INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: Dr. John Brannon

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Course Description: A study of the Torah with focus on its meaning and relevance today in the Judaism-Christian tradition.

This course is an introduction to the first five books of the Bible, known in Jewish tradition as the Torah and in Christian tradition as the Pentateuch. Since this portion of the canon presents a single story from the creation of the world to the entry of the people in Canaan, we will attend most closely to what Robert Alter has called the “art of biblical narrative.” Thus, the primary methodology employed in this course will be literary criticism, and much of our attention will be focused on the interpretation of narrative material within these books. Two secondary goals will occupy our attention: 1) the nature and role of non-narrative material (most importantly, law) in the wider story of the Pentateuch/Torah and 2) the history of biblical interpretation and the relative value of various ways of reading the Bible.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1) perceive the literary features and historical background of biblical narrative and
2) employ their knowledge of a passage’s literary contours and historical context to articulate a coherent and compelling interpretation of a passage from biblical narrative and law
3) recognize and recount the basic contours of Israel’s story as presented in the first five books of the Bible (i.e., they will be able to state what happens in the Torah, and, when a reason is provided by the narrative, why)
4) evaluate theological, political, or ideological claims whose basis is found (ostensibly) in the Torah/Pentateuch (e.g., the Gospels’ use of the Torah, Roy Moore’s appeals to the Decalogue, film adaptations of biblical narratives)


Course Requirements:

1) Journal
To demonstrate that you are completing the reading and engaging the biblical text with some care, you must prepare a three to five paragraph reflection on one of the readings for each week. Find some topic, theme or character within the reading that is particular interest to you and explore the various aspects of that text, giving particular emphasis to ways the text speaks to the modern reader and specifically to you personally.

2) Movie Review
A major Hollywood film was recently released based on the Torah entitled Exodus (starring Christian Bale as Moses). This film, along with many other film adaptations based on the events of Torah have been released over the years, and you will be required to view one of these and write a three-page interpretation review. How does the film succeed as a reading of the story from the Bible? How does it fail? Be as specific as possible, drawing both from the movie (you may want to take notes) and the biblical text. This review will be due the last night of class.

3) Midterm and Final Exams
During week three of our class there will be a mid-term exam. Questions will come primarily from the text itself, but may also derive from lectures and the commentary material found in Kaminsky and Lohr. The final exam will likely consist three to five paragraph essays. Essays are likely to ask students to perform short interpretations of biblical texts. Students who keep up with the reading, attend all lectures, and engage the material carefully should have no difficulty demonstrating their knowledge of the Torah.

Grading Elements

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<th>Grading Elements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments</td>
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<td>Movie Review</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Grading Scale:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 0-59

Attendance Policy:
Absences and Tardiness – All students are required to attend the first session. Those who do not attend the first session will be automatically dropped from the course. Students with more than one absence will receive an "F" for the course. Since this class meets only five times, missing a single class meeting is equivalent to missing three weeks of a regular term. If you cannot attend a class you must let the instructor know via email as soon as possible. In case of absences you are responsible for obtaining all handouts and assignments. Tardiness may result in a deduction in your class participation grade. Excessive tardiness may count as an absence.
Participation – Participation is not the same as attendance. Participation requires students to come to class prepared to actively participate, which makes the classroom experience more meaningful. However, participation is not just speaking out in class. The contributions made by the student should be related to the course content and meaningful to the class discussion.

Late Assignments – No shows fail the assignment. It is expected that the students fulfill their assignments on the date they are scheduled to do so. Students with illness or other problems that prevent them from attending class on the day a presentation or written assignment (including a test and/or exam) is due must contact their instructors PRIOR to the deadline via Huntingdon College email with supporting documentation to request an extension or a make-up. In most cases, missed assignments are logistically difficult to make-up while maintaining the integrity of the module. In rare cases, approval to make-up an assignment may be granted at the discretion of the faculty member based on the seriousness of the circumstance and on the supporting evidence provided by the student. Contacting a fellow class member does not substitute for contacting the instructor.

Accommodation of Special Needs– Huntingdon College makes every reasonable accommodation for disabilities that have been processed and approved through our Disability Services Committee in accord with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. In order to request disability-related services at Huntingdon College, students must self-identify to the Disabilities Intake Coordinator, Camilla Irvin, and provide appropriate and up-to-date documentation to verify their disability or special needs. After the accommodations have been approved by the Disability Services Committee, the 504 Coordinator, Dr. Lisa Olenik Dorman, will notify your professor(s) of the committee’s decision. If you have any questions regarding reasonable accommodation or need to request disability-related services, please contact Disability Services at (334) 833-4577 or e-mail at disabilityservices@huntingdon.edu.

Academic Honesty – Plagiarism is literary theft. Failure to cite the author of any language or of any ideas which are not your own creation is plagiarism. This includes any text you might paraphrase, as well. Anyone is capable of searching the Internet or any printed media; your research paper is intended to broaden your knowledge, stimulate your creativity, and make you think, analyze, and learn. It is not consistent with the College Honor Code, nor with scholarly expectations to submit work which is not the product of your own thinking and research. Severe penalties will result upon the submission of any work found to be plagiarized, including potential failure of the entire course. It is easy and simple to properly cite all sources used in your paper. Take no risks – cite your sources.

Class Schedule
Please note: All secondary readings will be provided well in advance of their due dates. For the current class schedule, only readings from the primary textbook of the course are included. Other articles will be provided as determined by the professor.

Week One
“In The Beginning...”
Genesis 1:1-50:26
Kaminsky and Lohr chapters 1-4 pages 1-87

Week Two
“Out of Egypt...”
Exodus 1:1-40:38
Kaminsky and Lohr chapter 5 pages 88-109

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Week Three
“Laying Down the Law...”
Leviticus 1:1-27:34
Kaminsky and Lohr chapter 6 pages 110-123
Mid-Term Exam

Week Four
Numbers 1:1-36:13
Kaminsky and Lohr chapter 7 pages 124-140

Week Five
Deuteronomy 1:1-34:12
Kaminsky and Lohr chapter 8 pages 141-160
Final Exam
Movie Review Due