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## BS 501 Introduction to Biblical Studies I

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ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
BS 501 Introduction to Biblical Studies—1  
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I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

The two-course sequence of BS 500-501 comprises three interrelated topics: (1) an introduction to the concept and significance of the canon of Scripture, the discipline of hermeneutics, and a contextual, text-centered approach to biblical interpretation; (2) an introduction to the OT in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts; and (3) an introduction to the New Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts. Course participation, reading, and projects will be configured in part so as to reflect the character of the degree specializations represented among the course participants. In order to achieve credit for either course, the full, two-course sequence must be completed successfully. Required of all M.A. (Professional), M.A. in Theological Studies, and M.A. Counseling degree students. BS 500 focuses on the OT.

The course aspires to sketch a comprehensive approach, emphasizing both direct textual study in the context of contemporary approaches to the literary character, historical and cultural setting, composition, authorship, and literary unity of these books. A central axiom of the class is that the OT emerges from a cultural and ethnic setting that is *radically different from those of any contemporary culture*. Thus to study the OT in connection with the settings of its emergence is to learn to *receive* God's word cross-culturally, which forms a necessary preparation for *testifying* to the message of God's word cross-culturally. Thus the very act of responsible and holistic interpretation involves grasping, affirming, and moving creatively between the text's ethnic and cultural framework and our own.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVE the student who fully realizes the objectives of the course will, upon completing the course, be able to:

A. Trace the development of canonization, discuss the meaning and significance of the canon and of canonicity, especially the canon and canonicity of the OT, and articulate the major issues involved in the relationship between the testaments.

- B. Explain and illustrate the major issues in biblical interpretation use these insights to interpret and apply the OT text.
- C. Demonstrate, in a rudimentary way, the ability to observe, interpret, and apply the OT text, and to show the significance of this interpretation and application of the biblical text for the tasks of his/her ministerial vocation. Specifically, the student will
- (a) identify the overall structure of a biblical book by dividing into major and minor sections and identifying the logical thought-flow through those sections;
  - (b) engage in a "close reading" of individual passages so as to make relevant observations useful for interpretation;
  - (c) employ various kinds of information to gain insight into interpretation of the text, e.g., context, word usage, historical background, literary genre, the history of interpretation for the interpretation of the OT text;
  - (d) move from interpretation of the OT passage to specific and creative application to contemporary Christian life, including the exemplifying of principles that must be kept in mind in the use of the OT for Christian application.
- (e) Show how the teachings of individual passages within the OT contribute to the flow of biblical revelation as a whole,
- D. Describe the basic historical and cultural background of the Bible, specifically, the historical setting of the OT story and make appropriate use of this historical information in the interpretation of the OT texts.
- E. Begin integrating the competent, responsible study of the Bible, particularly the OT, to is/her vocation.

### III. COURSE REQUIRED TEXTS

Drane, John. *Introducing the Old Testament*. Completely Revised and Updated edition. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.

Klein, W., Craig L. Blomberg and R. L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993.

Thompson, David L. *Bible Study That Works*. Revised edition. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1994.

A Contemporary, but "Formal-Equivalent" translation of the Bible. Examples include: *Revised Standard Version* or *New American Standard Bible*, *New Revised Standard Version*, *New International Version*. Examples of what *not* to use for this class include: *The Message*, *the New Living Translation* and others like them. These are *excellent translations*, but for the kind of analysis done in this class, we need a more "literal"

translation. Select a "text edition" Bible with *minimal editorial clutter* (i.e. no study notes) in the layout.

Several articles of importance for OT Studies have been scanned and saved as PDF or MS Word documents, and will be uploaded to an "Articles" folder on the Course Center with the lecture materials.

**Required Access to Reference Materials:** You will from time to time need to use one of the following multi-volume Bible encyclopedia sets. No substitutes are permitted. You do not have to own these, but they are a worthy addition to your library. Often one or the other is available in public libraries. The Asbury Bookstore can facilitate purchase should you wish to do so, as well as other dealers in theological books.

*The Anchor Bible Encyclopedia.* New York: Doubleday, 1992. 6 Volumes. Also available on CD.

*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised Edition.* Ed. G. Bromily. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988. 4 Volumes. Note this is *not the work by the same name found on most biblical studies software disks.* Regardless of what they say is the publication date, the version of ISBE found on, e.g. *BibleWorksis* edited by James Orr and dates from the 1920's and *is not acceptable for use in this class.* Currently, the revised ISBE is not "included" in any software package but is a \$100+add-on to Logos/Libronix. **ANY OTHER ISBE IS THE OUT-OF-DATE ONE!**

*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols; ed. W. Van Gemeren, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. Available on CD-ROM.

**The Course Conference.** As soon as possible early in the first week of class, students will find an OT 520 Conference icon on their FirstClass desktop in the ATS e-mail system. This conference serves several functions:

1. It is where several **articles and other course materials** will be posted
2. A **discussion forum** is held there to allow for your questions, further discussion of issues raised in class, etc. You are encouraged to make the most of this opportunity. I check this several times per day and usually can respond immediately to issues raised. *This is also a forum in which you can "take me on" if you want to debate course content issues.* Periodically I will be posting "polls" to find out student opinion and reaction to various topics relevant to the conduct of the course.
3. **Announcements** to the class as a whole will be made here

Course materials *will not be available elsewhere.* Therefore it is essential for students to have an ATS e-mail account (free) and avail themselves of the computing services offered at ATS if they do not have e-mail access from home.

**Note:** Computer, Internet, and E-Mail skills are assumed. We have the finest Instructional Technology staff in the country. Students needing assistance

will find the IT staff extremely knowledgeable, experienced, helpful, and sympathetic. The professor cannot provide support for students issues with computers, software, etc. Please refer all such matters to the IT staff. Note also that computer crashes, printers running out of ink, etc. *are not acceptable excuses for late work!* The digital dog eating your homework is just as lame an excuse now as it was in High School ;-)

#### IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE

Grading is on a Points system. Each assignment is worth a set number of points. The total will be the final grade with a possible maximum of 300. The grade derives from:

- A. **Attendance:** Attendance is extremely important. An attendance grade is recorded reflecting the total number of days the student attended class. All absences "count" against this total, but up to 4 absences can be made up and removed. A makeup will involve listening to an audio recording of the missed class session and writing a 1-page summary. In cases where an audio recording is not possible, a reasonable reading assignment with a 2-page summary suffices. Attendance will be recorded on a chart on the wall in the back of the classroom. Students are responsible for recording their attendance. Do not record anyone else's attendance, please. The total days students attend, up to a maximum of 25, will be recorded as a point total.
- B. **Readings:** Two reading reports will be submitted, at midterm and final. Students will be asked to report the percentage of readings assigned *to date* that have been completed. For the final report, that is the percentage of *all class readings*. Students will be given a scale from 1-15 on which to report how much of the reading assigned to date they have completed. The scale will be based on a rough percentage.

**A note on reading assignments:** Readings are correlated to specific days to help students read the books in a sequence that complements class presentations. In addition, assignments ("Lessons") are much easier to complete, and usual get a higher grade, when students have read the text material reasonable apace with the schedule. Except for the reading of Thompson's *Bible Study that Works*, *these are not fixed due dates*. It is recognized that students will not always be able to read the exact assignments for each day. wise student will endeavor to follow the reading plan as closely as possible.

- C. **6 Biblical Study Assignments** will be completed, implementing the interpretive processes covered in the course. These lessons will be scored at 20 points each, yielding a total of 120 points total. Specific instructions for each lesson will be posted to the Course Center.

D. Completion of **6 examinations** involving OT historical background, content and critical issues. Material includes lectures and the books by Drane and Klein-Hubbard-Bush. The tests will be multiple choice in nature, but not mechanical or merely recognition oriented. Questions will require of students critical judgment and balancing of alternatives. Sometimes a biblical passage will be presented and students will respond to a series of questions requiring some level of analysis of the passage based on knowledge gained from the course. These tests will be taken on-line. There are to be no notes, books, or consultations during the exam. Students are on their honor not to discuss the exam in any way with anyone who has not yet completed it. The tests will be short, normally about 20 questions randomly chosen from a larger pool. Each student's test will be slightly different since the test software will randomize the questions for each student. A Total of 120 Points derive from the tests.

E. **No assignment may be skipped.** *All work must be turned in and all tests taken to pass the course.*

The Specific assignments and their maximum point values are:

Attendance.....	25
Readings.....	30
Biblical Study Assignments.....	120
Biblical Background Tests .....	120
Total: .....	295 Points

The Total Points will yield letter grades according to the following table:

Letter	Points
A	280 –295
A-	266 –279
B+	257 –265
B	245 –256
B-	236 –244
C+	227 –235
C	215 –226
C-	207 –214
D+	198 –206
D	186 –197
D-	177 –185
F	0 –176

## **OVERVIEW OF COURSE TOPICS**

- I. Orientation: Why Study the OT? (1 week)
- II. Getting the Story From the Book—The Literary Context of the OT (3 Weeks)
- III. Keeping the Book In the Story—The Historical and Cultural Context of the OT (Apologies to J. R. R. Tolkien!)
  - a. The Fellowship of the King: God Forms a People
  - b. The Two Powers: The Fellowship Declines, Divides, and Dies
  - c. The Return of the Ring: Rediscovering and Reinventing the People of God
- IV. From Book To Story—There and Back Again

**PROJECTED COURSE CALENDER**

Day	Date	Topic	Assignment	OTI	IBI	BSTW
T	8-Feb	What do We Do With The OT?				
R	10-Feb	Stages in the Journey		Ch 1	Ch 1	
T	15-Feb	Surveying a Segment-Content			Ch 2, 4	
R	17-Feb	Surveying a Segment-Structure			Ch 5	Complete
T	22-Feb	Survey Genesis 1:1-2:4a	Lesson 1			
R	24-Feb	Survey Genesis 2:4b-25	Lesson 2			
T	1-Mar	Detailed Observation			Ch 5	
R	3-Mar	Detailed Observation Gen 2:7	Lesson 3			
T	8-Mar	Interpretation			Ch 6	
R	10-Mar	Interpreting Gen 2:7	Lesson 4			
T	15-Mar	Surveying a Book			Ch 7	
R	17-Mar	Surveying Amos	Lesson 5			
T	22-Mar	Reading Week	None	None	None	None
R	24-Mar	Reading Week	None	None	None	None
T	29-Mar	Ancestral Era		Ch 2	Ch 8	
R	31-Mar	Ancestral Era	Test 1			
T	5-Apr	Mosaic Era		Ch 3		
R	7-Apr	Mosaic Era			Ch 10	
T	12-Apr	United Kingdom		Ch 4	Ch 11	
R	14-Apr	Divided Kingdom-1	Test 2			
T	19-Apr	Divided Kingdom-2		Ch 5-6		
R	21-Apr	Judean State	Test 3			
T	26-Apr	Exile-1		Ch 7-8		
R	28-Apr	Exile-2	Test 4			
T	3-May	Restoration-1		Ch 9-10		
R	5-May	Restoration-2	Test 5		0	
T	10-May	How Did We Get the OT?		Ch 11-12	Ch 3	
R	12-May	Making The Cut: the OT Canon		Ch 13	Ch 3	
R	19-May	Finals Week	Lesson 6 Test 6			

**READING REPORT DUE IN CLASS March 29 (mid-term) and April 12 (all)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Total Reading Points (Max. 15) \_\_\_\_\_

This report covers all readings assigned up to and including the due date

USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE to calculate your points:

- 15; 100%
- 14; 95%
- 13; 90%
- 12; 85%
- 11; 80%
- 10; 75%
- 9; 70%
- 8; 65%
- 7; 60%
- 6; 55%
- 5; 50%
- 4; 45%
- 3; 40%
- 2; 35%
- 1; 30%

## Biblical Study Lessons

### Lesson 1

#### Observation of Segments as Wholes: Genesis 1:1-2:4a

Do not use any secondary sources at all; no commentaries, no Study Bible notes except translational variants; no handbooks or encyclopedias, no neighbors...

1. Give a **brief title** to each paragraph whereby its contents may be recalled by association.
2. Describe the general types of materials found in this segment
3. Locate the main units and sub-units within the segment as a whole, and trace the flow of thought in some detail. Be especially sensitive to the possibility of one or more of the following structural principles occurring:
  - a. **Repetition** of words, phrases, ideas
  - b. **General** Statements that are then unpacked in specifics
  - c. **Preparatory** or introductory statements that are then unfolded
  - d. **Problems** that receive **solutions** or **Questions** that receive **Answers**
  - e. **Comparisons** and **Contrasts**
  - f. Final **Summary** Statements or **Generalizations** that wrap up the whole
  - g. A **Final High Point** or Dramatic conclusion (**Climax**)
  - h. The operation of **Cause and Effect**
  - i. The use of **Reasons** in **Substantiation** of the writer's points
  - j. Radical Reversals in Theme or Emphasis, or **Pivotal** Turning Points
  - k. Identification of **Means** or Tools for specific **Purposes**
4. Try to determine *which of the relationships in 3 above are the most significant* for the whole segment. Ask a few interpretive questions based on each major structural relationship observed. For example, if you find the operation of Means/End, ask specific questions like: what specific means are identified? What exactly is each one? What purposes are the means used for? What is the meaning of each of these purposes? How do these means accomplish this end? Why would an author identify these and use them this way?

NOTE: you do NOT try to ANSWER these questions now. You are trying to brainstorm on your observations to create the largest possible pool of fruitful questions based on the actual text, that can then be used later to build helpful study plans for interpreting the material.

5. Identify the key verses or strategic areas which provide insight into the segment as a whole.
6. Identify the literary form(s) or features employed in the segment.
7. Note other major impressions relating to the segment as a whole.

### Lesson 2

#### Observation of Segments as Wholes: Genesis 2:4b-25

- Apply the same steps noted for lesson 1 to this passage
- Do not engage in comparisons of Gen 1:1-2:4a with Gen 2:4b-25, but work "as if" Gen 2:4b-25 is the only text you have.
- Do not use any secondary sources at all; no commentaries, no Study Bible notes except translational variants; no handbooks or encyclopedias, no neighbors...

### Lesson 3 Detailed Observation of 2:7

Follow the suggestions in the document "DetailOI.pdf" in the course center.

**Lesson 4: Interpretation of 2:7**

What does the expression "Adam became a living soul/creature" mean?

Use the following information:

1. Review of occurrences of the Hebrew term *nepesh* in the Pentateuch.
2. Read the articles in the folder posted in the course center
3. Follow the suggestions relating to interpretation in the "DetailOI.pdf" document from the course center.

**Lesson 5: Survey of a Book: Amos**

1. Read through the book of Amos in a fairly literal translation (RSV, NASB, NIV)
2. Title each chapter
3. Identify the various types of materials: narrative? similar kinds of sayings? visions? Speeches?
4. Determine the major units and subunits of the book and title each of these.
5. Track the most important *repetitions* through the book.
6. Identify the main structural laws or features that govern the *whole book*
7. As some interpretive questions about the structural features identified
8. Identify *strategic areas* that provide windows into the book as a whole or into significant features of the book
9. Identify any other literary features you think are significant for this book

**Lesson 6: To be Announced**