PLACE: Saint Louis University, Laclede Classroom Building 118.  
TIME: Fall Semester, 2008-2009; Tuesday-Thursday, 9:30-10:45 P.M.  
PROFESSOR: Dr. Bernhard A. Asen. Humanities Building 248. Office phone: 977-2857; Email: Asen@SLU.EDU; Home phone: 862-1423.  

COURSE DESCRIPTION  
This course will survey the historical, literary, cultural and theological heritage in ancient Israel from its earliest beginnings to the start of the Christian era. Special attention will be paid to the geographical and historical contexts in which the Jewish scriptures arose, their social settings, political biases, and theological message.

LEARNING OUTCOMES  
The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament did not develop in a cultural vacuum. Thus, close attention will be paid to the cultural diversity that marked the Ancient Near East, and its influence on Israel's life and faith. By the end of the course students will have learned about: Exodus and liberation, power and violence, creation and fall, love and covenant, faith and story, prophecy and kingship, etc. The wide variety of literature contained in these scriptures has influenced and continues to influence people today. An awareness of their content and character can assist in a fuller understanding not only of Judaism, but also of Christianity, for the Jewish scriptures are the "seedbed" out of which early Christianity arose.

SKILL ACQUISITIONS  
By the end of the course students will have read major portions of the Old Testament that highlight the various themes listed below, as well as selected readings from the textbook listed below. Class periods will consist of lecture and discussion. Your participation in the discussions will be very important to our mutual growth and learning. Skills acquired will include: how to read biblical texts in their historical contexts; how to distinguish various forms of biblical literature (e.g., history, poetry, psalms, prophetic oracles, stories of origins, etc.); how to evaluate various kinds of biblical interpretation, and how to relate Old Testament to New Testament texts and themes.

REQUIRED TEXTS  
*The Holy Bible.* Any version is acceptable, but The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha is preferred. Be sure the Bible you use contains both Testaments. Bring your bible to every class period.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
If you cannot be in class, please email me or call me at my home or office. **More than three (3) unexcused absences will drop your grade one level (A becomes B, etc.).**

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS
Any student who feels that he/she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course—as outlined in the syllabus, due to the presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Disabilities Services. Please telephone the office at 314-977-2930, or visit Room 131 in the Academic Resources Center, 3840 Lindell Blvd. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion by the University.

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS
In its educational mission Saint Louis University is committed to the following five dimensions: 1) Scholarship and knowledge, 2) Intellectual inquiry and communication, 3) Community building, 4) Leadership and service, 5) Spirituality and values. As we proceed through the course outline below it is hoped that you will find how these dimensions are richly present in the biblical prophets. For example: 1) Learning to read texts in context and acquiring knowledge about the basic meaning of Hebrew words, as well as the political background and theological message of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, will prepare students for further study in scripture. 2) This in turn will help to better understand that the biblical writings were above all else meant to communicate a specific message that, while historically conditioned, also has meaning and importance for today’s world. The biblical authors were thoroughly engaged with the people and powers of their day. 3) The biblical prophets, especially, placed a high value on the importance of community, compassion for human life, and were promoters of social justice. 4) By serving God and their communities the leaders of the OT led by example and had a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of national as well as local concerns. 5) The lives of the people of Israel were often filled with sorrow. In order to continue on their covenant journey with God, they had to develop a deep spirituality and keep in constant dialogue and relationship with God.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES
1. There will be four (4) Synthesis papers required: **September 9, September 25, October 9 and November 4, 2008.** The papers should be one (1) typed page and include
your questions, probing and reactions to the material presented and discussed in class. These papers will not be graded as such, but are a course requirement.

2. A Final Synthesis paper (2-3 pages) due December 4, 2008. No late papers will be accepted. (Nos. 1 and 2 above comprise 1/4 of your grade).

3. A Mid-term examination (October 16, 2008) consisting of short answer, matching and essay questions (1/4 of grade). A study guide will be provided and discussed in the class prior to the Mid-Term exam.

4. A four to five page essay on some biblical theme, person or event (See attached list of possible topics). You are not confined to this list. However, if you choose a topic not on this list, please ask me before you begin your research and writing (1/4 of grade). The final form of the paper is due December 4, 2008, though you may submit it at any time during the semester. I am willing to read rough drafts and outlines of your paper.

5. A Final comprehensive examination Tuesday, December 16, 2008, 8:00-9:50 A.M. consisting of short answer, matching and essay questions. The Final Exam will cover the entire course (1/4 of grade). A study guide will be supplied and discussed in the last class before the final exam.

6. At least once during the semester (more if you wish) each student is invited to visit me in my office.

7. All students are required to complete the on-line course evaluation at the end of the semester. The time when it will be available on-line will be announced in class.

COURSE OUTLINE AND TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR CLASSES*

August 26
Course introduction: How to Read the Bible: Some basic questions and the tools of the trade.

August 28
Israel's world. Israel's life and thought were not created in a vacuum. Thus, a brief survey of the history of the Ancient Near East will be important and helpful. Read: Anderson, pp. 1-15.

September 2
Israel's world (cont.).

September 4
The Exodus tradition: Where it all begins. The bible begins with creation but Israel's history begins with the Exodus. Read: Exodus 1-10; Anderson, pp. 49-76

September 9
The Exodus tradition (continued).
Synthesis Paper due

September 11
September 16
Covenant and Law (cont.).

September 18
It's not easy being king! The rise of the monarchical tradition in Israel. Read: 1 Samuel 1-15; 2 Samuel1-7; Anderson, pp. 192-222.

September 23
The rise of the prophetic tradition: Forthtelling, not foretelling. Read: Amos; Anderson, pp. 223-71

September 25
Amos (continued)

September 30
Amos (cont.), begin Hosea. Read: Hosea; Anderson, pp. 271-84.

October 2
Hosea (cont.) Polytheism.

October 7
The Ancestral History: Genesis 12-50. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers. The ancestral history is both foreword and forward. Read: Genesis 12-50; Anderson, pp. 18-48.

October 9
The Ancestral History (cont.) Read; Anderson, pp. 137-63.
Synthesis Paper due.
Mid-term exam review sheet will be distributed.

October 14
Mid-term Exam review.

October 16
Mid-term Examination

October 21
No Class. Fall Break.

October 23
Creation and Fall. What is the meaning of the biblical creation accounts? There is more than one account about how the world began. Read: Genesis 1: 1-3 :24; Psalm 104.
October 28
Creation and Fall (continued).

October 30
The Flood: Archaeology or Arkeology? Read: Genesis 6-9.

November 4

Synthesis Paper due

November 6
Pride and Prejudice: The Book of Jonah. This is much more than a fish story. Read: Jonah; Anderson, pp. 546-48.

November 11
Wisdom literature: "The beginning of wisdom is get wisdom" (Prov 4:7a). Read: Anderson, pp. 510-29.

November 13
Wisdom literature: Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes). Read: Ecclesiastes.

November 18
Job, suffering and the afterlife. Read: Job; Anderson, pp. 529-44.

November 20
Job (cont.).

November 25
Apocalyptic literature. An introduction to the rise of a truly "fantastic" literature-kingdoms, monsters, beasts, and the end of the world. Read: Daniel 1-6; Bel and the Dragon; Tobit; Anderson, pp. 553-82.

November 27
No Class. Thanksgiving Holiday

December 2
Apocalyptic literature (cont.)

Final exam study guide distributed.

December 4
Final exam review. Final Synthesis and Research Papers due.

December 16
Final Exam. Tuesday, 8:00-10:00 A.M.
* I say "tentative" because we will stress understanding, comprehension and dialogue rather than speed. It may be necessary here and there to abbreviate certain sections and lengthen others. If at any time you have questions, comments, problems, or you just want to talk, please feel free to drop my office.

**List of Possible Paper Topics**

The following is a list of possible topics for the required research paper. The list is by no means exhaustive or final. You can pick from one of these topics, or choose your own. However, if you choose your own topic, please clear it with me in advance. I may be able to help you focus your idea so that it is manageable.

The text of the paper should not be longer than five (5) double-spaced pages, including the bibliography. One place to begin your research is to look up your topic in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Six volumes), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Four volumes plus a supplementary fifth volume) or *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (One volume). These dictionaries are in the reference section of Pius Library.

**Who was Moses? Who was Rebekah? Who was Joseph? etc.**

**Where is Armageddon?**

**What is the importance of archaeology for Old Testament studies?**

**Education in ancient Israel**

**What is the prophet Joel's message about?**

**Sacrifice in the Old Testament**

**Marriage and the family in ancient Israel (focus on one specific aspect, e.g., role of father, mother, tribe, structure of the family, etc.)**

**Circumcision**

**Leprosy**

**Bees and the Bible**

**Sheep in ancient Israel**

**Music and musical instruments in the Old Testament**

**Angels and angelology**

**The names of God**

**Death and funeral rites**

**Slavery in Israel**

**Pick a favorite Psalm and discuss its form and message**

**The royal household**

**The Ark of the Covenant**

**Who was Leah? Rachel? Sarah? etc.**

**Child sacrifice in the Ancient Near East**

**The origin of Passover**

**The origin of Hanukkah**

**Death and afterlife in the Old Testament**

**Judas Maccabeus**

**Zoroastrianism**

**The Ugaritic Tablets**

**Sex in Canaanite religion**
Write a portrait of one of the Judges of Israel: Deborah, Samson, Gideon, et al.
The Suffering Servant
The Son of Man
The Canaanite gods: Baal, El, Astarte, etc.
How were the Israelites to treat strangers?
What is the Old Testament concept of sin?
Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?
What is eschatology?
What is exegesis?
The role of women in the Old Testament
Righteousness and justice in the Old Testament

The research paper should be three (3) to five (5) pages in length, typed, double- spaced and include a bibliography of sources cited. In addition to the Bible, at least three (3) secondary sources should be consulted. You may use any standard style sheet (e.g., Turabian, MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.). I am willing to read outlines, rough drafts, or help with the selection of a topic.
The final synthesis paper should be approximately three (3) pages in length. It is not meant to be a repetition of the course, but a summary of a few ideas, themes, etc. that you found interesting and worthwhile over the course of the semester.

**Grading Scale for Mid-term and Final examinations**

- **100-93** = A
- **92-90** = A-
- **89-87** = B+
- **86-83** = B
- **82-80** = B-
- **79-76** = C+
- **75-71** = C
- **70-68** = C-
- **67-62** = D
- **61-0** = F

The following are general principles of the Department of Theological Studies concerning grading standards and criteria:
A range = *Superior, exceptional, outstanding* with evidence of critical, informed, and creative theological inquiry that deepens their understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student demonstrates depth of insight beyond what is normally expected. Carefully nuanced reasoning and writing, free from material, structural and grammatical error are presupposed in this grade.

B range = *Good*, ready command of full range of concepts and shows some critical, informed, and creative inquiry that deepens their understanding of essential theological/historical concepts. This means the student has produced an assignment that is free from material, structural and grammatical errors.

C range = *Acceptable*, satisfactory ability to describe overall picture and essential concepts. This means the student has completed the assignment in a manner involving no significant errors. Material may not be free from structural and grammatical errors. Nuanced reasoning is not demonstrated.

D range = *Below normal expectation*. Reasoning is neither carefully nuanced nor coherently presented; writing is insufficient in depth of insight and/or use of texts; presentation is not free from material error in structure, spelling and grammar. This means that the student failed to respond adequately to the assignment and its intentions.

F = *Unsatisfactory*. The student failed to respond to the assignment: 1) failed to turn in the assignment; 2) did not respond to the assignment as given; 3) submitted work so thoroughly flawed as to indicate that the student did not make a serious effort, 4) plagiarism or cheating involved.

Letter Grades and GPA: A=4.00, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.00, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.00, C-=1.7, D=1.00, F=0.0

For conversion of numerical scores to Letter Grades:

A=100-96, A-=95-93, B+=92-89, B=88-85, B-=84-81, C+=83-80, C=79-76, C-=75-72, D=72-68, F=67 or lower