

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary
 BI 411/511D – God’s Word: The Old Testament
 Fall Semester 2017
 Online & Residential

Faculty Information:

Professor: The Rev. Dr. Matthew R. Schlimm
 Preferred Title: Dr. Matt
 Office: Severance 210
 Office Phone: 563/589-3101
 Email: mschlimm@dbq.edu
 Website: www.MatthewSchlimm.com

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the content, historical background, canon, theological and critical issues of the Old Testament. 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. Develop a sound understanding of the fundamentals of the Old Testament's content;
2. Gain proficiency in recognizing and articulating the context of biblical passages;
3. Become trained in expounding upon the Old Testament's theological depth and homiletical power; and
4. Enhance their ability to interpret Scripture.
5. Acquire skills for critically assessing Old Testament 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 MACL curricular objective:

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

Text(s), Readings, and Materials:

Required Textbooks

- Aharoni, Yohanan, et al. *The Carta Bible Atlas*. 5th Revised and expanded edition. Jerusalem: Carta, 2011. ISBN: 978-9652208149.
- Coogan, Michael. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0195305050.
- Davis, Ellen F. *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2001. ISBN: 1561011975.
- Schlimm, Matthew R. *This Strange and Sacred Scripture: Wrestling with the Old Testament and Its Oddities*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015. ISBN: 978-0801039799.

Required Option: One of the Following:

- Green, Joel, et al., eds. *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2013. ISBN: 978-1609260286.
- Coogan, Michael D., et al., eds. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Fully revised 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0195289602.

Recommended Textbooks

- Erlander, Daniel. *Manna and Mercy: A Brief History of God's Unfolding Promise to Mend the Entire Universe*. Mercer Island, Wash.: The Order of Saints Martin and Teresa, 1992. Available: <http://www.danielerlander.com/manna.html> ISBN: 9786000020743.
- Fretheim, Terence E. *About the Bible: Short Answers to Big Questions*. Revised and Expanded Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2009. ISBN: 9780806657677.

Summary of Course Requirements:

1. Exams: A midterm and final exam. The final exam is *not* comprehensive. (30% each)
2. Weekly reading reflections, either [1] asking a question about the Bible, [2] asking a question about the assigned readings, or [3] expressing disagreement with the assigned readings. (40%)
3. 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 two examinations. 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 (e.g., a map).

All exams are administered through our course Moodle site. Neither online nor residential students should be physically present on the days exams are given. 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 will provide what is necessary for studying. See course objectives 1-4.

Reading Reflection: Each week, students should write either a *question* or an area of *disagreement* on our Moodle site.

The *question* can be about either the biblical text or the secondary readings.

- *An example about the biblical text:* "Genesis 4 sounds like there were other people around besides just Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel (see Gen 4:14-15, 17). How is that possible?"
- *An example about the secondary readings:* "Coogan talks about how scholars have questioned the existence of some of the four sources of the Documentary Hypothesis (pp. 16, 19). Which sources' existence has been questioned?"

The *disagreement* should pertain to the secondary readings. For example:

- "Schlimm overstates his case when claiming that the story of Adam and Eve is highly symbolic. The appearance of Adam in genealogies suggests he was in fact a historical person (Gen 5:3-5; 1Chr 1:1)."

Students' reflections need to be 500 characters or less. 500 characters is about five sentences. The examples above measure 135, 180, and 198 characters, respectively. Brevity is required because it is an excellent skill for ministers to develop.

Grading for Reading Reflection:

- *Grade A:* In addition to meeting the conditions for a B grade, these questions display insight, creativity, and/or critical thinking skills. The difference between an A and a B has to do with quality, not quantity. That is to say, students will not receive extra points for extra questions. Grade-A questions and comments evoke thoughts like, "That's a really good question" or "That's a really good point."
- *Grade B:* These questions have the following qualities:
 - They are clear and easy to understand.
 - They include page numbers (or digital locations) when referring to the textbooks and scripture citations when referring to the Bible.
 - They show thoughtful reading of the texts.
- *Grade C:* These questions lack clarity and originality. Or, they fail to cite textbooks and the Bible when appropriate. Or, they display only a superficial understanding of the material. They might, for example, ask a question about a reading that the author answers.
- *Grades D and F:* Students receive these grades if they fail to make reflections as instructed.

Each week, the professor will choose some of the reflections to respond to. See course objectives 4 and 5.

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.

Grading:

The final grade will be determined by an average of the above components:

Component	Percent of Final Grade
Midterm Exam (on Torah)	30%
Final Exam (on rest of OT)	30%
Reading Reflection	40%

As a core course, BI 411/511D is graded according to the letter-grade system only.

The grading scale is as follows:

93 - 100%	A
90 - 92%	A-
87 - 89%	B+
83 - 86%	B
80 - 82%	B-
77 - 79%	C+
73 - 76%	C
70 - 72%	C-
67 - 69%	D+
63 - 66%	D
0 - 62%	F