

REL 101 Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Instructor

Dr. Katherine Low
Professor of Religious Studies

When can I visit Dr. Low?

This section details office location, office hours, and how to book a virtual appointment.

Email availability

Students can expect timely responses (within one business day) to emails sent through their official university account during business hours (8am-6pm) during the work week but should not expect a reply in email over the weekend.

Catalog Description

Introduction to the historical and cultural background of Hebrew Bible. Students are introduced to the historical-critical method of study. The Biblical texts are approached from the perspectives of the history, faith, and theology of Ancient Israel, from Abraham to the return from exile.

Humanities Learning Outcome [General Education requirement]

This course fulfills the following learning outcome for Humanities: Courses fulfilling the humanities component of the common curriculum are those that study human beings and their cultures through examination of their histories, philosophies, religions, and literatures. Students who complete humanities courses increase their knowledge of the critical methods used in such disciplines as history, philosophy, religion, or literature, while developing their ability to interpret and analyze texts and primary sources as well as synthesize this information and effectively communicate their findings.

What does this course offer?

First, students will gain biblical literacy, which is a valuable tool because biblical literature remains influential to our Western world. Second, students will analyze how the books in the Hebrew Bible emerged out of life in the ancient Near East. They will gain valuable insights into ancient symbols and ideas that influence the questions we ask and the orientations we have in our society today. Finally, besides an understanding of the major characters and events, students will also gain an appreciation for the role of the Hebrew Bible in the living out of Judaism today.

What will students be able to do after taking this class?

This course should enable students to 1.) understand the organization of the Hebrew Bible—Tanakh—and how that organization relates to historical and cultural contexts and elements of modern Judaism, 2.) recall major characters and events of the Old Testament as well as ancient Near Eastern themes and how they have been impactful in Western culture, 3.) be able to navigate the various literary components of the Old Testament with attention

to Canon arrangements for both Judaism and Christianity, and 4.) critically engage the complexities of reading the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible in light of religious, racial, ethnic, and gendered backgrounds. As an added benefit, we will practice critical reading skills.

What will students be expected to read?

In order to be successful in this course, students must actually read the material that we are studying. That means that a Bible course requires reading the Bible and not assuming we know the text!

This textbook is required:+

- ***New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 5th Edition/Fully Revised and Expanded Edition, 9780190276089.***

Please order by the ISBN due to the existence of many different versions. Please order the copy with this ISBN: 9780190276089.

+If finances are an issue for you when it comes to purchasing the textbook, email Dr. Low. Thanks to past students, Dr. Low has a few NOABs available to check out.

The professor will be referring to the 5th edition in class. We will be reading this edition in class. Referred to as **NOAB** in class. You will need to bring NOAB to every class; we will learn how to read, and will consistently refer to, the scholarly notes at the bottom of the pages. The pages in the reading schedule correspond to the pagination of this edition.

A student wrote this on a past course evaluation: "My only suggestion is telling students that purchasing the book is not optional. Unlike other courses where they tell me I need the book, I purchase it, and then we never use the book, that was not the case for this course. We used the NOAB book every single class, and if I had not purchased the book, I'm really not sure how someone could pass this class without it."

A website from which required readings are assigned:

Bible Odyssey, Society of Biblical Literature, <http://www.bibleodyssey.org/>

Occasionally, supplementary readings will be provided on Canvas.

What about using the internet for bible study sources and tools?

Please use the recommended sites in this syllabus. Much misinformation exists on the internet. A similar issue exists for Dr. Low and her pet house rabbit Chuckie. The veterinarian has an official list of greens that are good for rabbits and adamantly tells Dr. Low not to trust the internet for credible information to maintain Chuckie's health. The overload of information about what greens are good for her house rabbit gets confusing, as it seems every website states something different about approved rabbit greens. This is because anyone can claim anything without credible education about what greens are safe for rabbits. Given how much the Bible is influential in many kinds of communities in the world, the same situation exists when it comes to using the internet for academic study of the Bible.

Dr. Low has a PhD in Hebrew Bible, so she is an expert, and will highlight other expert voices in this class. Biblical scholars vary in their interpretive approaches to the text, but they do so from within a framework of knowing biblical Hebrew and a historical-critical base. Dr. Low will introduce multiple perspectives from within the field of biblical interpretation. If a student wishes to utilize any website for study, source, or reference, they must email the URL to the professor for approval. See the academic writing statement appendix or further information.

So, I can't use the internet at all when studying for this class?

Not at all! There are reputable websites in which the authors are educated as experts. Various readings are assigned from www.bibleodyssey.org, which is a collection of scholarly information about biblical material sponsored by the Society of Biblical Literature. Also, the following websites are approved for use as source material for this course:

- Jewish Women's Archive, Encyclopedia of Jewish Women: Bible, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia>
- Frontline, PBS, Apocalypse! The Evolution of Apocalyptic Belief and How it Shaped the Western World, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/>
- Open Yale Course, RLST 145: Introduction to the Old Testament, professor Christine Hayes, <http://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-145>
- Oxford Biblical Studies Online, www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com

Can I use an electronic version of NOAB?

Yes, but with a caveat and a warning. Laptops and tablets that have the electronic version of NOAB are allowed in class except for during testing days (see the two tests below). On testing days, students can borrow Dr. Low's NOAB but that is not ideal. Students may NOT use their phones to access the electronic textbook at any time. Be warned...it is not ideal for most students to use the electronic version. Students report that they like to write in their NOABs and keep them on their shelves for when biblical conversations happen, and they need a resource at their fingertips. To set yourself up for success, just order the hardcopy book and make your life easier. An ebook version of the 4th edition of the textbook is available through the university library. This could suffice until you order a hardcopy for yourself.

What will students be expected to do?

Attendance and Participation

There is no virtual, Zoom, synchronous option to attend this class. This class is on-campus and in-person. Students cannot make up in-class work if they are not present for the class session unless there is a documented excuse from the health center or other official university excuse for missing the class session. Accommodation for missing class does not take place retroactively; by the add/drop deadline, students should email the professor about what days they expect to miss due to athletics or due to religious holidays not noted in the course schedule.

Timely, responsible, and consistent use of the course's Canvas page. Inability to access wifi to connect to online required readings or access tests is not an acceptable excuse for missed or late work. Use of Canvas and all assigned features are requirements for this class.

Weekly notes, study guides, study pages, and supplementary videos are provided in each module on Canvas. Everything that is needed to succeed is provided, but students must access the material. Students are responsible for checking the accuracy and the timeliness of their assignment and test submissions on Canvas. If a deadline discrepancy exists between the syllabus and Canvas, the schedule in this syllabus is always the accurate source.

In-Class Scholarly Note Sharings (8 at 2 points each for a total of 16 points)

During class sessions, students will be asked to mention one scholarly note at the bottom of NOAB that was particularly helpful to them when reading the required readings that week. This should be a one-sentence statement that reflects academic engagement related to course material rather than reflective or theological. The scholarly note sharing will take place in various forms while in class. Students cannot make up these sharings if they are not present for the class session unless there is a documented excuse from the health center or other official excuse for missing the class session. If a student knows they will be missing the class session ahead of time due to an official university reason, the student must email Dr. Low ahead of time to arrange a way to provide the scholarly note share.

Quizzes (7 at 4 points each for a total of 28 points)

Quizzes cover context, the “who, where, why, and what” of situations. These situations relate to being in class/studentship, the required readings, as well as studying biblical literature using the scholarly tools in NOAB. We study ancient literature this semester. Therefore, the ancient cultural, historical, and geographical contexts help us understand Hebrew Bible. These quizzes will be done on Canvas, outside of class.

Three Assignments (3 at 10 points each for a total of 30 points)

Assignments follow the organization of the Tanakh, and will consist of various forms, often with several options. The goal is to investigate further a particular idea using the course materials as study guides. Students should read the assignment directions carefully on Canvas.

Assignment 1: Curate a profile of a character found in the Ancestral Story, Gen 12-50

Assignment 2: “Everyone Loved King David” critical analysis, 1 & 2 Samuel

Assignment 3: Megillot holiday PowerPoint presentation

Two Tests (2 tests each worth 8 points for a total of 16 points)

Two tests that cover the lectures, weekly study guides, and reading materials will be given in class. Students will come to the classroom to take these tests on paper. In-class tests are open-book and will be short answer reflection questions. A review and guidelines will be posted on the course's Canvas page. Most short answer questions address specific class sessions. For instance, several questions will ask you to reflect on when we look at various English translations of Hebrew terms in class. If students do not attend class, they will not

have the notes to answer the questions. If students know they will miss the test day due to an excused absence, they must email the professor 24 hours ahead of time or they forfeit the opportunity to complete the test at full point value. If students miss the test for an unexcused reason, they can take a makeup test no later than a week past the deadline at 50% reduction in point value. They must email the professor asking to arrange for a makeup test within 24 hours of missing the test.

Expect at least a week for the professor to score and return all work submitted at the deadline.

Final Exam

10 points

A comprehensive and reflective final exam will be given with announcement pertaining to our exam day during exam week. The final quiz will be given the last week of classes to cover the review sheet on the final exam. A review sheet will be posted on Canvas and it is expected that students will read the expectations of the final exam in the review.

Course Evaluation

Your 100 point term grade will be calculated as follows:

Scholarly Note Sharing in Class (8 each worth 2 points)	16
Quizzes (7 each worth 4 points)	28
Assignments (3 each worth 10 points)	30
Two Tests (2 each worth 8 points)	16
Final Exam	10

The grading scale will evaluate your work as follows:

A	100-93
A -	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-73
C-	72-70
D+	69-67
D	66-63
D-	62-60
F	59 >

For all Assignments: Citing Biblical Texts

In academic writing on biblical literature, citations of the biblical text are required when referring to the biblical text. This is because the biblical text is the primary text of study in this class, and readers cannot take one's word for what is contained in the

biblical text. Writers and readers are responsible for careful reading. When citing a biblical passage, include the abbreviated name of the book, the chapter number, and the verse number—never a page number. Chapter and verse are separated by a colon. Put the citation in parentheses after making a statement about the biblical text.

Example when writing about biblical subjects: To demonstrate his worthiness to become king of Israel, David kills the Philistine giant known as Goliath through military skill (1 Samuel 17), even though elsewhere a possible scribal error states that David didn't actually kill Goliath (2 Samuel 21:19; see also 1 Chronicles 20:5).

What will the instructor be expected to do in this class?

The professor will provide thorough instructions for every assignment, along with providing examples in class, clear deadlines and timely communication. A course schedule will be maintained and updated, if applicable, on Canvas. Dr. Low will provide ample feedback on assignments. She will also be happy to see you if you stop by her office outside of class!

The instructor aims to create a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) while keeping the academic field of biblical studies at the center. To help accomplish this, students are expected to honor the classroom expectations and the instructor will: 1. Use names and pronouns that students reveal, even if they differ from Mary Baldwin records, 2. Honor observance of religious holidays if pertinent to class attendance (see attendance policy), 3. Facilitate a classroom environment of respect even as we engage multiple perspectives, and 4. Advise and support students on the various resources and options available to them. They include:

Extra-Credit

1-5 points

If a student engages in a face-to-face or online tutorial at The Writing Center BEFORE any written assignment, up to five different assignments, and provide proof, the student will receive 1 point extra-credit for that assignment, regardless of the final overall score of the assignment. More information on how to make an appointment is listed here.

Rough Drafts

Students are welcome to send rough drafts of any kind of work BEFORE the submission deadline. Rough drafts should be sent in an email to Dr. Low and feedback will be provided in a business day. The deadline to email a rough draft is 48 business hours before an assignment is due.

Other Support Services

University specific resources for tutoring, accessibility, and support are listed here.

What are the academic policies students should know about?

Missing Class Sessions: This class is on-campus and in-person. For excused absences with medical documentation or athletic/university programs: At least 24 hours' notice is required to request an excused absence. Dr. Low will provide notes, background information, and pertinent links/makeup assignments within reason of accommodation for an excused absence. For unexcused absences: Communication with the professor is key to success if a student misses class sessions for unexcused reasons because often, depending on frequency and timing, Dr. Low will respond in email with notes or other pertinent information if a student missed class for any reason.

Late Work: Students will receive an automatic zero for failing to submit an assignment on time. However, we are humans and extending grace is a healthy part of being human! Therefore, students can submit late work. Usually a 1-2 point penalty will incur for late assignments if submitted within 24-48 hours past the deadline. All make-up work must be emailed to Dr. Low, who will then submit the work on Canvas on behalf of the student. Communicate with Dr. Low about making up missing work expeditiously if you miss an assignment. The grace is extended, but at a certain point the responsibilities you have to complete your work trumps that grace. Therefore, under no circumstances will Dr. Low consider scoring any late work from the semester after 5pm on the final day of class sessions. Any late submission will not be given the same turn-around time and feedback for scoring as those submitted on time.

Late Tests: If a student misses the test deadline for any reason, the student can make up the test with a 50% point penalty if completed within one week of the missed deadline. This arrangement must be made with the professor within 24 hours of missing a test. This does not apply to the final exam.

Academic Writing Statement:

Every student in class must abide by the college's Honor System, which would be listed here.

Course Schedule**

Items in the boxes need to be completed by the class session.

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
WEEK 1	Read the syllabus and visit Canvas before class. Visit the Textbook module and watch the "Introduction about Textbook" video. Introduction: What are we studying?	Read "The Canons of the Bible: Hebrew Bible" and access the chart in NOAB, pages 2235-2238. Read A.J. Levine, "What is the Difference between the Old Testament, the Tanakh, and the Hebrew Bible?" on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/where-did-hebrew-come-from/	Add/Drop Deadline Read Aaron Rubin, "Where did Hebrew Come From?" on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/where-did-hebrew-come-from/

		y.org/articles/what-is-the-difference-between-the-old-testament-the-tanakh-and-the-hebrew-bible/	Quiz #1 covering the syllabus and material from this week due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am
WEEK 2	Section #1: The Torah Read Michael D. Coogan, “Cultural Contexts: The Ancient Near East and Ancient Israel to the Mid-First Millennium BCE,” in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 2290-2296.	Read Alan Lenzi, “How Does the Hebrew Bible Relate to the Ancient Near Eastern World?” on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/how-does-the-hebrew-bible-relate-to-the-ancient-near-eastern-world/	Read Genesis 1 and 2 before class. We will compare the chapters together in class! Quiz #2 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am
WEEK 3	Read Marc Brettler, “Introduction to the Pentateuch,” in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 3-6 Read David Carr’s introduction to Genesis in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 7-11. Then, read Gen 12.	Read Genesis 16, 18, 19, 21	Read Genesis 27, 29, 32 Scholarly note sharing #1 in class on these following chapters: Genesis 27, Genesis 29, Genesis 32 Quiz #3 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am
WEEK 4	Read Victor Matthews, “Joseph and His Clothing” on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/joseph-and-his-clothing/ Scholarly note sharing #2 in class on these following chapters: Genesis 37, Genesis 38	September 17 Read introduction to Exodus by Carol Meyers in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 81-83. Read Exodus 1-2. Scholarly note sharing #3 in class on Exodus 1, Exodus 2.	September 19 Read Exodus 3 & 4 Assignment 1 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am
WEEK 5	Watch: Cheryl B Anderson, “The Audience of the Ten Commandments,” on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/video-gallery/the-audience-of-the-ten-commandments/	Read Jeffrey Stackert, introduction to Leviticus in NOAB 5 th edition pages 143-145.	Read Bernard Levinson introduction to Deuteronomy in NOAB 5 th edition pages 247-250

	<p>Read William P. Brown, “The Ten Commandments” on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-ten-commandments/ Read Exodus 20 & 21 (compare with Deuteronomy 5:6-21)</p>		<p>Quiz #4 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am</p>
WEEK 6	<p>Read Bruce Wells, “Inheritance Laws in Ancient Israel” on Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/inheritance-laws-in-ancient-israel/ Biblical law codes: Covenant Code, Exodus 20:19-23:33 Holiness Code, Leviticus 17-26. Deuteronomistic Code, Deuteronomy 12-26</p>	<p>Section 2: <i>Neviim</i> (Prophets)</p> <p>Read Joshua 5, Joshua 6 Scholarly note sharing #4 in class on Joshua 5 and Joshua 6</p> <p>Reaad Lorenzo Nigro, “Jericho,” on Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/jericho/</p>	<p>Read Judges 2, 4, 5</p> <p>Review for Test 1 in class</p>
WEEK 7	Test 1 in class	<p>Judges continued Scholarly note sharing #5 in class on Judges 11, 14, 16</p>	No class, Fall Break
WEEK 8	No class, Fall Break	Read 1 Samuel 8, 9, 10	<p>Read 1 Samuel 17, 18, 31</p> <p>Quiz #5 due on Canvas on Monday, October 20 by 6:00am</p>
WEEK 9	Read 2 Samuel 6, 13 1 Kings 1	<p>Read 1 Kings 3, 5, 10, 11 Scholarly note sharing #6 in class on 1 Kings 3, 5, 10, 11</p>	<p>Special class session on Elijah and Jezebel Read Cat Quine, “Jezebel” on Bible Odyssey: https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/jezebel/</p>

			Assignment 2 due Monday on Canvas by 6:00am.
WEEK 10	Review the “Kings of Israel and Judah,” on Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/timeline-gallery/kings-of-israel-and-judah/ Assyrian sack of Northern kingdom and siege of Jerusalem: 2 Kings 17 & 18	Babylonian sack of Southern Kingdom and Babylonian exile: 2 Kings 22, 23, 24, 25 Scholarly Note Sharing #7 in class on 2 Kings 22, 23, 24, 25	Special “spooky” class session Quiz #6 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am
WEEK 11	Read “How to Recognize a Biblical Prophet” on Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/how-to-recognize-a-biblical-prophet/ Read Julia O’Brien, “Introduction to the Prophetic Books” NOAB 5 th edition, pages 971-975	Read introduction to Jeremiah by Louis Stalman in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 1069-1070 and introduction to Ezekiel by Stephen Cook in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 1175-1177	Read Deborah Rooke, “The Woman-Adulterer Motif,” on Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/the-woman-adulterer-motif/
WEEK 12	Test 2 in class	Section 3: The Writings Read “Introduction to the Poetical and Wisdom Books” in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 729-733 Read introduction to Proverbs by Christine Roy Yoder, NOAB 5 th edition, pages 905-906	Read introduction to the Psalms by Richard Clifford in NOAB 5 th edition, pages 781-784 We will also cover Jonah.
WEEK 13	Read Ruth Scholarly Note Sharing #8 in class on Ruth	Read Esther	Read Ecclesiastes 1, 3, 6, 8 and Song of Songs Assignment 3 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am.
WEEK 14	No class , Dr. Low is attending the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting	No class, Thanksgiving Break	No class, Thanksgiving Break

WEEK 15	Read introduction to Job by David Clines in NOAB 5 th edition, page 735	Read Sarah Shectman, “How do Biblical Scholars Read the Hebrew Bible?” on Bible Odyssey, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/articles/how-do-biblical-scholars-read-the-hebrew-bible/	Class review; final exam review posted on Canvas Quiz #7 due on Canvas on Monday by 6:00am
EXAM WEEK			

****This schedule is tentative and students should expect changes. Those changes will be communicated to the class in a clear and timely manner. Updated course schedules will be posted on the course Canvas page. It is the responsibility of students to be aware of any changes and to adjust accordingly.**

****Copyright of Course Materials****

This syllabus is my intellectual property. The exclusive copyright belongs to me, Katherine Low.

You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own personal educational use. However, you may not reproduce, distribute, or publicly display these materials, whether for commercial purposes or not, without my express written consent. This includes, but is not limited to, posting content on websites like Course Hero, Chegg, or other similar platforms.

Unauthorized distribution or display of course materials may be a violation of copyright law and could also be a violation of the University’s Code of Student Conduct.