BLST 601 Old Testament Survey
Fall 2024

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Course Dates: Online, Fall Semester, 2024

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Old Testament describes the nature, character, and actions of God as he creates, is rejected, and then graciously pursues his creation through covenant, temple, kingship, prophet, and other means. This course surveys the historical context, literary styles and genres, and theological themes of the books of the Old Testament. Students will also be introduced to a number of methodological perspectives, including historical-critical, rhetorical, literary, and canonical.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the *historical* circumstances surrounding the events of the Hebrew Bible, and the range of its subsequent reception from antiquity to the present.
2. Analyze the *theological* subtleties in this vast collection and become acquainted with how such matters have been interpreted.
3. Explain the *artistic* sophistication of the Old Testament literature, and the kinds of hermeneutical skills required to appreciate its coherence.
4. Apply the skills and tools required for a "close-reading" of various texts.
5. Craft intelligent responses to important questions about the Old Testament and take preliminary steps toward disseminating the results of their research to various audiences in the church, the academic world, and other communities.

COURSE TEXTS

Keith Bodner, *The Old Testament in 48 Hours* (provided as a free ebook to all registered students)

Sandra Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008)

We should have a copy of the Bible on hand for each lecture.

Students are expected to refer Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers*, available as PDF documents here:* http://briercrest.ca/current/seminary/academics/important-documents/*.*

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: http://briercrest.ca/bookstore*.*

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (https://briercrest.instructure.com; cf. http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND DELIVERY

Online Discussion Groups for this course will run on Tuesday nights, 5:00-6:15pm (SK time) for 8 weeks, from Tuesday, September 10 until Tuesday, October 29, 2024. Additional details will be posted in Canvas.

OUTLINE of PROPOSED TOPICS

In this course we will study the narrative and poetry of the Old Testament according to the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible. In Part 1 we study the Torah (Law), the first five books of the Bible. Next, we study the Prophets, divided into two sections: the Former Prophets (the historical books of Joshua to 2 Kings) and the Latter Prophets (including the major prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the minor prophets, or "the book of the Twelve"). Third, we will study the Writings, including the Psalms, Wisdom Literature, the Five Festal Scrolls, and the final material of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles.

Introduction
- Overview of central issues
- Principal events in the timeline of Ancient Israel

The Torah
- Genesis: creating of the cosmos and creation of a small (dysfunctional) family
- Exodus and the movement from slavery in Egypt to serving the LORD
- Leviticus and the spatial setting of the center of the universe
- Numbers and the wanderings of two generations in the wilderness
- Deuteronomy and the dramatic monologue from the territory of Moab

The Prophets
- Joshua, Judges, and the perils of life in the land of promise
- The request for a king and the burdens of monarchy in 1 & 2 Samuel
- Forty-two failed leaders in 1 & 2 Kings and the formal end of an institution
- The Deuteronomistic History as a cohesive narrative
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel: the major writing prophets
- The Book of the Twelve: minor prophets with a collective message
- Prophetic Legacy and the Hebrew Bible

The Writings
- Overview of the Writings
- The plot and the drama of the Book of Psalms
- One of the most important questions ever in the Book of Job
- Proverbs and the challenge of living the human life
- The Five Scrolls
- Why is Daniel in the Writings?
- Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, and the end of the Hebrew Bible

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ASSIGNMENTS

Pre-Course Assignment:

1. Write two three-page single-spaced reports on our course textbooks, Keith Bodner (*The Old Testament in 48 Hours*) and Sandra Richter (*The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*) due prior to the start of our course on Monday, **September 9, 2024**. Each report should summarize the content of the respective volume and provide an overview of what the student has learned (**10%**). Please email to the professor (kbodner@briercrest.ca) as a WORD or PDF attachment.

Post-Course Assignments:

2. Creative Responses: *The Workshop* (**60%**). Over the course of our journey together we will work through a series of interactive questions (for example, "Why is the prologue of Genesis 1-3 so important? What are some other key moments in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and what impressions are formed on the reader?"; "While Solomon is often applauded as Israel's wealthiest monarch, how would you evaluate his reign in the first part of 1 Kings?"; "Discuss the contributions of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah to the Book of the Twelve"; "What is the overall effect of 1 & 2 Chronicles closing both the Writings and the Hebrew Bible as a whole? How is the Old Testament indispensable for an integrated biblical theology in today's world?"). The student will provide a written response of approximately 300-400 words for each question, and the entire workshop should be emailed to the professor as a WORD or PDF file not later than **December 24, 2024.**

4. Research and Reflection essay: (**30%**). This is a standard 1500-word paper, single-spaced in Chicago format to be emailed to the professor as a WORD or PDF file no later than **December 24, 2024.** The topic can relate to any of our discussion items, or a particular text or issue in the Old Testament, or possibilities for the application of this diverse literature in the contemporary journey of faith.

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar: https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/.

Attendance Policy
In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses
Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

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Online Courses
If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses
All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Course Schedules
Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission
All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments
Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty
As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI

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features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations
Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

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