

The Bible and Archeology

Religion 840:302:01

Professor Debra Ballentine

Fall 2015

Class Meeting: Mon/Thurs 10:55-12:15

Hickman 205

Debra.Ballentine@rutgers.edu

Loree Building, office 132

Office Hours: Mondays 12:30-1:30

Our main source of information about ancient Israel and Judah is the Hebrew Bible (a.k.a. the Christian 'Old Testament'). The Hebrew Bible is an anthology of texts that was produced over the course of about 1000 years. Without this ancient literary product, we would know relatively little about Israelite and Judean society and religion. At the same time, the Hebrew Bible primarily represents the views of an elite minority, including various priestly and royal scribes and select divinatory specialists. To develop a fuller reconstruction of the biblical world, scholars have analyzed a variety of material evidence from ancient Israel and Judah as well as the broader ancient Near East. Archeological remains of city walls, gates, homes, temples, and palaces, as well as royal monuments and inscriptions are invaluable for our understanding of the society that informed and was shaped by biblical authors. In this course we study select material evidence, where and how it was found, how scholars have interpreted it, as well as the particular biblical stories and phenomena the material evidence elucidates. Students will become familiar with the ancient data, practice analysis of material and literary evidence, and examine scholarly theories and debates about biblical, ancient Judean, and ancient Israelite traditions.

Books:

-The Hebrew Bible: NJPS or NRSV; preferably either the (NJPS) 'The Jewish Study Bible' (Oxford, 2014) or (NRSV) 'The New Oxford Annotated Bible, College Edition' (Oxford, 2010) versions. We will discuss various versions in class, and I will consult the Hebrew text as well.

-K. L. Noll, *Canaan and Israel in Antiquity: A Textbook on History and Religion* (2nd edition; London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

-Philip R. Davies, *Memories of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008)

-Readings from the following are available on Sakai: Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient*

Israel and Judah (2nd edition; Westminster John Knox, 2006); Hallo and Younger, eds. *The Context of Scripture, vol. 2 Monumental Inscriptions* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Johnston, ed.

Religions of the Ancient World (Harvard, 2004); Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What do we know and How do we know it?* (T&T Clark, 2008); and various journal articles

Course requirements:

30% Participation: be present, prepared to answer and ask questions and discuss readings

30% Two in-class presentations, based on assigned readings; two responses to presentations

40% Final exam (Wednesday, December 16, 12:00-3:00)

We will adhere to the University's Policy on Academic Integrity

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Provisional schedule, topics, and readings:

Unit 1: Modern scholarly context; ancient geographical and political setting

Week 1

Th 9/3 Introductory discussion of the academic study of religion and biblical studies

Week 2 *note Tues 9/8 is a 'change of designation' day to a Monday schedule*

T 9/8 Key concepts: biblical studies, Hebrew Bible, extra-biblical evidence

Read: Collins "Israel"; Lincoln "Theses on Method"

Th 9/10 Geographical setting; linguistic relationships; historical framework

Read: Noll ch.1; Miller/Hayes ch.1

Week 3

M 9/14 Theory discussion: History, Historiography, and Historicity

Read: Noll ch.2, 3; Grabbe ch.1

Unit 2: Development and aspects of the scholarly debate

Th 9/17 History, the Bible, and "Biblical History"

Read: Davies ch. 1, 2, 3; Miller/Hayes ch.2

Week 4

M 9/21 Archeology, the history of "Biblical Archeology"

Read: Dever, "Sources and Methods for the Study of Ancient Israel's Religions"; Dever online lectures 1 and 2; check all biblical citations for yourselves

Th 9/24 Dever online lectures 3, 4, 5; check all biblical citations for yourselves

Week 5

M 9/28 Dever online lecture 6, 7, 8; check all biblical citations for yourselves

Th 10/1 Use of archeology and inscriptions

Read: Davies ch. 4, 5

Week 6

M 10/5 Constructing history and cultural memory

Read: Davies ch. 6; Ezra, Nehemiah

Th 10/8 Comparing scholarly views: maximalist, minimalist, and moderate reconstructions

Read: Davies ch. 7, 8, 9

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Unit 3: Analysis of material and literary evidence within the historical framework

Week 7 - M 10/12 and Th 10/15

Item: Merneptah Inscription

Setting: Bronze Age

Issue: Origins of early Israel

Themes: royal ideology, military hyperbole, theological politics

Read: Noll ch.4; Miller/Hayes pp.39-42; *COS* 2.6; Rainey "Israel in Merneptah's Inscription and Reliefs"; Oxford or NJPS intro to Exodus

Week 8 - M 10/19 and Th 10/22

Items: pottery, dwellings

Setting: Iron I

Issue: "identity" of early Israelites, Canaanites, Philistines

Read: Noll ch.5; consult Oxford or NJPS notes on relevant passages

Themes: royal ideology, theological politics, military apology, patron gods, other gods

Read: Noll ch.6; note treatment of multiple inscriptions and biblical texts; consult Oxford or NJPS notes on relevant passages; *COS* 2.29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38

Week 9 - M 10/26 and Th 10/29

Items: city structures, Sheshonq's Inscription

Setting: 10th century

Issue: status of United Monarchy

Themes: royal ideology, military hyperbole

Read: Noll ch.7; Miller/Hayes pp.42-43, 197-220, 244-254, 259-262, 278-279; 1 Kings 1-15 with intro and notes

Week 10

M 11/2

Item: Mesha Stele

Setting: Iron II

Issue: Omride dynasty

Themes: royal ideology, theological politics, military hyperbole, relationships between Israel/Judah and neighboring polities

Read: Noll ch.8-9; *COS* 2.23; Miller/Hayes pp.244-248, ch.10; 1 Kings 16, 2 Kings 3 with notes

Th 11/5

Items: Shalmaneser's Monolith and Black Obelisk Inscriptions; Rimah Stele; Zakkur Inscription

Setting: Iron II

Issues: Omride dynasty, Jehu's coup and dynasty

Themes: royal ideology, theological politics, military hyperbole, relationships between Israel/Judah and neighboring polities

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Read: review Noll ch.8; Miller/Hayes pp.244-248, ch.10-11; *COS* 2.113A, 2.113F, 2.35, 2.114F; 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 10 with notes

Week 11 - M 11/9 and Th 11/12

Item: Tel Dan Inscription

Setting: Iron II

Issues: Historicity of David; Omride dynasty and Jehu's coup

Themes: royal ideology, theological politics, relationships Israel/Judah and neighboring polities

Read: review Noll ch.8; Miller/Hayes pp.148-149, 244-254, ch.10; *COS* 2.39; 2 Kings 9-10 with notes; Biran & Naveh, "An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan," "The Tel Dan Inscription, A New Fragment"; Davies, "'House of David' Built on Sand"; Suriano, "The Apology of Hazael"

Week 12 - M 11/16 and Th 11/19

Items: inscriptions from Sargon II

Setting: Neo-Assyrian period

Issues: destruction of Israel and Judean responses

Themes: theological politics, apology for destruction

Read: *COS* 2.118A-118I; 2 Kings 16-25; 2 Chron 29-36 with notes

Week 13

M 11/23 Metropolitan Museum online lecture and essays on the Cyrus Cylinder; no class meetings - SBL conference

Th 11/26 Thanksgiving break; no class meeting

Week 14 - M 11/30 and Th 12/3

Item: Cyrus Cylinder

Setting: Persian Period

Issue: biblical theology in the context of ANE theology

Themes: royal propaganda, theological politics

Read: Noll ch.10; *COS* 2.124; Isaiah 44-45; Chronicles 36; Ezra with notes

Week 15

M 12/7 Analysis of common themes; implications for our understanding of biblical theological apologies for military defeat and destruction; review responses to exile

Th 12/10 Conclusions, discussion of final exam

Final exam: Wednesday, December 16, 12:00-3:00