

REL 3213 – STUDIES IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURE/OLD TESTAMENT

Dr. W.W. Mountcastle

TEXTS: A Modern Translation of the Bible: New Revised Standard Version, New English, The Tanakh (The Jewish Bible), new International Version, or New Jerusalem Bible, (choose one); and Understanding the Old Testament, Anderson.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the critical study of the literature of ancient Israel in a way that demonstrates the compatibility of faith and reason. Our study will focus on the evolution of ethical monotheism from primitive beginnings to the oracles of the prophets.

SESSION TOPICS

I. CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND BIBLICAL RELIGION

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The “Fertile Crescent” and ancient civilizations of the Mid-East: Egypt & Mesopotamia, Semitic People, `Apiro
- 3 Textual and literary criticism, Exegesis & hermeneutics
- 4 Documentary hypothesis of the Pentateuch
- 5 Biblical Literature: Myths and Creation stories
- 6 Creation stories, Gen. 1, 2
- 7 The Fall and Original Sin, Gen. 3
- 8 The Flood and the Ark, Gen. 6, 9:12, tower of Pride, Gen. 11
- 9 Saga and the Patriarchal stories: The Covenant Promise, Abraham and Isaac, Gen. 12:24ff.
- 10 Jacob and Esau, Gen. 25-33
- 11 Joseph, Gen. 37-50

II. THE DEVELOPING CONCEPT OF GOD

- 12 Ancient Habiru polytheism. The Shield of Abraham, Gen. 15:1 The Fear of Isaac, Gen. 31:42. The Mighty one of Jacob, Gen. 49-24. The El Gods, El Roi (All Seeing God), Gen. 16:13; El Olam (Everlasting God), Gen. 21:33; El Shaddai (Mountain God), Ex. 6:2; El Elyon (Most High God), Gen. 14:22, El Bethel (God of Bethel), Gen. 31:13; El Berith (covenanting God).
- 13 Mosaic henotheism and the ethical imperative Moses encounters. YAHWEH – Lord of History, Ex. 1-6.
- 14 Flight from Egypt, Ex. 12:18; Covenant at Sinai
- 15 Evolution of the Decalogue, Ex. 19, 20, 24, 32,34. Deut. 5:6-12
- 16 YAHWEH - God of Holy War, Chieftain of the Hebrew armies – 16 Joshua leads the invasion of Palestine. Nu. 31, Deut. 33, 34; Josh 1 6, 24

Mid Term Essay

III. JUDGES, KINGS AND SEERS/ISRAEL: FROM CONFEDERACY TO MONARCHY

- 17 The “D: theology of History.” Ju.2:11-16, 3:7-9a
- 18 Deborah, Gideon, Ju. 1-7
- 19 Jephthah 11-16, 19-21
- 20 Samuel and Saul, I Sam 1-12
- 21 David – United Kingdom, I Sam 15-18, 26-31, II Sam. 1-13
- 22 Absalom and Revolt, II Sam. 13-18, I Kings 2-3
- Solomon and Civil War, I Kings 9-14
- 23 Elijah and Elisha, I Kings 17-21, II Kings 9-10

IV. ETHICAL MONOTHEISM – LEGACY OF ISRAEL’S PROPHETS

- 24 Amos – prophet of the Moral Law “Let Justice flow down as the waters!” Amos 1-9
25 Hosea – prophet of God’s Love
“I desire love and not sacrifice!” Hosea 1-14
26 Isaiah – prophet of God’s Holiness
“Holy, holy, holy is YAHWEH!” Faithfulness as the only proper response. Is. 1-10, 20-30. II
Kings 25
27 Jeremiah – prophet of The New Covenant of inward religion. Jer. 1, 5, 18, 24. Ezekiel – prophet
of individual responsibility. Ez. 1, 2, 14, 18, 34-37
28 Deutero Isaiah – The Way of the “Suffering Servant.” Is. 40-44, 49, 51-53.

(Second Essay due before last week of class)

the two “take home” essays take the place of conventional in-class examinations. They should be about 4-6 pages in length and include a bibliography and identification of sources quoted or paraphrased. They will be graded with respect to clarity of expression, importance of topic discussed, coherence of thought, evidence of use of material presented in class and library resources, and quality of personal insights.

Class attendance and participation in class discussions are very important and will be included in semester grade evaluation along with the two written essays. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED!!!