This course is an introduction to the collection of literature known as The Hebrew Bible or by the acronym, TANACH, standing for its three main divisions --Torah, Prophets [Nevi'im], and Writings [Ketuvim]. No prior knowledge and no particular religious commitments are presupposed. Actually, we will put all religious preconceptions and beliefs aside as we try to confront the biblical text on its own terms. One issue we face is deciding to what extent this is possible.

The Hebrew Bible is ancient literature that has greatly influenced the course of western civilization as well as some of its most important writers and thinkers for more than two millennia. It gave rise to three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The questions that emerge and with which we will struggle are just as important, therefore, as the answers we might or might not agree upon along the way. Our central concern is not to arrive at a definitive understanding of the texts we examine; our main purpose is to appreciate the genius and majesty of the biblical writers and of biblical themes and ideas.

There is a vast and growing body of scholarship focused on analyzing and interpreting the Hebrew Bible from many different perspectives. We will familiarize ourselves with some of these trends; How to Read the Jewish Bible, with its extensive bibliography, will be our guide. Still, our central objective will always remain the same: to hear the voice of the biblical writers, to do our best to understand that voice, and to allow ourselves to respond to it, each in his or her own way.

REQUIRED BOOKS

The Jewish Study Bible, Oxford University Press, 2004, paperback
Marc Zvi Brettler, How to Read the Jewish Bible, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007
[These books are only available at the Panther Book Store on Downer and Hampshire]
Additional assigned articles are on E-Reserve and Traditional Reserve in the library.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

--Regular attendance is very important. Sometimes missing class is unavoidable, but if you miss more than three classes, it is your responsibility to contact me to arrange to make up a missed class (typically a two or three page paper or written version of a class activity). Absences that are not made up will affect your final grade.
--Students are expected to have read all assignments before coming to class.
--Students with special needs of any kind should contact me at the beginning of the course so appropriate accommodations can be arranged.
--Feel free to contact me, by phone or email, for any reason; if necessary, we can arrange to meet after class.

GRADING

Attendance and participation: 25%
Two Reflection Papers (about four pages each) on Assigned Topics: 25%
Study Group Presentations, beginning Week #7: 25%
Final Research Paper, about eight pages in length, due Week #15: 25%

CLASS SCHEDULE, READING, AND ASSIGNMENTS
9/8 & 9/13 – **Intro & Logistics/Reading an Ancient Text and Historical Context**
Reflection Papers, grading, assignments, formation of Study Groups, etc.

Reading: *How to Read the Jewish Bible* [HTR, hereafter]: Chapters 1 to 4
*Jewish Study Bible* [JSB, hereafter]: pp 1-7; 2048-2062
Interview with James Kugel-E-Reserve and Traditional Reserve

9/15 thru 9/29 – **Creation, The Flood and Babel: Mythology or Science or ?**

Reading: Genesis, chapters 1 to 11
Excerpts from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *Enuma Elish: The Babylonian Creation Epic* [on reserve]
Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for our Understanding of Genesis 1-9* [on reserve]
“The Flood—Genesis 6:5-8:22”, Richard Friedman’s *Who Wrote the Bible?* [on E-Reserve and Traditional Reserve]
Essays in *JSB*: pp 8-11
*HTR*: Chapters 5 & 6

10/4 thru 10/20 – **The Mamas and The Pappas**

Reading: Genesis, chapters 12 to 50
*HTR*: Chapter 7

**FIRST REFLECTION PAPER DUE WEEK #6 [10/11 or 10/13]**

**STUDY GROUP #1 PRESENTATION—Week #7—Monday, October 18**

10/25 thru 11/3 – **Moses: A Leader Larger Than Life?—Revelation at Sinai—Covenant and Legal Traditions**

Reading: Exodus, chapters 1 to 24; and chapters 31 to 33;
Leviticus, chapters 17-26
Deuteronomy, chapters 12 to 26 and chapter 34
Joshua, chapter 24
Essays in *JSB*, pp 102-107, 203-206
*HTR*: Chapter 8
“How Moses Shaped America,” by Bruce Feiler, in *Time Magazine*, October 12, 2009 [on reserve in library]
“Biblical Parallels in American Law,” Gary Edles [on reserve]

**STUDY GROUP #2 PRESENTATION—Week #9—Monday, November 1**

11/3 thru 11/10 – **Conquest and Settlement of The Promised Land**

Reading: Joshua, chapters 1 to 12, and chapters 21, 23 and 24
Judges, chapters 1 to 3
Essays in *JSB*: pp 462-464, 508-510, and 2048-2052
*HTR*: Chapter 11
“Shifting Ground in the Holy Land, “ Jennifer Wallace, in *Smithsonian*, May, 2006 [on reserve in library]

**STUDY GROUP #3 PRESENTATION—Week #10—Wednesday, November 10**


Reading: 1 Samuel
2 Samuel, chapters 1 to 8
1 Kings, chapters 1 to 12, 16
2 Kings, chapters 17 to 25  
1 Chronicles chapters 1, 5, 20  
2 Chronicles chapters 7, 33, 35  
Essays in **JSB**: pp 558-561, 668-671, and 2052-62  
**HTR**: Chapters 12, 13 and 14  

**STUDY GROUP #4 PRESENTATION—Week #11—Monday, November 15**  

11/22 & 11/29 – Prophecy—Amos and Jeremiah  
Reading: Amos & Jeremiah  
Essay in **JSB**: pp 780-784, 917-920, and pp 1176-1177  
**HTR**: Chapters 15,16,17, 18 and 20  

**SECOND REFLECTION PAPER DUE WEEK #12 [November 22]**  

12/1 & 12/6– Wisdom Literature—Lamentations and Psalms  
Reading: Lamentations  
Psalms, 1,3,6,8,14,15,19,23,24,53,118,137,139  
Essays in **JSB**, pp 1275-84, pp 1587-89,  
**HTR**: Chapter 22  

**STUDY GROUP #5 PRESENTATION—Week #14—Monday, December 6**  

12/8 & 12/13 – Wisdom Literature—Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Esther  
Reading: Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs and Esther  
Essays in **JSB**, pp 1564-66 and pp1603-06  
**HTR**: Chapters 23, 25, 26 and 27, and pages 297-283  

**STUDY GROUP #6 PRESENTATION—Week #15—Monday, December 13**  

**FINAL PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN MONDAY, December 13 [Last Class Day]**

**Major/Minor in Jewish Studies**  
This course is part of the Jewish Studies major and minor. The major offers two tracks: Hebrew Studies and Jewish Cultural Studies (which does not require Hebrew language). With its combination of core courses and electives, the Jewish Studies program allows students to create a course of study that can focus on religion, culture, Israel, Holocaust, media, or immigration. A dynamic and innovative major, Jewish Studies prepares students to work in our multicultural world. For more information on the Jewish Studies major and minor, please the coordinator, Dr. Rachel N. Baum, rbaum@uwm.edu; 229-5156.

**Religious Studies**  
If you are thinking about a major or a double major in Religious Studies, please contact either Peter Paik, Director, at pypaik@uwm.edu or Dr. Judith Beall, Associate Director, at jbeall@uwm.edu.