

COURSE SYLLABUS¹

RELS 3090
Readings in Primary Texts: Advanced Biblical Hebrew I
T 3:30-6:15
Dr. John C. Reeves
204B Macy
Office hours: MTW 2:00-3:15; or by appointment
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Course description: A critical reading and translation of biblical, non-biblical, and postbiblical Hebrew prose and poetic texts. We will concentrate during the fall semester on prose narrative tales culled from the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua-Kings), with occasional attention given (where relevant) to alternative intrabiblical or even extrabiblical renditions of the assigned readings (e.g., from the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* of Pseudo-Philo), pertinent material in the early versions (primarily Targum, but also Septuagint and Peshitta), Qumran and medieval manuscripts, rabbinic midrash, and the medieval commentaries (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, et al.).

Required textbooks:

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (ed. K. Elliger, et al.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977), or later reprints of this edition. Alternatively, one may use the relevant portions of the *Miqra'ot gedolot* or just about any other Hebrew language edition (e.g., Koren; Kittel; Letteris) provided there is no western translation adjacent or in near proximity to the Masoretic Text.
F. Brown, S. R. Driver, & C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907). Numerous reprints.
Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (2d rev. & enlarged ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1995).
Page H. Kelley, Daniel S. Mynatt, and Timothy G. Crawford, *The Masorah of Bibla Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998).

Recommended purchases: Moreover, you will also find on the bookstore shelves one **recommended** title for optional purchase which is a useful tool for improving your grasp of biblical Hebrew grammar and vocabulary:

W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910). Numerous reprints. This is the standard English-language reference grammar for biblical Hebrew. If you intend to be a student of biblical Hebrew philology, you will need to own and frequently study this book.

Supplementary readings and/or exercises will be assigned or distributed by the instructor as needed.

Course requirements:

a. *Diligent attendance and preparation.* Almost perfect attendance is an essential requirement for this course. Each class session builds upon the knowledge gained and skills acquired during previous

¹ This specific course requires as its minimum prerequisite: (1) the successful completion at UNC Charlotte of two semesters of introductory study; i.e., 'Introduction to Biblical Hebrew I' and 'II'; or (2) an equivalent sequence of introductory biblical Hebrew courses at another institution of higher learning; i.e., amounting to two semesters, three quarters, or one year; or (3) the verbal permission of the instructor.

meetings. Moreover, oral recitation and group study/discussion comprises practically the entirety of every class session. The instructor's assessment of one's attendance, class preparation, oral recitation, and verbal contribution to class discussions constitutes 100% of the final course grade for undergraduates; 80% of that grade for post-baccalaureates and graduates.

b. *Seminar papers (Graduates and post-baccalaureates only!)*. Almost every week during a portion of the class period, students will orally expound and collectively discuss the content of at least one secondary article or essay that has been previously assigned by the instructor. Individual students may be asked to initiate and guide our discussions. The readings will come from the bibliography of articles provided below. In addition to their oral contributions, graduate and post-baccalaureate students will prepare and submit a written seminar paper that concisely summarizes and critiques the major points of each assigned article or essay. Maximum length of the seminar paper will be two (2) pages. The instructor's assessment of the seminar papers accounts for the final 20% of the course grade for graduate and post-baccalaureate students.

c. *Final class*. A required final class for all enrolled students will be held on the date and at the time officially mandated for the final examination for this course by the UNC Charlotte administration. Further details regarding the class will be provided later in the semester.

d. Each student is responsible for all lectures, readings, class discussions, assignments, and announcements, whether or not he/she is present when they occur.

Miscellaneous information:

a. The grading scale used in this course is as follows:

91-95+	A	=	demonstrable mastery of material; can creatively synthesize
81-90	B	=	some demonstrable proficiency in control of material & analysis
71-80	C	=	satisfactory performance of assignments; little or no analysis
61-70	D	=	inadequate and/or faulty understanding of material
0-60	F	=	unacceptable work

Moreover, a 0-70 evaluation for graduate students = U.

b. One of the requirements of this course is to complete the work of the course on time. Sometimes there are legitimate reasons for late work—an illness or other emergency. 'Emergency,' however, does not include your social involvements, travel plans, job schedule, disk and/or printer failures, the state of your love life, your obligations to other courses, or general malaise over the state of the world. The world has been in a mess as long as anyone can remember, and most of the world's work is done by people whose lives are a mass of futility and discontent. If you haven't learned yet, you had better learn now to work under the conditions of the world as it is. **Therefore:**

1) All assignments are due at their announced dates and times. In other words (and please note well!), there will be NO MAKEUP OPPORTUNITIES scheduled. All missed assignments (these include weekly oral recitations!) will be averaged as a 0 in the computation of the course grade. No exceptions will be considered or granted.

2) For accounting purposes, letter grades bear the following values: A=95; A-=92; B=85; C+=78; C=75; D=65; F,U=30. Seminar papers are assessed according to the following formulae: $\sqrt{+} = A$; $\sqrt{=} = B$; $\sqrt{-} = U$. An untyped seminar paper automatically receives the grade U, as do those typed submissions which violate the required parameters or which the instructor deems physically unacceptable and/or grammatically incomprehensible.

3) Since your diligent physical participation is critical for the success of this course, attendance at class meetings will be monitored by the instructor. One absence is regrettable; two absences are the limit of tolerability. Three (3) or more absences will result in an automatic F for the course. Please note that the instructor does not distinguish 'excused' from 'unexcused' absences. Unsanctioned late arrivals and early departures will be tallied as absences.

4) Policy regarding Audits: the instructor expects auditors (whether formally enrolled as such or not) to meet the same attendance, preparation, and oral participation standards as those students who

are taking the course for credit. The instructor does not expect auditors to prepare and submit any written assignments.

c. The [Cuneiform Studies Laboratory](#) (located in Macy 216) houses a number of lexical and grammatical aids (both print and electronic) for the close study of biblical and postbiblical Hebrew. Please consult with the instructor for access to this learning resource and the regulations regarding its use.

d. Assistance and solicitation of criticism is your right as a member of the class. It is not a privilege to be granted or withheld. Do not hesitate to request it nor wait too late in the course for it to be of help.

HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LORE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- David H. Aaron, "Judaism's Holy Language," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism, New Series: Volume Sixteen* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 49-107.
- David Goodblatt, "Constructing Jewish Nationalism: The Hebrew Language," in his *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 49-70.
- J. A. Emerton, "Did Jesus Speak Hebrew?" *Journal of Theological Studies* (= *JTS*) n.s. 12 (1961): 189-202.
- _____, "The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus," *JTS* n.s. 24 (1973): 1-23.
- Jehoshua M. Grintz, "Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple," *Journal of Biblical Literature* (= *JBL*) 79 (1960): 32-47.
- Avi Hurvitz, "The Historical Quest for Ancient Israel and the Linguistic Evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations," *Vetus Testamentum* 47 (1997): 301-15.
- Paul Kahle, "The Masoretic Text of the Bible and the Pronunciation of Hebrew," *Journal of Jewish Studies* (= *JJS*) 7 (1956): 133-53.
- Chaim Rabin, "The Historical Background of Qumran Hebrew," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 4 (1958): 144-61.
- Milka Rubin, "The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity," *JJS* 49 (1998): 306-33.
- William M. Schniedewind, "Qumran Hebrew as an Antilanguage," *JBL* 118 (1999): 235-52.
- Seth Schwartz, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine," *Past and Present* 148 (1995): 3-47.
- David Stern, "The First Jewish Books and the Early History of Jewish Reading," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 98 (2008): 163-202.
- Emanuel Tov, "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts from the Judaean Desert: Their Contribution to Textual Criticism," *JJS* 39 (1988): 5-37.
- Edward Ullendorff, "Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 34 (1971): 241-55.
- Steve Weitzman, "Why did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119 (1999): 35-45.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUCCESS IN THE STUDY OF BIBLICAL HEBREW

1. Strive to spend at least 30 minutes per day (including weekends and holidays) studying and reviewing grammatical rules, paradigms, and vocabulary. Once these have been reasonably mastered, spend that same time (every day!) simply reading portions of the biblical text.
2. The best way to learn and review vocabulary is to use homemade 'flashcards.'
3. Form a study-group with two or three of your classmates in order to practice vocalization and reading skills together. As your knowledge increases, begin to engage in 'sight' translation.
4. Simply DO NOT MISS CLASS. If you 'must' miss a class, make sure that you consult with your classmates regarding assignments, etc. in order to prevent potentially unpleasant surprises.