

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

BI 411/511D – Old Testament Introduction

Fall Semester 2024

Faculty Information:

Professor: The Rev. Dr. Matthew R. Schlimm

Preferred Title: Dr. Matt

Office: Van Vliet 316. This building does not have an elevator. If you would like to meet elsewhere, just let the professor know.

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Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the Old Testament. Students will gain an introductory understanding of the content, historical background, canon, theology, and critical issues of the Old Testament. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to lead Bible studies and preach sermons informed by the field of biblical studies. This course fulfills the M.Div. basic first-year requirement in Old Testament studies (3 credits, letter grade only), but is open to all UDTS students.

Course Objectives:

Students who complete this course will:

1. Classify the fundamentals of the Old Testament's content, canon, and theology;
2. Identify the historical, literary, and canonical context of biblical passages;
3. Apply key tools of biblical scholarship to problems faced in ministry contexts; and
4. Evaluate (i.e., critically assess) biblical scholarship.

In keeping with the stated purpose of the M.Div. degree (“to serve the one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and prepare women and men for faithful, compassionate, and effective pastoral ministry”), this course helps meet the following M.Div. curricular objectives:

- Be formed by, live in, and minister out of Scripture and the historical and theological tradition of the church.
- Interpret the Christian Scriptures through faithful exegesis and in light of the Christian tradition.
- Preach the Word of God with faithfulness and clarity.

Additionally, this course helps meet the following MAMD curricular objective:

- Articulate and reflect critically and constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world.

Additionally, this course helps meet the following MAM curricular objective:

- The student will be able to identify and interpret key themes from the Christian scriptures.

Required Textbooks:

Coogan, Michael, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0190276089.

Green, Joel, ed. *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2018. ISBN: 978-1609262167.

Schlimm, Matthew R. *This Strange and Sacred Scripture: Wrestling with the Old Testament and Its Oddities*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. ISBN: 978-0801039799.

NOTE #1: Students are required to obtain all three of these resources. Even though two are study Bibles, these study Bibles are different.

NOTE #2: Students are required to obtain the 5th edition of the *New Oxford Annotated Study Bible*. They will be tested on its contents, and students using different editions will have different content.

Recommended (Optional) Textbooks:

Aharoni, Yohanan, et al. *The Carta Bible Atlas*. 5th Revised and expanded edition. Jerusalem: Carta, 2011. ISBN: 978-9652208149.

A less expensive alternative to the above atlas (usually available used): Aharoni, Yohanan, et al. *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*. 3rd edition. New York: Macmillan, 1993. ISBN: 978-0025006058.

Fentress-Williams, Judy. *Holy Imagination: A Literary and Theological Introduction to the Whole Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2021. ISBN: 978-1426775314.

Hays, Christopher B. *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014. ISBN: 978-0664237011.

Summary of Course Requirements:

1. Exam 1: focused on Gen–Deut. (25% of final grade)
2. Exam 2: focused on Josh–Eccl. (25% of final grade)
3. Exam 3: focused on Isa–Malachi. (25% of final grade)
4. Five short written assignments. (5% each; 25% total)
5. It is assumed that students will view all lectures and material posted to our course website within a week of their being posted. Moodle tracks whether students do this. Any student failing to do this will receive a significant reduction in final grade, which may entail failing the course.

Detailed Explanation of Course Requirements:

Students are expected to complete the following successfully:

Examinations: Students will be tested with three examinations. Each exam will be available for students to take several days before the due date. Study guides will be provided for exams. As they explain, students will be expected to know material from:

- Class lectures
- Textbook readings
- Bible readings
- If applicable: Other material listed on study guide.

All exams are administered through our course Moodle site. However, the exams are "closed book," meaning no resources (print, electronic, or otherwise) should be consulted while taking exams. It is considered cheating to view exams from previous years; the study guide provides what is necessary for studying.

See course objectives 1-2.

Short Assignments: These five assignments provide students with the opportunity to:

- i. gain familiarity with key tools of academic biblical study,
- ii. critically assess biblical scholarship, and
- iii. address the needs of local churches.

Specific instructions are provided on our Moodle page. None of these assignments exceed 300 words (about one double-spaced page).

See course objectives 3-4.

Participation: It is assumed that students will view all lectures and material posted to our course website within one week of the material being posted. Moodle tracks whether students do this. Any student failing to do this will receive a significant reduction in final grade.