

THEO 7370 Christian Scriptures 1
George W. Truett Theological Seminary
Dr. W. Dennis Tucker, Jr.

'Justice and only justice you shall pursue so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving to you.' ---Deuteronomy 16: 20

Catalog Description

An in-depth analysis of the literary issues, meaning, and message of the text of the Old Testament, including Genesis through Kings.

This course is part of a grant that has been funded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). The content of this course covers Genesis-2 Kings and traditionally attention has been given primarily to historical, literary and theological issues associated with these texts. While these issues will remain both necessary and important in this course, they will be filtered anew through a question posed by Richard Bauckham in the opening line of his book *The Bible and Ecology*: "How should Christians read the Bible in an age of ecological disaster?" In order for students to develop and sharpen an appropriate hermeneutic for biblical interpretation, given current ecological concerns, students must understand the world of the text, but equally so, they must also develop an awareness of the world in which they inhabit. To this end, relevant research and findings in climate science, and anthropogenic climate change in particular, will be paired with appropriate texts from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament (HB/OT) in pursuit of a constructive theological and ethical response. Although this portion of the HB/OT is known best, perhaps, for its attention to texts focused on creation and stewardship, other issues remain relevant for this interdisciplinary investigation including matters associated with the land, the poor, and human migration, all matters that intersect with anthropogenic climate change.

Competencies

Goals	Objectives
1. To know the background, historical setting and related literary and critical issues to selected Old Testament texts	Be able to discuss in class specific issues related to the texts and respond to related questions on the final exam.
2. To explore the theological insights from selected Old Testament texts and their implications for Christian faith and practice	Be able to discuss in class theological insights from texts and respond to related questions on the final exam.
3. To consider the significance of the Old Testament in matters related to climate science.	Be able to integrate insights from the biblical text with readings related to climate science in group presentations and in written assignments
3. To recognize the power of the Old Testament for the life of Christian faith and practice	Be able to discuss in class observations related to the biblical material

Textbooks

Bruce Birch, Walter Brueggemann, Terence Fretheim, and David Petersen. *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd Edition. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.

Ellen Davis. *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. **Note:** This book is also online in the Baylor Library.

Readings Posted on Canvas

Course Assignments

- **Participation Grade:** The professor expects students to be faithful in their attendance and to be prepared for each class session. Each student's **participation grade** will be based upon a combination of his/her attendance as well as preparation for and participation in classroom discussions.
- **Reading Observations:** For each class, students will submit a bullet point outline of salient points from the readings. Each submission should be approximately 3/4 of a page to 1 page, singled spaced. At the bottom, please include two questions that might be beneficial for class discussion. Assignments must be submitted through Canvas **prior to** the start of class. **No late assignments will be accepted.** There are **23** assignments and **3** will be dropped. First assignment due is **January 25th**.
- **Short Response Papers:** Four classes will be devoted to "Biblical, Theological, and Contextual Engagement" in which students will read articles related to the biblical text and articles that pertain to climate science and its broader implications. For each class a question has been posed. Students will write a 1 ½ to 2 page single spaced response to the question(s). Student comments and reaction will be discussed in class (students will be invited to read sections of their reflection). Assignments must be submitted through Canvas **prior to** the start of class. **No late assignments will be accepted.**
- **Exams**—There will be a written mid-term exam and an oral final exam worth 100 points each.

Grading and Grading Scale

Participation Grade	100 points
Reading Observations	200 points (10 points each)
Short Papers: Biblical, Theological and Contextual Engagement	120 (30 points each)
Midterm Exam	100 points
Final Exam	100 points

100-95	A	86-84	B	76-70	C
94-90	A-	83-80	B-	69-60	D
89-87	B+	79-77	C+	< 60	F

Your Professor

My office is #206. You can reach me by phone at 710-7346 or by email at Dennis.Tucker@Baylor.edu. I am available to meet with you concerning academic, personal, or professional matters. Please make an appointment with me in advance, if possible.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty George W. Truett Theological Seminary Baylor University

According to the Seminary catalog, all Seminary students, as students enrolled in Baylor University, are subject also to general University regulations, including the Honor Code. Plagiarism is listed among the potential academic violations in the Honor Code. Baylor University has defined plagiarism as

"incorporating into one's work offered for course credit passages taken either word for word or in substance from a work of another, unless the student credits the original author and identifies the original author's work with quotation marks, footnotes, or another appropriate written explanation."

Students may claim that they did not *mean* to plagiarize or that it was unintentional. Intent, however, cannot be judged in such matters. If you submit a document that plagiarizes another source, then you

have committed plagiarism. It is the responsibility of the student to check and recheck sources to insure that proper citations have been included. If in doubt, consult with your professor about proper procedure.

All students must submit papers, exams, and other written materials to "Turnitin.com." This computer source will scan your document and determine if there is evidence of plagiarism. This search engine will also provide a citation of the source from which you have taken the text in question. Please be advised of the following statement:

"Students agree that by taking this course, all required papers, exams, class projects or other assignments submitted for credit may be submitted to turnitin.com or similar third parties to review and evaluate for originality and intellectual integrity. A description of the services, terms and conditions of use, and privacy policy of Turnitin is available on its [web site](#). Students understand all work submitted to turnitin.com will be added to its database of papers. Students further understand that if the results of such a review support an allegation of academic dishonesty, the course work in question as well as any supporting materials will be submitted to the Honor Council for investigation and further action."

Consequences of Plagiarism:

Students who have submitted plagiarized work will face the following consequences:

1. The student will be penalized in accordance with the Baylor University Honor Code. Possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, failure/grade penalty on the assignment, rewriting the assignment, failure/grade penalty on the test, and failure/grade penalty in the course.

The professor is required to report all forms of academic misconduct to the Office of Academic Integrity. All matters of academic dishonesty, including student appeal, will be handled according to the University's Honor Code.

2. If a student commits plagiarism a second time, then according to the Baylor University Honor Code, the Office of Academic Integrity will refer the student's file to the Honor Council. The Honor Council will consider additional sanctions for repeat violations. Possible sanctions include, but are not limited to probation, suspension, and expulsion.

Students Needing Accommodations

Any student who needs academic accommodations related to a documented disability should inform me immediately at the beginning of the semester. You are required to obtain appropriate documentation and information regarding accommodations from the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA). Contact Information: (254) 710-3605 - Paul L. Foster Success Center, 1st floor on the East Wing of Sid Richardson.

TITLE IX Information

Title IX Office – Title IX Coordinator

Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Interpersonal Violence Policy

Baylor University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities, and it does not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex or gender. This policy prohibits sexual and gender-based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, intimate partner violence, and retaliation (collectively referred to as prohibited conduct). For more information on how to report, or to learn more about our policy and process, please

visit www.baylor.edu/titleix. You may also contact the Title IX office directly by phone, (254) 710-8454, or email, TitleX_Coordinator@baylor.edu.

The Title IX office understands the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on- and off-campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, university housing, and other forms of assistance that may be available. Staff members at the office can also explain your rights and procedural options if you contact the Title IX Office. You will not be required to share your experience. **If you or someone you know feels unsafe or may be in imminent danger, please call the Baylor Police Department (254-710-2222) or Waco Police Department (9-1-1) immediately.**

Class Schedule

- January 18 Introduction to Course
Framing the Conversation:
--*Theological Introduction to the Old Testament (TIOT)*, 1-24.
--Ellen Davis, "Reading the Bible through Agrarian Eyes," pages 1-20 in *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- January 20 Introduction to the Pentateuch; The Land of Israel as Context
--Richard Briggs and Joel Lohr, "Reading the Pentateuch as Christian Scripture," 1-16.
--Ellen Davis, "Reading the Bible through Agrarian Eyes," pages 21-41 in *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*.
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- January 25 Religious and Cultural Worldview in ANE
-- William Brown, "Revolution and Evolution—ANE Backgrounds to Creation," in *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
--Readings on Canvas:
 "Egyptian Texts on Creation"
 "Enki and Ninmah"
 "Enuma Elish"
- January 27 Introduction to Genesis;
The Creation of the World
--Genesis 1-2
--*TIOT*, 29-46
-- William Brown, "Cosmic Temple: Cosmology According to Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Read pages 1-16 in the PDF carefully; you are welcome to skim the remainder.
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- February 1 Disobedience and Estrangement
--Genesis 3
--Terence Fretheim, "Genesis 3:1-24," pages 359-70 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).
- February 3 The Spiral of Sin and the Dissolution of Creation

- Genesis 4-11
 - Terence Fretheim, "Genesis 4:1-26," pages 372-78 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*
 - TIOT*, 52-58.
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February 8 *Biblical, Theological and Contextual Engagement*
Question: How do the texts we have read thus far (and the articles below) inform a response to the challenges posed by climate science?
--TedTalk [Video](#): Katharine Hayhoe, "What if Climate Change is Real"
--Ellen Davis, "Seeing with God: Israel's Poem of Creation," *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 42-65.
--Weiss, "We are all Connected: Toward a Biblical Theology of Creation," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 45 (2013): 57-67.

February 10 The Rise of a Family and the Role of Covenant
--Genesis 12-22
--*TIOT*, 62-78

February 15 The Rise of a Family: The Patriarchs (cont.)
--Genesis 23-36
--*TIOT*: 78-85

February 17 The Family in Egypt
--Genesis 37-50
--*TIOT* 85-92

February 22 *Biblical, Theological and Contextual Engagement*
Question: In what ways does food and famine help to frame the patriarchal narratives? How can food and famine shape our own biblical and theological responses to the climate crisis? In what ways could the biblical narrative aid in shaping our contemporary responses?

--Casey A. Strine, "The Famine in the Land was Severe: Environmentally Induced Involuntary Migration and the Joseph Narrative", *Hebrew Studies* 60 (2019): 55-69
--Stephen B. Chapman, "Food, Famine, and the Nations: A Canonical Approach to Genesis," pages 323-333 in *Genesis and Christian Theology*, ed. Nathan McDonald, Mark Elliot and Grant Macaskill (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).
--Groundswell Policy Note # 3, "Internal Climate Migration in Latin America."
--Optional Read: Gene Steffens, "Changing Climate Forces Desperate Guatemalans to Migrate," *National Geographic Online*.

February 24 Introduction to the Book of Exodus;
Resistance and Revelation
--Exodus 1-5
--*TIOT*: 93-124

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- March 1 The Book of Exodus: Deliverance
 --Exodus 6-15
 --Terence Fretheim, "The Plagues as Ecological Signs of Historical Disaster," *JBL* 110 (1991): 385-96.
- March 3 Formation of a Communal Ethos: The Wilderness and the Book of the Covenant
 --Exodus 16-24
 --Samuel Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship*, Overtures in Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 119-136.
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- March 8 Spring Break
- March 10 Spring Break
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- March 15 Communal Holiness and The Role of Ritual
 --Leviticus 8-20; 25
 --Joel N. Lohr, "The Book of Leviticus," pages 83-111 in *A Theological Introduction to the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Torah as Christian Scripture*, ed. Richard S. Briggs and Joel N Lohr (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).
- March 17 *Biblical, Theological and Contextual Engagement*
 Question: How might the book of Leviticus and our readings today shape our thinking about what it means to be human before God?

 --Ellen Davis, "A Wholesome Materiality: Reading Leviticus," pages 80-100 in *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*
 --Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' (Praise be to You): On Care for Our Common Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), 137-151.
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- March 22 Resilience and Rebellion in the Wilderness
 --Numbers 8:5-25:18
 --*TLOT*: 136-141
 --Ellen Davis, "Numbers: Marked for Blessing, Plagued by Sin," 82-93
- March 24 **EXAM 1**
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- March 29 Introduction to the book of Deuteronomy;
 Introduction to the Deuteronomistic History
 --Framing the Book: Deut 1-6; 28-34
 --Ellen Davis, "Deuteronomy: Learning to Love and to Fear," 105-116.
- March 31 The Deuteronomic Law Code

--Deut 12-26
--*TJOT*: 141-147; 164-170
-- Sandra Richter, "Environmental Law in Deuteronomy: One Lens on a Biblical Theology of Care," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20 (2010): 355-76.

April 5 Introduction to the Deuteronomistic History
The Settlement of a Community
--Joshua 1-11, 24
--*TJOT*: 173-205

April 7 The Community in the Land
-- Judges 1-9; 17-21
--*TJOT*: 205-214
--Ellen Davis, "Leadership and its Discontents," pages 148-63 in *Opening Israel's Scriptures*

April 12 The Rise of the Last Judge (Samuel)
and the Rise of the Monarchy (Saul)
--1 Sam 1-15
--*TJOT*: 215-235

April 14 The Rise of David
--I Samuel 16-17, 21-22, 24, 28, 31, 2 Samuel 1-2:11, 5-7
--*TJOT*: 235-248

April 19 The Succession Narrative
--2 Samuel 9-1 Kings 2

April 21 Solomon: King over the Nation
--1 Kings 1-11
--*TJOT*: 248-256

April 26 The Division of the Kingdom
and the Rise of Prophecy
--I Kings 12-22
--*TJOT*: 257-269

April 28 ***Biblical, Theological, and Contextual Engagement***
Question: In 1887, Bishop Mandell Creighton famously wrote, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." How do the stories in 1 Kings and the report on Bolsonaro bear this out? What do both stories tell us about power, corruption and the abuse of land? How does the Bolsonaro story inform our response to the climate crisis?

--Ellen Davis, "The Sovereignty of the Prophetic Word—1 Kings 13-21," pages 209-19 in *Opening Israel's Scripture*

--Ellen Davis, "Economies in Conflict," pages 101-119 in *Scripture, Culture and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*

--*Inside Climate News*, "Indigenous Leaders and Human Rights Groups in Brazil Want Bolsonaro Prosecuted for Crimes Against Humanity." See article [here](#).

May 3 Assyrian Dominance and the Fall of the Northern Kingdom
 --2 Kings 13-20
 --*TLOT*: 289-307

May 5 The Babylonian Empire and the Fall of the Southern Kingdom
 --2 Kings 21-25
 --*TLOT*: 327-334
 --Daniel Smith-Christopher, "On a Theology for Modern Babylonians: The Exile as a Basis for Doing 'Biblical Theology,'" *Quaker Religious Thought* 79 (1992): 7-18.

EXAM 2