

Spring 2018

Course: Introduction to the Old Testament

Instructor: Joan Wolf, O.P.

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Dates: Jan. 20, 27; Feb. 3, 10, 17 (No class Feb. 24) Mar. 3, 10, 17, 24

Times: Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to noon

Place: Interactive Television sites throughout Dodge City and Salina Dioceses

[*“I’ve often said the Bible is the best book in the world and the worst book in the world. It is the worst when it is used for bullying and self-justification; it is the best when it is used for the healing of the world and for transformation of the self. Obviously, God intended the latter.”*]

(Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM)

Course Description:

The Old Testament is far more than the story of ancient Israel. The material revealed in its pages provides the theological and moral foundation for three of the world’s major religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. As such, it has shaped the history of Western civilization and continues to influence our world today.

This course is designed to bring the Old Testament to life and to thrill its readers with the story of one people’s journey into faith. These ancient people’s experiences may reveal the truth of our own journeys in that we can see ourselves in their life experiences, in their growth as well as in their backsliding, in their discoveries of the nature of God and in their misreading what was the will of God, in their frustration when life’s troubles were overwhelming and when they had to trust God when important questions remained unanswered. It is a story which covers 2,000 years; a story of real flesh and blood people searching for God and of God’s loving self-revelation over the centuries.

Course Goals:

1. To read the Old Testament with greater ease and a deepened understanding and appreciation of its message for our lives.
2. To recognize that the culture of the people and the times in which they lived must be taken into account before passing judgment on their behavior, beliefs, and their unique manner of recording and understanding history.
3. To recognize the nature of God’s intervention in history and to appreciate God’s gradual self-revelation to a people moving from polytheism to a sure faith in a one and only Supreme Being.
4. To improve one’s ability to recognize the various genres present in the Scripture, to differentiate fact from fiction and history from morality tales, and to find parallels in modern hymnology in the poetry of the psalms.
5. To leave the course with greater ability to read the Old Testament with intelligence and with an openness to learn the lessons it has to teach us in the modern age.

Required Text: *Reading the Old Testament, an Introduction* by Lawrence Boadt, revised and updated by Richard Clifford and Daniel Harrington, published in 2012.

***(Be sure to purchase **this 2012 version**, not Boadt’s original.)

Highly recommended: The New American Bible, revised Edition (NABRE) .

All having the same translation will enable us to read together, which we hope to do often during the course, and thus to follow the text with ease.

Class Requirements:

1. Class attendance and participation
2. Reading of text and other assigned material, including the Bible itself
3. Two papers, the first due (via e-mail or snail mail) by Feb. 28, the second by March 30.
More information regarding the papers will be given in due time.

Grading:

Attendance is critical. If one is absent more than three classes, one's final grade drops by one letter. Actual grades for the papers will, together with attendance, comprise one's final grade.

Grading Scale:

A = 90 – 100 B = 80 – 90 C = 70 – 80 D = 60 - 70 F = less than 60

Disclaimer:

Due to the amount of material involved in such a comprehensive course, the instructor reserves the right, in the interest of true learning, to limit the amount covered if such coverage compromises true understanding and appreciation of the subject.

Schedule of Classes:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Class Content</u>	
Jan. 20	“What’s it all about, Alfie?”	Overall introduction to course: Syllabus, Bible, Text.
Jan. 27	“Before the Beginning.”	Pre-History: Gn. 1 – 11: Creation, the Flood, the Tower of Babel.
Feb. 3	“Mom and Dad and the Kids.”	Early History: Patriarchs & Matriarchs: Abraham & Sarah; Isaac & Rebekah; Jacob & Rachel; the Twelve Tribes of Israel.
Feb. 10	“Home at Last!”	Suffering in Egypt, Covenant on Mt. Sinai, and arrival at the Promised Land.
Feb. 17	“Who’s Got the Power?”	Rulers of Israel: Judges and Kings, Israel and Judah.
Feb. 24	NO CLASS. <i>First paper due on Feb. 28.</i>	
Mar. 3	“Telling It Like It Is.”	The Prophets of Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah) Kingdoms.
Mar. 10	“Wise Beyond Their Years.”	Wisdom Literature: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, etc.
Mar. 17	“Your God is My God, Too.”	Praying the Scriptures: the Psalms.
Mar. 24	“Left to Our Own Devices.”	Wrapping up with insights, challenges, doubts, questions, appreciations, etc. <i>Final paper due Mar. 30.</i>