

Bergen Community College  
Division of Arts and Humanities  
Department of Philosophy and Religion

**Course Syllabus**

**PHR-125 The Hebrew Scriptures**

**Basic Information about Course and Instructor**

Semester and year:  
Section Number:  
Meeting Times and Locations:  
  
Instructor:  
Office Location:  
Phone:  
Departmental Secretary: [optional]  
Office Hours:  
Email Address:

**Course Description**

**PHR-125 The Hebrew Scriptures** is an introductory study of traditional and modern perspectives on the Hebrew Bible. The relationship between the Bible and the Talmud will also be discussed.  
3 lectures, 3 credits  
General Education Course – Humanities Elective

**Student Learning Objectives:** As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to

1. identify the major events and major figures of the Hebrew Bible and explain their historical and theological significance;
2. identify the cardinal tenets of the religion of the Hebrew Bible and the various rituals and practices pertaining thereto;
3. identify the major similarities and differences between various interpretations of the biblical text;
4. identify and summarize the major developments in, and the major strengths and weaknesses of, modern biblical scholarship and criticism; and
5. state and support their own views on issues in biblical criticism and interpretation, both orally and in writing, and with logical and critical precision, clarity, and rigor.

In pursuit of the foregoing objectives, the course is based on the reading and discussion of the Hebrew Bible and portions of the Talmud; the basic principles and methods of critical thinking are introduced; students are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals as possible. They are also correlated with the overall Learning Goals of the Religion Program. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through a variety of assessment types (tools) and on the basis of a variety of assessment criteria. These alignments and correlations are depicted in the [attached document](#). [[Back to course listing](#)]

### Course Content

As with all BCC religion courses, "The Hebrew Scriptures" (PHR-125) is designed to be an academic study of its subject matter and not to advocate particular sectarian views. The course should survey current scholarly opinion on the Hebrew Bible, as well as various ways in which diverse traditions construe the authority and meaning of the Bible.

The instructor need not hesitate to challenge the preconceptions of students in the course, especially since many such tend to cluster about the Hebrew Bible. By the same token, however, care should be taken never needlessly to affront the sensitivities of students, since such sensitivities may be keen and deeply held. If all goes well, the course will furnish students with many new tools and much information to enrich any interest they may already have (or may gain) in the study of the Hebrew Bible. Just as important, the course ought to impart a firm sense of the plurality of perspectives and a new understanding and tolerance of perspectives other than one's own.

### Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

E.g., the use of learning technologies in the course (Internet, PowerPoint, etc.); the inclusion of technological literacy and/or information literacy learning in the course; etc.

### Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

The **required texts** for this course are *Tanach, The Holy Scriptures* (paperback, 1985, ISBN 0827603665), the Jewish Publication Society's edition of the Hebrew Bible, and selections from the Talmud (e.g., Cohen and Neusner, *Everyman's Talmud*; Stern, *Perke Avot: Wisdom of the Jewish Sages*; Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*) (specific edition to be designated by the instructor).

### Useful Secondary Sources:

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*  
Bloom, Harold. *The Book of J*  
Brenner, Athalya. *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*  
Buber, Martin. *On the Bible*  
Goldberg, Jonathan. *Reclaiming Sodom*  
Goldin, Judah. *The Living Talmud*  
Gottwald, Norman K. *The Holy Bible: A Sociological Introduction*  
Hammer, Reuven. *The Classic Midrash*  
Kaufmann, Yehezkel. *The Religion of Israel from its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*  
Katz, Michael, and Gershon Schwartz. *Swimming in the Sea of Talmud*  
Knight, Douglas and Gene Tucker. *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*  
Kvam, Kristen et al. *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*  
Neusner, Jacob. *The Mishnah*  
Plaskow, Judith. *Standing Again at Sinai*  
Trible, Phyllis. *Texts of Terror*  
Visotzky, B. *Reading the Book*

### **Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)**

Because PHR-125 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

### **Grading Policy**

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the students' final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than twenty percent (20%) of the final grade.

### **Attendance Policy**

#### **BCC Attendance Policy:**

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

#### **Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

#### **Attendance Policy in this Course:**

[To be designated by the instructor]

**Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements** [optional but recommended]

<p><u>Examples:</u></p> <p>Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.</p> <p>ADA statement.</p> <p>Sexual Harassment statement.</p> <p>Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.</p> <p>Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.</p>
---

**Student and Faculty Support Services** [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

**Student and Faculty Support Services**

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 <a href="mailto:psimms@bergen.edu">psimms@bergen.edu</a>
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp">www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp</a>
The Tutoring Center	Room S-118	201-447-7908
The Technology Assisted Learning Lab (Math and English)	Room C-110	201-447-7988
The Writing Center	Room C-110	201-447-7136
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)		<a href="http://www.bergen.edu/owl">www.bergen.edu/owl</a>
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-153	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

**Include the following statement on Logos – The BCC Philosophy Club**

**Logos – The BCC Philosophy Club**

Logos usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, in Room L-342. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of religion, you should find the meetings and other activities of the philosophy club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy & Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor, Dr. Vanda Bozicevic (L-331, 201-493-7528, [ybozicevic@bergen.edu](mailto:ybozicevic@bergen.edu)). (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)

**Include a Course Outline and Calendar** [can be combined in a single syllabus section]

The Course Outline and Calendar must include all of the following elements:

- A daily or (at least) weekly schedule of topics to be covered.
- Dates for exams, quizzes, or other means of assessment. (This does not mean that all evaluation of students must be in groups and at the same time. Exams and other means of assessment can be listed as "to be scheduled individually.")

- Due dates for major assignments – e.g., when is a paper due; if the topic has to be approved, when; if an outline or draft is an interim step, when it is due.
- Any required special events must be included in the outline/calendar, e.g., a lecture by a visiting speaker, a dramatic or musical performance, a field trip.
- Designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic (see sample below).
- A note to students stating that the course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

### Sample Course Outline

- I. Introduction
  - A. The Nature and Basic Principles of Biblical Interpretation
  - B. The Historical Origins and Development of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud
- II. Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible
  - In the Torah
  - In the Prophets
  - In the Writings
- III. The Relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud
- IV. Biblical Thought and Scholarship in the Contemporary World

### SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

**Note to Students:** The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Learning Objectives	Required Reading
1		The Nature and Basic Principles of Biblical Interpretation First Paper Assigned	2, 3, 4  1-5	Hand-Out Materials
2		The Historical Origins and Development of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud	1	Hand-Out Materials
3		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – Torah	1-4	Selections from the Torah
4		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – Torah, continued	1-4	Selections from the Torah
5		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – Torah, continued First Paper Due	1-4  1-5	Selections from the Torah
6		Mid-Term Examination	1-5	
7		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Prophets Second Paper Assigned	1-4  1-5	Selections from the Prophets
8		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Prophets, continued	1-4	Selections from the Prophets
9		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Prophets, continued	1-4	Selections from the Prophets

Departmental Policy Syllabus

4/29/05

10		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Writings	1-4	Selections from the Writings
11		Major Themes in the Hebrew Bible – The Writings, continued	1-4	Selections from the Writings
12		The Hebrew Bible and the Talmud	1-4	Selections from the Talmud
13		The Hebrew Bible and the Talmud Second Paper Due	1-4 1-5	Selections from the Talmud
14		Biblical Thought and Scholarship in the Contemporary World	4	Hand-Out Materials
15		Final Examination	1-5	