

Pentateuch I: Genesis-Exodus
REL 4221.034A / REL 3938.034B / JST 4936.2B80, Fall 2020
MWF 4 (10:40-11:30)

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Course Description:

The modern study of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) effectively began in the nineteenth century, when scholars, through painstaking critical analysis of the biblical text, discovered that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) was written not by one author – Moses, according to venerable tradition – but by several, over the course of several centuries. It was “the Documentary Hypothesis,” as this discovery came to be called, that laid the foundation for the modern discipline of biblical studies. In this course, we will take the analysis of the Pentateuch into its original sources as our starting point, and begin carefully reading our way through it, from the creation of the world to the exodus from Egypt. We will discover that modern interpretation, rather than stripping the Bible of its literary brilliance, has actually helped restore the original luster of its narrative art. Various secondary readings will raise other issues – historical and literary – necessary to a critical understanding of this foundational book, or rather, collection of composite books.

Required Textbooks:

Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*

Stephanie Dalley, trans., *Myths from Mesopotamia*

Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (recommended)

additional secondary readings, course materials, and information will be made available through **Canvas** at e-Learning

Accommodations for students with disabilities: students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory

REL 4221 / JST 4936

Participation – 10%

2 Essays (6 pages) – 45%

2 Exams – 45%

REL 3938

Participation – 10%

2 Essays (3 pages) – 30%

2 Exams – 60%

Make-up exams and late papers must be approved by instructor beforehand, or justified afterward by providing appropriate documentation (medical, etc.).

Grade scale:

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

Zoom Statement

I am very saddened by the fact that we cannot conduct face-to-face classes. I hope we can all agree that holding classes on-line is less than ideal. Be that as it may, I have decided (like most of my colleagues) that, under these trying circumstances, synchronous Zoom classes will provide us with the best alternative, the closest substitute, to in-person classes. In this spirit, I propose that we all do our best to pretend that we are sitting in a single classroom this semester. In particular, I encourage all of you to turn on your webcams throughout the semester. It would be nice, after all, to be able to see each other's faces when we talk to each other. I understand that you may have some PRIVACY concerns. First, you should know that our classes will NOT be recorded. Second, you can also use a virtual or blank BACKGROUND on Zoom. Please let me know if you have other concerns regarding our virtual classroom this semester.

Schedule

PRIMEVAL HISTORY

Week 1

- 8/31 **Introduction:** syllabus; aims of course; general background
- 9/2 **Philology:** Kawashima, "Sources and Redaction"; Genesis 1-3
- 9/4 **Composition of the Pentateuch:** Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 1

Week 2

- 9/7 **Labor Day (no class)**
- 9/9 **Cosmogony:** Dalley, "Epic of Creation"; Knohl, *Divine Symphony*, ch. 1 & appendix A
- 9/11 **Creation:** Genesis 1-5; Knohl, *Divine Symphony*, ch. 2 (pp. 9-14), ch. 3

Week 3

- 9/14 **Creation:** Genesis 1-5; Knohl, *Divine Symphony*, ch. 2 (pp. 9-14), ch. 3
- 9/16 **Flood and Cosmic Balance:** Dalley, "Atrahasis"; Eliade, "Sacred Time and Myths"
- 9/18 **Cosmic Balance; Flood and the Problem of Evil:** Genesis 6:1-9:17; Knohl, *Divine Symphony*, ch. 2 (pp. 14-19); (Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 2)

Week 4

- 9/21 **Problem of Evil; Gilgamesh and the Epic Quest:** Dalley, "Epic of Gilgamesh"; (Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 3)
- 9/23 **Gilgamesh**
- 9/25 **J's Primeval History and the Human Condition:** Genesis 9:18-12:4; Kawashima, "Homo Faber"

Week 5

- 9/28 **Yom Kippur (class cancelled)**
- 9/30 **Human Condition; The Redaction of the Primeval History:** Genesis 1-11; Knohl, "Cain"
- 10/2 **Redaction**

PATRIARCHS

Week 6

- 10/5 **From Hero to Patriarch:** Coogan, Aqhat; Genesis 12:1-4, 14:1-22; (Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 4)
10/7 **Hero to Patriarch; Abraham:** Genesis 12:1-25:18; Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, ch. 2
10/9 **Abraham**

Week 7

- 10/12 **Narrative Art I:** Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, chs. 3-4; **PAPER 1 due in class**
Bargaining with God
10/14 **Narrative Art I; Bargaining with God:** Genesis 18-19; Hendel, "Poetics of Myth"
10/16 **Bargaining with God**

Week 8

- 10/19 **Narrative Art II:** Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, chs. 5-6
10/21 **Narrative Art II**
10/23 **EXAM 1** (8/31 – 10/16)

Week 9

- 10/26 **The Binding of Isaac:** Genesis 20-22; Homer, *Odyssey* 19; Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar"
10/28 **Binding of Isaac; the Patriarchal Age:** Genesis 25:19-36:43; Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, ch. 3
10/30 **Patriarchal Age**

EGYPT AND THE EXODUS

Week 10

- 11/2 **Esau and Jacob:** Genesis 25:21-28:9; (Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, ch. 5)
11/4 **Esau and Jacob; Jacob and Laban:** Genesis 28:10-33:20, 35-36; Barthes, "Wrestling with the Angel"
11/6 **Jacob and Laban**

Week 11

- 11/9 **Dinah and Shechem:** Genesis 34; Deuteronomy 22:13-30; Frymer-Kensky???
11/11 **Veteran's Day (no class)**
11/13 **Dinah and Shechem; Joseph in Egypt:** Genesis 37-41; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Bird, "Harlot as Heroine"

Week 12

- 11/16 **Joseph in Egypt**
11/18 **Joseph and his Brothers:** Genesis 42-50; Halpern, "Exodus," part 1
11/20 **Joseph and his Brothers; Egypt:** Exodus 1-15; Numbers 33:1-49; Halpern, "Exodus," part 2

Week 13

- 11/23 **Egypt**
11/25 **Thanksgiving (no class)**

11/27 **Thanksgiving (no class)**

Week 14

11/30 **Slavery:** Exodus 1-6; Hendel, *Remembering Abraham*, ch. 4; **PAPER 2 due in class**

12/2 **The Plagues:** Exodus 7:1-15:21; Psalms 78, 105; Pardes, *Biography of Ancient Israel*, ch. 2

12/4 **Birth of the Nation:** Exodus 15-20, 24; Pardes, *Biography of Ancient Israel*, ch. 4

Week 15

12/7 **EXAM 2 ()**

12/9 **Conclusion**