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OT 520XL OLD TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION

Asbury Theological Seminary
Syllabus – Spring Semester, 2005

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00 Contact Information

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For bio sketch, click http://www.ats.wilmore.ky.us/people/bios/b_arnold.htm or simply double click on my name anywhere in FirstClass® and you'll have access to my complete resume, which you'll most definitely want to ignore. ☺

Telephone: Note that the telephone number is for my office on our Wilmore campus. I'm often not there (I have a few other classes to teach, believe it or not, and meetings, ... but don't get me started), but you can always leave voice mail. Before our course begins, feel free to contact me via e-mail about any questions you might have; but when the course begins, you will need to address personal correspondence to my virtual office (under **04 Course Navigation** below, see (3) **to Office**).

01 Welcome

Welcome to ExL and “Old Testament Introduction.” I look forward to guiding you through the content and issues arising out of the Old Testament, beginning with the “Pentateuch” which may be a new term for some of you. It refers to the first five books of the Bible, traditionally known as the Books of Moses, or the Torah. But we’ll get to all that later.

For now, please notice carefully my address and phone number above. Since so much of this experience depends on community, you won’t be surprised that I’m not your only guide through this process. You will also want to keep the names and addresses of a few others nearby. For a complete list, see “09 Help!” below.

Before we get started, I want to learn a little about you. Please send as soon as possible a brief sketch of yourself. Tell me about your church affiliation, your reason for taking this course, your previous educational background and experiences, and your hobbies and interests. This will open up the communication lines and help us get to know each other better.

02 Course Description

This course is an introductory level seminary course that is foundational for all of our other Old Testament courses. I thoroughly enjoy teaching this course on campus, and I am looking forward to introducing you to the riches of God’s word in these Old Testament books over the next thirteen weeks. If you have never before studied the Old Testament in such a directed fashion, I think you will be surprised by how exciting this can be. More importantly, I pray this experience will be formational for you personally, and will contribute to the continuing Christian maturity for all of us. Let’s keep the words of John Wesley before us as we begin our study of the Old Testament: “I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God Himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book! Oh give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book.”

03 Course Objectives

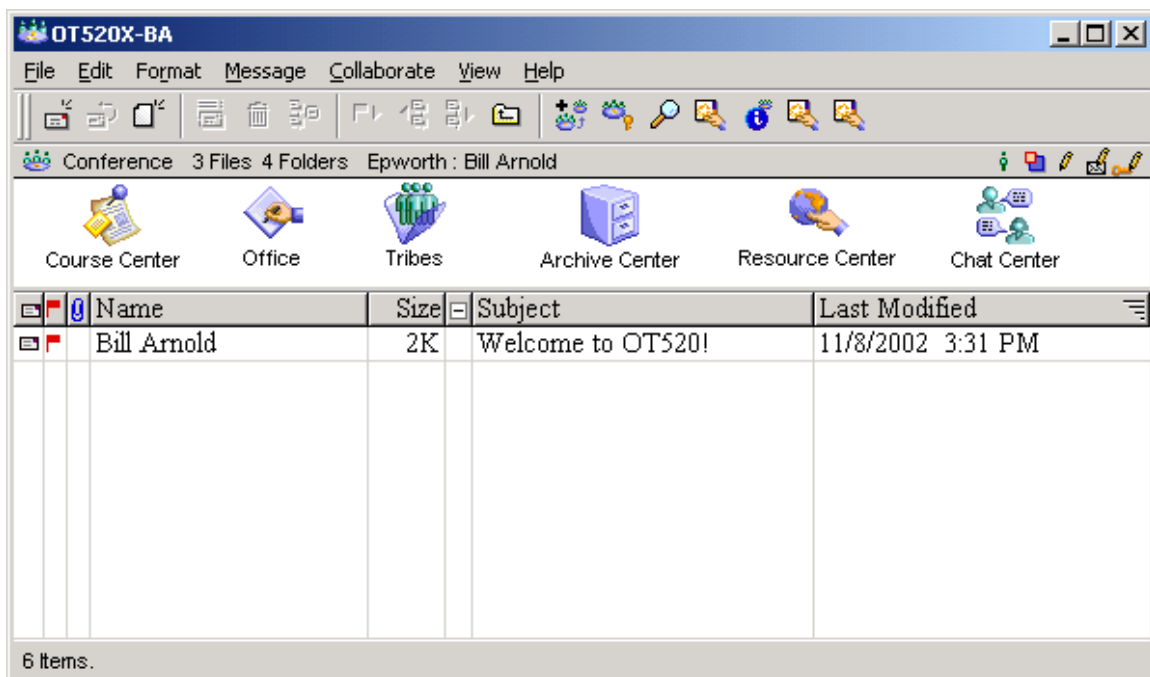
My mission in the course is to help you master information about the Old Testament that will be necessary for effective ministry. I am also interested in guiding you into emotional commitments to the message of the Bible and to a life-long practice of in-depth Bible reading. At the end of the course, you should be able to

- 1) Itemize the major events of Old Testament history in relative chronological order, as well as the salient features of ancient Near Eastern history.

- 2) State the general content of each section of the Old Testament.
- 3) Identify key theological motifs as they run through the Old Testament.
- 4) Analyze several interpretive techniques to the Old Testament in general.
- 5) Evaluate current scholarly positions on such critical matters as the authorship, date and unity of the Pentateuch, the nature of the Deuteronomistic History, etc.
- 6) Apply the Old Testament to Christian life and ministry.

04 Course Navigation

Although you may already be familiar with the FirstClass® user interface, I would urge you to read the following overview, because it is tailored to the specific features of our virtual classroom:



- (1) **Course Center.** This is the "nerve center" of our classroom, because it is from here that the instruction and direction for our course of study will flow. Here you will find the course syllabus, learning modules, and other materials that will set the pace for our study.
- (2) **Discussion Center.** This is the unlabeled bottom pane of the OT520X-BA window. It is our conference room where anyone in the class may communicate questions or comments about the current learning module, assignments we are working on, or any matter of interest to others in the class.

- (3) **Office.** This links you to the OT520XL (SP05)-Office, which is my private virtual office. This is the icon you will click on to hand in assignments and send personal correspondence directly to me. Once the semester begins, **please discontinue addressing messages to my e-mail address** (listed in **00 Contact Information** above). Clicking on the **to Office** icon will be the quickest, surest, and exclusive doorway to my office, and whatever you send there cannot be viewed by anyone else but me.

Important: If you need to reach me in case of an emergency, please do not hesitate to leave a voicemail at my phone number (859.858.2290), or send an e-mail to **Office** with the exclamation "URGENT!" in the Subject line.

- (4) **Archive Center.** As the semester progresses, our Discussion Center will begin to fill up with the threaded discussions that will form our conversations about the Old Testament. (A "thread" is simply a string of messages that are all related to the same subject.) Older discussions will be archived in the Archive Center in order to avoid clutter and to free up space in the Discussion Center for dialogue about our most recent learning module. Message threads may not be continued from within the Archive Center. However, this does not mean that you should be embarrassed if you need to raise a question that has already been dealt with in an archived discussion. Reinforcement of previous knowledge and skills is a good thing for all of us.
- (5) **Resource Center.** Here is where you will find an array of documents and links to information and services that will assist in the learning process. You are encouraged to explore all that the Resource Center has to offer you.
- (6) **Tribes.** Members of the class will work collaboratively on weekly assignments in small groups of 3 to 5 students. Since this is an Old Testament course, your small groups will be "tribes" (cheesy, I know, but previous students have liked it!). The folders for each tribe will be the appropriate place for students to carry on extensive discussion of the various topics each week. These will be more personal conversations between tribe members (which you will get to know quite well, trust me). The Discussion center is the entire classroom, where we can have conversations involving the entire class.
- (7) **Chat Center.** As opposed to the asynchronous environment of our Discussion Center, the Chat Center affords students the opportunity to meet with one another in real-time to study, quiz one another, ask questions, or simply get to know one another better. Remember that unless someone saves the text of a chat session before everyone exits the Chat Center (either by cutting and pasting the running text into a new FirstClass® document, or by clicking on File > Save As) the record of the session will be lost. Also, I should mention that the chat center is not the best place to ask for clarification or content questions, because some of your classmates will likely

live in time zones around the world. That's exciting enough in itself, but it means we should carry on substantive discussions in the discussion center instead.

05 Things to Remember

First, all electronic "conversation" about the topics and in response to the assignments of the class must be copied to me or to members of your small group. This is an electronic classroom, not a series of individual study courses. There may arise occasions when you feel it is appropriate to contact me personally (or another class member for that matter) for communication that is not for the eyes of everyone in the course. But in general, copy everyone in your tribe on everything. Think of it this way: in a traditional on-campus course, when you make a remark aloud in class, everyone hears it and has a chance to respond. That's the same way it should be in this "electronic" classroom. Occasionally I may take a question or comment from your tribal folder and put it in the Discussion Center for the entire class.

Second, since I'm on the topic of email correspondence, let's all agree to use good email etiquette (should I say it – "netiquette"). Please label all messages clearly by using the subject line of your message. As a matter of common courtesy and efficiency, try to limit your messages to 50 words (except the initial weekly posting by each tribe's chief, see 06 below). Pupils with propensities for loquacity and garrulousness must curtail such verbosity for the sake of communal efficaciousness! Got it?

Third, please be prepared to spend eight to ten hours each week on this course. Find a regular quiet place and time to do your online work. Negotiate with all those important people in your life (spouse, children, boss, dog, etc.) in order to protect this time for your work. And above all, don't get behind. The nature of the course makes it imperative to stay current with the rest of the class in the regular assignments.

Fourth, get acquainted with local theological libraries in your area. You will most likely need to make use of these facilities in the process of writing your paper (see below). You may need to plan a little travel time to obtain the materials you need.

Fifth, you will need to be prompt with your messages, papers, and other work. Part of seminary training is learning to prophesy on schedule. Late work will count against your final course grade. Obviously, there may be legitimate reasons for late work, but such situations are comparatively rare. I reserve the right to determine what will be accepted as "legitimate" with respect to late assignments.

06 Assignments and Requirements

I have designed the course around twelve topics or units (see “08 Course Schedule”). Please follow the schedule closely, and as I said before, don’t let yourself get caught trying to play catch-up.

Group multi-logue (40% of grade). The twelve are spread over our 13 weeks of classes. Each week’s assignment will have a set of questions based on “lectures” I will post and readings from the textbooks. You will be assigned into organized teams, with three to five class members in each team. Since we will study ancient Israel, including the tribal society that constituted earliest Israel, I will call these teams “tribes.” One member of your tribe, the “chief” for the week, will be assigned the task of posting his/her answers to the questions. The chief should post answers that are no more than 200 words per question. Other tribe members will then post responses to the first student’s answers. You will need to post your answers in a timely fashion. In your responses to the answers provided by the chief, indicate the following. 1) Areas where you think your tribal chief has accurately interpreted the readings, or even clarified some particular point for you. 2) Areas where you feel your team member has missed the boat and failed to understand the material. 3) Suggestions for further study of the topic, or some practical application of the material under question. My student assistant and I will read these “multi-logues” selectively, making responses where appropriate. These exchanges will account for 40% of the grade for the course.

Examination (30% of grade). There will also be an examination given during the tenth week of the course (fourth week of April). This exam will cover all lectures and readings. It will be posted in the Discussion Center for a two-day period and then withdrawn. This test will be an open-book exam, limited however to a Bible, class lectures, and class textbooks. This is not a research paper, but rather an opportunity to reflect on the materials we will have covered at that point in the class. The examination will contribute 30% of your final grade.

Term Paper (30% of grade). I am also asking that you write a brief paper during the term of no more than 2500 words on the topic of your choice from the list below. The paper should conform to “Chicago Manual Style,” chapter 7 in *Form and Style*, by Slade, Campbell, and Ballou (available through the Asbury bookstore). Alternatively, you may use the new resource for biblical studies edited by Patrick H. Alexander, et al., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). The paper will be due May 21 at 8:00am (EST). There will be a penalty for late papers. The paper will constitute the last 30% of your grade.

In the process of researching your topic for the paper, you should read a minimum of 500 pages beyond the other assigned readings for the course. Be prepared to use eight to ten good sources for your paper (excluding the Bible,

Webster's dictionary, and web sites). Resources listed in your textbooks as primary and secondary sources will serve you well in this capacity. You can also log onto the Asbury Seminary library line in our Web page in order to survey the possibilities. At the end of the bibliography, please indicate the amount you have read from each source along with the total read for the term project, excluding the textbooks required for the course and listed below.

The following list of topics is partial. Other topics may be chosen in consultation with the professor.

- The geography of Mesopotamia (or Syria-Palestine, or Egypt) and its significance for Old Testament Studies
- The history of writing, including the development of the alphabet.
- Survey of the Semitic languages.
- The Atrahasis Epic, the Enuma Elish and comparisons with Genesis.
- Survey some aspect (religion, socio-political structure, etc.) of one of the following: Sumerians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Hurrians.
- Survey one of the following archaeological periods with special reference to the biblical connections: Middle Bronze, Late Bronze, Iron I, Iron II, Iron III.
- Unique features of the ancestral narratives, and the questions concerning the dating of Israel's ancestors.
- The nature of ancestral religion.
- Some aspect of Hebrew religion (tabernacle/temple, sacrifice, festivals, law, etc.) as compared with a similar aspect in another Ancient Near Eastern culture.
- Origins of Yahwism.
- History of Monotheism
- A theological theme of the Pentateuch (holiness, sin, atonement, righteousness, etc.).
- The poor and the oppressed in the Old Testament.
- The unique understanding of history in the Old Testament compared to other cultures of the ancient Near East.
- Nature and role of holy war in the Old Testament.
- Canon and Old Testament textual criticism.
- Survey the history of Source Criticism in the nineteenth century.
- History and methods of Form Criticism.
- Methods of Tradition Criticism.
- Biographical sketch of one of the following: J. Wellhausen, H. Gunkel, G. von Rad, M. Noth, W. F. Albright.

07 Required Textbooks

LaSor, William S., David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996.

This is one of the best introductions available. This volume will also be one of the first places to turn to find more literature on the topics of your interest.

Coogan, Michael David, editor. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

This important source has just been released in paperback (May, 2001), and is one of the best volumes available on biblical history. Its scope is a bit beyond the focus of our class, but the majority of the book is directly pertinent, and it is probably the best available.

Alexander, T. Desmond. *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002.

This has been one of the most popular books for my students in this class in the past. It has just been released in a new, expanded edition with a completely new section in the beginning entitled "Pentateuch Criticism." The assignments below don't include this section, but it may be of interest to certain students. And if you write a paper on a related topic, this would be an excellent resource for current bibliography! Otherwise, the readings will all come from part 2 of the new edition.

The volume only covers the Pentateuch, and at times I've been tempted to replace it with a different third textbook. But I decided to keep using it this semester because it has been so appreciated in the past. It will be almost devotional in quality. Don't read it too quickly, or you'll miss his rich theological insights on the biblical text. Also, don't assume he is always right. He is theologically sensitive, but his interpretations often assume a theological approach that I believe is wrong. So enjoy, but be careful!

08 Course Schedule

1. February 7-13 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Opening shots. Introductions. Syllabus.

Introduction: Why study the Old Testament?

Reading assignments: Lecture #1, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 3-14 & 585-605, Alexander 97-114

2. February 14-20 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Genesis Overview: Primeval History & Ancestral Narratives

Reading assignments: Lecture #2, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 15-51, Alexander 129-142

3. February 21-27 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Reading assignments: Lecture #3, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 619-687, Alexander 114-128 and 143-156, Pitard in Coogan 25-57

4. February 28 – March 6 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

History & Geography: Syria-Palestine, Mesopotamia & Egypt through the ages

Reading assignments: Lecture #4, and Coogan 3-23

5. March 7-13 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Exodus Overview: Rescue and Relationship

Reading assignments: Lecture #5, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 52-79, Alexander 157-203

6. March 14-20 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Leviticus & Numbers Overview

Reading assignments: Lecture #6, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush 80-110, Alexander 204-252, Redmount in Coogan, 58-89.

7. March 21-27 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Deuteronomy Overview: Speeches from the Plains of Moab

This week, read the Book of Deuteronomy in a contemporary English translation. Also read Lecture #7, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush, 111-127, and Alexander 253-280.

8. March 28 – April 3 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Reading the Pentateuch: Methodologies & varieties of source hypotheses

This week, read Lecture #8, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush, 3-14 (again), and Stager in Coogan, 90-131.

9. April 11-17 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Reading the Pentateuch: Interpreting the Evidence

This week you are reading Lecture #9, and Hackett in Coogan, 132-164.

10. April 18-24 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

The Deuteronomistic History

This week you are reading Lecture #10, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush, 131-164, and Meyers in Coogan, 165-205.

11. April 25 – May 1 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

Israel's Monarchy and Its Collapse

This week you are reading Lecture #11, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush, 165-220, and Campbell in Coogan, 206-241.

12. May 2-8 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

The Old Testament Prophets

This week you are reading Lecture #12, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush, 221-231, and Cogan in Coogan 242-75.

13. May 9-15 (Due 8:00 am, EST)

The Old Testament Poetic Books

This week you are reading Lecture #13, LaSor/Hubbard/Bush, 231-242, 425-428, 447-459, and Leith in Coogan 276-316.

09 Help!

Asbury Theological Seminary offers you a full complement of resource people to help you with every aspect of your ExL learning experience.

(1) Contact List

General ExL help: Dale Hale, 859.858.2393
exl_office@asburyseminary.edu

Tech support, library research support, library loans, ExL media:
info_commons@asburyseminary.edu
859.858.2233, Toll-free: 866.454.2733

(2) Accessing Information Commons Materials:

General Questions:

▪ The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml>.

Materials Requests:

- To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml>
- ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
- ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

Research Questions:

▪ ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best

sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

Online Databases:

- To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).