accepting whom God Chooses
4. Preparation for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: Exodus 1-15:21
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Four, just the section on Exodus.
C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.

D. Questions for Discussion: In what way has God called you? Is your response in faith consistent or is the characterization of Abraham’s life in faith much like your own? What do you think about Jacob? How is it that God could choose someone like him?

11JUN2015: The Exodus (QUIZ 2)
1. Preparation Required:
   A. Sacred Scripture: Exodus 1-15:21
   B. Harris’ *Understanding the Bible*: Chapter Four, just the section on Exodus.
3. Theological Concerns: Oppression and Liberation, God’s intervention in History

4. Preparation Required for next class:
   A. Sacred Scripture: Exodus 15:22-18:27, Numbers 11-24
   B. Harris’ *Understanding the Bible*: Chapter Four, just the section on Numbers
   C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.

D. Questions for Discussion: How do you relate to miracles in your own life? Do you see them as the biblical world did? Why? Why not? How does God intervene in history? How does God intervene in your world?

16JUN2015: The Sinai Experience
1. Preparation Required:
   A. Sacred Scripture: Exodus 15:22-18:27, Numbers 11-24
   B. Harris’ *Understanding the Bible*: Chapter Four, just the section on Numbers.
2. Material to Cover: Covenant, Law and the Wilderness Tradition
3. Theological Concerns: Covenant/Relationship to God, to Law and God’s Care/Our Rebellion

4. Preparation Required for next class:
   A. Sacred Scripture: Joshua (scan), Judges (scan), 1-2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11
   B. Harris’ *Understanding the Bible*: Chapter Five, up to and including the sections on 1 Kings
   C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.

D. Questions for Discussion: What meaning does God as lawgiver have for you? Do you find it difficult to accept God as a God of law? Why? How do you relate this to Jesus’ depiction of God as a God who forgives?

18JUN2015: The Deuteronomistic History
Preparation Required
A. Sacred Scripture: Joshua (scan), Judges (scan), 1-2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Five, up to and including the sections on 1 Kings
2. Material to Cover in Class Seven: The Deuteronomistic History, The Conquest of Canaan, Major and Minor Judges, David
3. Theological Concerns: God at work in history, God and War, Leadership and God’s Spirit
Preparation Required for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-39 and Jeremiah
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Six up to and including the section on Hosea, the section on First Isaiah, and the section on Jeremiah.
C. Questions for Discussion: What is it about the David stories that impresses you the most? Why? What is the relationship between leadership, authority and the Spirit of God?

23JUN2015: The Prophets (QUIZ 3)
1. Preparation Required:
A. Sacred Scripture: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-39 and Jeremiah
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Six up to and including the section on Hosea, the section on First Isaiah, and the section on Jeremiah.
4. Preparation Required for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Seven, introductory material, the section entitled “Wisdom Literature,” the sections on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.
C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.

25JUN2015: Wisdom Literature
1. Preparation Required:
A. Sacred Scripture: Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
B. Harris’ Understanding the Bible: Chapter Seven, introductory material, the section entitled “Wisdom Literature,” the sections on Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.
2. Material to Cover in Class Eleven: Wisdom Literature: In the Ancient Near East and in Israel, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
3. Theological Concerns: Worldly Wisdom vs. God’s Wisdom, Questioning God, How should one live?
4. Preparation Required for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: 1-2 Maccabees
B. Harris’ *Understanding the Bible*, Introductory material to Chapter 8 and the relevant sections.
C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.
D. Questions for Discussion in Class Thirteen: How do you minister to a defeated people?

30JUN2015: The Hellenistic World (QUIZ 4)
1. Preparation Required:
A. Sacred Scripture: Ezra-Nehemiah (Selections), 1-2 Maccabees
B. Harris’ *Understanding the Bible*, Introductory material to Chapter 8 and the relevant sections.
2. Material to Cover in Class Fourteen: The Rise of Greek Thought and Philosophy, Alexander the Great, my friends Philo and Josephus, a little bit of Qumran/Dead Sea Scrolls
3. Theological Concerns: What was the threat to the religion of the Jews? Are there any analogues to Christianity?
4. Preparation Required for next class:
A. Sacred Scripture: Daniel
B. Harris, relevant sections including “Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Daniel,” “Other Apocalyptic Works,” and “2 Esdras/4 Ezra”.
C. Reflections, Insights, Comments: Reflecting on the class material covered in class today, write about two or three things that you consider the most important from today’s class and relate what impact you think these will have on your ministry and/or your faith development.
D. Questions for Discussion: To what extent are we heirs of Greek philosophical and religious thought? To what extent are we heirs of Jewish thought?

02JUL2015: Daniel and Apocalypse (QUIZ 5)
1. Preparation Required:
A. Sacred Scripture: Daniel
B. Harris, relevant sections including “Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Daniel,” “Other Apocalyptic Works,” and “2 Esdras/4 Ezra”.
2. Material to cover: Apocalyptic Literature, historical background, The Book of Daniel
3. Theological Concerns: Oppression and God’s Will, Hope when there is no hope, God breaking into our world