BS 504 XL Introduction to Biblical Studies: Old Testament

Mark J. Boda

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BS 504XL  Introduction to Biblical Studies: Old Testament
Fall 2008 - 2 hours
September 2 - December 12, 2008

***This is the draft form of the syllabus for the semester. A final form will be provided on the first day of class.

Instructor
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Welcome!

I'm Mark Boda, your professor and facilitator for the semester. You have arrived at the syllabus page for our class this semester in Old Testament Introduction. This will be our guide throughout the semester so it is very important that we all begin by reading the notes provided below. From here you will be guided through the various learning modules, virtual lectures, and discussion rooms which will facilitate our learning this semester. If you have personal questions or concerns, just click on the To Professor link and I will get back to you a.s.a.p. I've provided a bit of my "official" life story below.

I spent my early life in the Academy setting, growing up in the home of a seminary professor and president in Western Canada. I ministered in pastorates in both Toronto and Philadelphia and
served in campus ministry in North Etobicoke before joining the faculty of Canadian Bible College and Theological Seminary in Regina, Saskatchewan, where I served from 1994 until 2003. Presently, I hold the post of Professor in the Faculty of Theology at McMaster University and the Chair in Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. My undergraduate degree was a Bachelor of Theology, which I received in 1984. After my first pastorate I studied for the Master of Divinity at Westminster Theological Seminary (1991) before reading for the Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge (1996). I see my ministry in the academy as multi-faceted, dominated by teaching and mentoring students, but also publishing and communicating to a variety of audiences, including research scholars, church leaders and lay people. To that end, I am consistently involved in the academic guilds, publishing scholarly articles and books through which I receive feedback on my foundational research and also hopefully make a difference for the kingdom in these contexts. I also devote some of my energy to writing commentaries and theological books for and presenting lectures to church leaders. Finally, I do take opportunities to write books for lay people and preach in local churches. I am ordained in the Christian and Missionary Alliance. My wife Beth and I have the joyous privilege of raising and mentoring our three boys in the life of the Spirit (David 21, Stephen 19, and Matthew 14). For fuller information on my past work see my faculty web page at http://divinity2.mcmaster.ca:8111/faculty/faculty.aspx?facid=5.

Description

This course lays the foundation for Old Testament study at Asbury by providing a window into the historical, cultural and geographical background, the literary and theological content and
the practical relevance of the Old Testament. The goal is to provide the information and tools which will enable the students to experience the text of the Old Testament throughout their lives through a three-dimensional reading. The student will not only grapple with the content of these books and their backgrounds, but also with the methods for interpreting them in a modern context.

**Purpose**

- **Think:** To know the historical, cultural, and geographical background, the literary and theological content and the canonical and practical relevance of the Old Testament; To know the various approaches to interpreting the Old Testament.

- **Do:** To demonstrate proficiency in interpreting and applying Old Testament literature.

- **Be:** To embrace the Old Testament as relevant material for today and be moved by their themes to love God and people.

**Resources**

**Required Books**


Library Resources

The required books will not be enough to carry you through this semester. You will need to become acquainted with your local theological and public libraries. At some point in the semester, you will need to use a theological library’s facilities for your research paper. Asbury can provide some help for your study. You can access some of their resources via the Resource section in Moodle (bottom left) and you can order articles and books from the librarians at the seminary.

Accessing Information Commons Materials:

1. General Questions:
   § The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.
   Phone: 1-866-454-2733 and 859-858-2233

2. Materials Requests:
   § To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information
   § ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary’s Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
   § ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:
   § ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help
choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. **Online Databases:**

To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to [http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information](http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information) and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id). Especially helpful for your work will be the ATLA Religion database (for journal articles) and the IPreach resource database (for commentaries, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, reference material).

**Copyright Information**

The copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

**ExL Media Copyright Information**
Program of Study

This is an internet course and requires both independent work and group discussion. The resource base will include a series of lectures which I will provide (virtual lectures), a series of books we will all read in their entirety together, and our interpretive and collaborative enterprises during the course of the semester. The learning experience is structured in 12 learning modules.

Here are some introductory remarks on the basic elements in the course:

The Virtual Classroom is built upon the open-source Moodle platform. By logging into http://virtual.asburyseminary.edu you will have access to this course and be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The Course Information Center contains many features to be used throughout the semester:

   a) Course News and Announcements, where I will post items important for the entire class;

   b) Syllabus, where a copy of the syllabus is provided;

   c) To Professor, which is a way for you to post a message directly to me and we can discuss an issue privately;
d) **Course Questions**, which is a public forum where you can publicly post any questions you have regarding the course so others may see your message and respond. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Course Questions Forum;

e) **Prayer Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post prayer concerns and praises for all to see. This is a way for us to build community;

f) **Open Forum**, which is a public forum where you can post anything that is not course-related for all to see. Examples include someone getting married, an upcoming birthday, discussions on topics not course-related, etc. This is a way for us to build community.

2. **Modules**, which are located below the Course Information Center, will contain forums where group discussions will take place, documents or other files to download or view online, and assignment links where you will post your assignments to me. Modules will be clearly labeled so you can follow along during the semester. This course is structured into 12 learning modules each corresponding to a one week period during the semester. 2 of these modules are devoted to the Dimension of Depth (Approach), 3 to the Dimension of Length (History), 5 to the Dimension of Width (Literature), and 2 to the Dimension of Height (Application)

3. **Resources**, a section located on the left side, provides links to items you may want to use often in the semester.
4. **Virtual lectures:** these lectures seek to orient us as a class to the issue under discussion in the particular learning module. They will be supplemented by reading in the textbooks and will be followed by questions which will prompt our discussion.

5. **Groups:** You have been arbitrarily put into groups for the semester. These groups will work together on two major group projects, one on the history of Israel and the second on the literature of the Old Testament.

6. **Independent Work:** Throughout the semester you will write one research paper on a passage you will carry with you throughout the various learning modules.

7. **Real Audio:** Most of the resources for this course are in written format either in your textbooks or in the collaborative classroom. However, in the first Learning Module you will need to listen to a sermon I preached this year which is available in Real Audio format. You must have Real Audio/Video installed on your computer and you can obtain that by going to www.real.com and clicking on the Get RealPlayer - Free link. You should do that a.s.a.p. and if you have any problems please contact the Information Commons and they can assist you.

**Hot Tip:** As the Catalog of the Seminary makes clear, students should expect to spend 2.5-3.0 hours outside of class for every hour in class. That means ExL students should expect to invest 10-12 hours maximum per week for this course. It is best to set particular times during the week to work on the course.


Communication

Professor

I have provided my phone numbers and you can contact me via To Professor. I have provided my home phone number because I am making myself available to you even outside my daily work hours. You will notice that my area code is not the same as that of Asbury Seminary. I will be guiding this class from my home in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and the beauty of this new medium of education is that I am as close to you as the professors in Wilmore and Orlando.

ExL Team

However, there are some other people whose work is often behind the scenes, but they are essential to the success of this learning experience.

ExL Contact Information:
For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program, contact Dale Hale:

ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2393

For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons:

Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2233
Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

High Tech/High Touch
Throughout the semester as you have things to share, prayer requests, even jokes or stories, please post them into the forums provided. I will keep you updated on my life. At times, I will ask someone to pray for us all as we begin the week. To get to know your classmates, just check out their profiles by clicking on their name anywhere in Moodle.

**Learning Modules: Reading in Three Dimensions**

My desire for you this semester is that you will taste the Old Testament again for the very first time. I want this text to jump off the written page as you experience it in three dimensions. My hope is that this will invite and orient you to a lifetime of study in the Old Testament. Our Learning Modules are designed to shape your understanding and skill levels in the various dimensions of the Old Testament. This will mean an overview of the general content of these dimensions for the entire Old Testament, but also focused attention on a particular Old Testament book which we will carry with us throughout the semester. This focused attention will reveal the essential nature of each dimension and the impact the dimension makes on our reading of the Old Testament.
Dimension of Depth: Approach (September 2-14)
Sept 2-7: Learning Module #1
Sept 8-14: Learning Module #2

Dimension of Length: History (September 15-October 5)
Sept 15-21: Learning Module #3
Sept 22-28: Learning Module #4
Sept 29-Oct 5: Learning Module #5

October 6-12: Study Hall #1--Research Time (History)

Dimension of Width: Literature (October 13-November 16)
Oct 13-19: Learning Module #6
Oct 20-26: Learning Module #7
Oct 27-Nov 2: Learning Module #8
Nov 3-9: Learning Module #9
Nov 10-16: Learning Module #10

Nov 17-23: Study Hall #2--Research Time (Literature)

Dimension of Height: Application (November 24-December 7)
Nov 24-30: Learning Module #11
Dec 1-7: Learning Module #12

December 8-12: Study Hall #3—Research Time (Application)
To properly understand any text, the interpreter must begin with his or her own perspective. Whether one admits it or not, every analysis of a text begins with the interpreters themselves. Every individual brings something to the text and that something ranges from a basic commitment to God and His Word, to one's prior experience with the text, to finally one's ability to perceive and grasp the truth. As interpretation begins in this world, so also it will end here as well. In this section, we will investigate core motivations for studying the Old Testament and essential prerequisites for us to do so in the context of the Christian tradition.

**Learning Experiences:**
Virtual Introductions, Reading in Textbooks and Lectures, Discussion, Sermon audio
The Dimension of Length: The Dimension of the Author (History)

By investigating the dimension of length, the dimension of history, we take seriously the large gap between our world and the world in which the text was born. At the same time, we must devise strategies to build bridges into that world. This dimension of history takes us into the world of the author, and by investigating it, we follow Hirsch’s advice (1960:478): “the interpreter's primary task is to reproduce in himself the author's `logic,' his attitudes, his cultural givens, in short his world”. In this section, we will offer a general overview of the history, culture, and geography of the Ancient Near East that shaped the Old Testament books and communities. We will also consider several critical methods that have arisen to assist appropriation of this dimension and evaluate their usefulness for Christian interpretation (Historical-Criticism, Archaeology, Source Criticism, Form Criticism).

Learning Experiences:
Reading in Textbooks, Virtual Lectures, Discussion, Group Project and Response, Preliminary Independent work on individual Research Paper
Learning Modules #6-#10

The Dimension of Width: The Dimension of the Text (Literature)

Although biblical passages are borne and honed in particular historical contexts (the Dimension of Length: History), it is important to understand that these passages create literary worlds of their own which are able to transcend their historical and cultural contexts and speak to later generations. In this section, we will gain an appreciation for the text of the Old Testament, written in a variety of genres and books and preserved through a long scribal tradition. We will also investigate the methods which have arisen to assist appropriation of this dimension and evaluate their usefulness for Christian interpretation (Redaction Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, Text Criticism).

Learning Experiences:
Reading in Textbooks, Virtual Lectures, Discussion, Group Project and Response, Further preliminary work on individual Research Paper
Learning Module #11-#12

The Dimension of Height: The Dimension of the Reader (Application)

Our journey in interpreting the text began with a focus on the Dimension of Depth: Approach, investigating the perspective of the interpreter, to identify the presuppositions that we bring to the text and to orient ourselves both theologically and intellectually to the text. In this final phase of the journey, we return again to the Dimension of Depth/Height to identify the significance of this text for the world in which we live. We are now crossing from exegesis to interpretation as we seek to connect the original meaning of the passage, identified in the Dimensions of Length and Width, to the contemporary significance of the passage today. This final phase consists of two aspects. First, we need to consider the ultimate context of every passage in the canon as a whole. As Christians we realize that Christ has come and that we are living in the "Last Days". We thus read the Old Testament differently than those who did not have the New Testament. Secondly, we will end our semester together by considering the opportunities for connecting the ancient message of the Old Testament in our Twenty-First Century Context. We will also investigate the methods which have arisen to assist appropriation of this dimension and evaluate their usefulness for Christian interpretation (Postmodern criticism, Ideological Criticism, Feminist Criticism).
Learning Experiences:
Reading in Textbook, Virtual Lectures, Virtual Discussion, Research Paper final draft and evaluation.

Learning Opportunities

Reading

The textbooks for this course must be read in the entirety by the end of the semester. On the title page of your final paper you will identify what percentage of each of the class textbooks you have read during this semester. Since this is a presupposition of this course, a positive mark is not assigned to the reading. However, failure to complete the reading will result in a loss of up to 10% of the course final grade.

Discussions 30%

Our various resources provide orientation and content during our various modules. They are designed to prompt us to discuss and clarify the issues raised. Your participation in this discussion is essential, both as an initial contributor as well as a responder to others’ contributions. Our discussions will not only take place with the entire class, but also within smaller groups. I will provide evaluation of your contributions at mid-semester and end of semester.

Format for Discussions: The level of English typically decreases drastically on the Internet and you will have to remind yourself you are in a class environment. Submissions in this class should be written in acceptable English prose style with proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. It is expected that you will use
appropriate written communication format with introduction, conclusion and a clear and concise flow of argument. Class and group discussions will take place in forums.

**Hot Tip:** The key to a good mark on discussions is---
- **Consistency** (regular interactions rather than all at the last moment)
- **Relevancy** (speak to your classmates' contributions and move the discussion along)
- **Punctuality** (on time according to the schedule)

**Group Papers and Evaluation (30%)**

At a couple of points in the semester you will work together in your groups to complete a project which will enhance the learning experience of every member of the class. You will contribute to the content of the class and evaluate other groups' work (Group Paper, 20%; Evaluation, 10%). A mark (20%) will be given to your Group Paper, but this may not be your own mark. I will ask for an evaluation of each group member by the members of the group and distribute the marks accordingly. Thus, if one person does twice the work as the others, an 18/20 may end up being 20/20 for that person and 17/20 for the other two. Your evaluation of your teammates will be done privately to the professor.

**Format for Group Papers:** Papers should be 2000 words (a range of 1900-2100 will be accepted). I am very sticky about this range because your classmates only have so much time to read. They should be posted to the appropriate forum in a message (not attached in file format) so your classmates can highlight elements and ask questions. Of course, you can use all the colors and fonts you wish.
Hot Tip: I evaluate based on three factors--

Presentation (is it laid out properly? does it use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation? etc.)

Argumentation (does it have an introduction, conclusion, flow of thought? etc.)

Content (does it cover the material required? is it the appropriate length? etc.)

Individual Research Pieces (40%)

Throughout the semester you will be required to apply to a passage of the Old Testament the principles for each dimension of the Old Testament which we are learning in class. Each person in the course has a different passage which they will choose in the first couple of weeks in the course. The focus of the work that is done should be on your own work in the text, but there is an expectation that you will engage the best secondary literature and identify key issues of debate and be able to resolve these. These research pieces are due two weeks after the completion of the dimension of study (except the last one which is due on the last day of classes). They should be submitted to the submission location provided on the course webpage (further instruction is given at that time in the semester). The preferred file format is Microsoft Word or RTF (.rtf=rich text format) which is available in most word processing programs. Just "save as" and choose the .rtf option.

All material which is submitted should be double spaced with 1" margins utilizing a readable font (10-12 pts). It must have a title page and bibliography which is not included in the length required. It should be written in excellent modern literary English with proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and rhetoric (including very
short introduction and conclusion and also logical flow of argument throughout). When secondary sources are used, they should be cited and footnoted appropriately.

**Hot Tip:** I evaluate based on three factors--
- **Presentation** (is it laid out properly? does it use proper spelling, grammar, punctuation? etc.)
- **Argumentation** (does it have an introduction, conclusion, flow of thought? etc.)
- **Content** (does it cover the material required? is it the appropriate length? etc.)

**Overview of Learning Opportunities Due Dates:**
- ✓ Team History Paper: Sept 29
- ✓ Individual Approach Research Piece: Sept 21
- ✓ Individual History Research Piece: Oct 19
- ✓ Team Literature Paper: Nov 10
- ✓ Individual Literature Research Piece: Nov 30
- ✓ Individual Application Research Piece: Dec 12
- ✓ Individual Reading: Dec 12

**Bibliography**

**History of Israel**

Provan, Ian, Long, V. Philip, & Longman III, Tremper
Soggin, J. Alberto

1993  *An introduction to the history of Israel and Judah* (2nd ed. rev. ed.).
     Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity International.
Rogerson, J.; Davies, P.

**Introduction to the Old Testament**

Bandstra, Barry L.


Birch, Bruce C.


Brueggemann, Walter


Crenshaw, James L.


Duggan, Michael


La Sor, William Sanford, Hubbard, David Allan, Bush, Frederic William, & Allen, Leslie C.


Rendtorff, Rolf


Bandstra, Barry L.


Collins, John Joseph

Harrison, R. K.

Hill, A. E.; Walton, J. H.

Young, E. J.

**Commentary series:** The following is a list of the best of commentary series.

- Word Biblical Commentary (Word/Nelson)
- New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Eerdmans)
- Old Testament Library (Westminster/John Knox)
- Hermeneia (Fortress)
- Continent Commentaries (Fortress)
- Anchor Bible Commentaries (Doubleday)
- Interpretation (Westminster/John Knox)
- Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Peeters)
- International Critical Commentary (T & T Clark)
- Readings (Sheffield Academic/Phoenix)
- Cornerstone (Tyndale House)
- Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVPress)
- Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary (Smyth & Helwys)
- Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Baker): Only Psalms and Wisdom
- New American Commentary (Broadman and Holman)
- NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan)
- JPS Torah Commentary (Jewish Publication society): Only Torah
- Expositors Bible Commentary (Zondervan)
- Berit Olam (Liturgical)
- Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Apollos/IVPress)
- New International Biblical Commentary (Hendrickson)
- Forms of Old Testament Literature (Eerdmans)
- New Century Bible Commentary (Sheffield)
- New Interpreters Bible (Abingdon)
IVP Bible Background Commentary (IVPress)
International theological commentary (Eerdmans)

**Interpretation of the Old Testament**

**Exegesis**

**General**

Carson, D. A.
Chisholm, Robert B.
Corley, B.; Lemke, S.; Lovejoy, G.
Cotterell, P.; Turner, M.
Goldingay, J.
Grant, R. M.; Tracy, D.
Greidanus, S.
Kaiser, W. C.; Silva, M.
McCartney, D.; Clayton, C.
McKenzie, S. L.; Haynes, S. R.
McQuilkin, R.
Narrative Analysis

Alter, R.
Bar-Efrat, S.
Long, V. P.
Longman, T.
Miller, P. D.
Sternberg, M.

**Poetic Analysis**

Alonso Schökel, L.
Alter, R.
Berlin, A.
Fokkelman, J.P.
Kugel, J.
Longman, T.
Watson, W. G. E.
Miller, P. D.
O'Connor, M. P.
Watson, Wilfred G. E.

Watson, W. G. E.


**Biblical Theology**

*Good series of volumes that cover many themes in the Bible include:*
New Studies in Biblical Theology (IVPress, Eerdmans)
Overtures to Biblical Theology (Fortress)

*Single/multi-volume Dictionaries which cover many themes:*
New Dictionary of Biblical Theology (IVPress)
New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (Zondervan)

*Good guides*
Achtemeier, E.
Baker, D. L.
Clowney, E. P.
Greidanus, S.
Hasel, G.
Holbert, J. C.
Klein, G. L., ed.
Leggett, D. A.
Long, T. G.
Scobie, C. H. H.