

1. Rel A 301: Old Testament, Genesis–2 Samuel

Dr. Eric D. Huntsman

Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture

316-L JSB, ext. 2-3359

eric_huntsman@byu.edu, <http://www.erichuntsman.com>

Consultations: TTh 9-9:50 a.m., F 3-3:50 p.m.

Choosing a Religion Section

- Taking a religion class at BYU is an important part of a student's university experience
 - Fortunately, numerous sections of each course are offered in any given semester or term, allowing students to be selective in the classes that they take
- Although each section of the same course covers the same scriptural material, sections differ in their approach and in the teaching philosophies and styles of their instructors
 - Consider carefully the objectives of a given section, the personality and teaching style of the professor, and the way the course is organized
 - **Read the syllabus carefully by next class meeting**
- **You are most welcome in this section and hopefully it will add to your understanding and appreciation of the scriptures**
 - On the other hand, *you are also free to change sections if this does not seem like the experience that you want*

Eric D. Huntsman

Associate Professor of Ancient Scripture, Affiliate Faculty,
Classics and Ancient Near Eastern Studies

- Academic Background
 - BYU alumnus: BA (1990) in Classical Greek and Latin
 - MA and Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania: 1992, 1997) in Ancient History
 - More details at Bio link at <http://www.erichuntsman.com>
- Church Background
 - Thailand Bangkok Mission (1984-85)
 - Former bishop (1996-2002)
 - Current Provo Temple ordinance worker, member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir
- Contact Information
 - 316-L JSB, ext. 2-3359
 - Consultations: TTh 9-9:50 a.m., F 3-3:50 p.m.
 - eric_huntsman@byu.edu



Samuel, Eric, Rachel, and Elaine



8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

3

Course Description

- Rel A 301 is an introductory survey to the first half of the Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh*, commonly known as the "Old Testament"
- In addition to reading most of Genesis thru 2 Samuel and a sampling of the psalms, this course will introduce students to the basic historical context and the literary and theological issues that surround this important work of scripture.

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

4

Course Objectives

- First, to increase the student's knowledge of the first half of the Old Testament—that is, to familiarize him or her more fully with its basic storylines, characters, themes and theological concepts.
- Second, to help the student read, analyze, discuss, and write about the Bible as both a source of scriptural knowledge and as a sacred *text*, examining them in their historical, literary, and theological contexts.
- Third, to strengthen individual testimonies of sacred truths, particularly by an increased understanding God and his interactions with his people throughout history.
- *Read through the entire syllabus before the next class period, noting in particular Course Requirements, Grading Policies, and all due dates*

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

5

Course Requirements

- Texts (LDS Standard Works, course packet)
- Online resources, Blackboard
 - Presentations, notable passage lists
- Attendance and class lectures
- Assessment
 - Quizzes, midterms, paper, final exam
- Class discussions, quizzes, and exams will be formatted with the course's three overarching objectives in mind
 - Identifications (scriptural knowledge)
 - Scriptural commentary, exegetical paper (understanding and analyzing scripture as text)
 - Essay questions (understanding doctrine to strengthen testimony)

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

6

Grading Policies

- Straight points
 - students earn grades, teachers do not give them
- Syllabus, appendix A for religion courses at BYU
- ***In no way should the grading of a religion class be considered an evaluation of one's testimony or sincerity***
 - Difference between a university-level religious education course and seminary and institute . . .
 - While testimonies should be strengthened by a serious study and discussion of the scriptures, students are evaluated on their mastery of the material covered in class
- **Students are responsible for the grades that they earn**
 - ***if one needs a certain grade for academic reasons, then he or she should plan accordingly***

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

7

Suggestions for Class Preparation

- Read background material before beginning each text
- **Read the assigned scriptural text**
 - Use the outlines in the packet as a "road map"
 - Follow suggested reading strategies and approaches (see slide below)
- **Review class presentations**
 - Posted on Blackboard and on class website
 - The instructor may chose to focus on some slides more than others in class, understanding, needs and discussion dictate
 - ***Nevertheless students are responsible for all of them***
- **Periodically review Notable Passages lists**
 - Lists important passages studied in each units
 - Not necessary to memorize chapter and verse, but ***students should be able to recognize them and be able to answer basic historical, literary, and theological questions about each***
 - ***Your greatest spiritual experiences will occur outside of class as you study and work with the scriptural text, so please take advantage of this opportunity to engage the scriptures in this systematic way.***
- Review sheets will be posted (or updated) before each quiz and exam

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

8

What is the “Old” Testament?

- **Testament:** here means “covenant,” but the meaning of “witness” works as well
- **Old?**
 - **Jewish View**
 - the God’s covenant with ethnic Israel and the Law of Moses are still in effect
 - Preferred: “Hebrew Bible” or better, *Tanakh* (more below)
 - **Typical Christian view**
 - the old covenant has been replaced by the new covenant in Christ (see Jeremiah 31:31–34; Mark 14:24)
 - **LDS view?**
 - Adam and the patriarchs to Moses had the fulness of the gospel and “the new and everlasting covenant!”

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

9

Introduction to the Old Testament

- **The Old Testament is a spiritual record, a religious document not a systematic *history*!**
 - It was meant to be a spiritual record of the Israelites and later the Jews, so only focuses largely on the Jews and their immediate ancestors.
 - Over the centuries, various scholars have tried to “prove” the Old Testament using archaeology, to pin down events, locations, dates, etc.
 - The results are ambiguous, however. Sometimes archeology provides strong support for biblical places, events, and even people, but sometimes it raises more questions
 - This leads some modern scholars to dismiss the OT as little more than legend, and discount everything in it as untrue.
 - Like the Book of Mormon, the OT, and all scripture, is meant to be taken on faith!
- ***The text is better understood by putting it in its historical and cultural context***

8/29/2009

2. Historical Background (final)

10

Tanak

- **Torah** also called the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses
 - **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy**
 - Deuteronomy: The “2nd law” established principles which are later demonstrated in the Hebrew Bible’s historical books
- **Nevi'im** – Technically “the prophets”
 - **Former Prophets:** mostly historical books, although prophets are major characters—the “Deuteronomistic History,” which includes Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings
 - **Latter Prophets:** most of the “literary” prophetic books
- **Ketuvim** – meaning “writings,” this sections includes everything else
 - Poetic books such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job
 - The “Chronicler’s History,” which includes 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah
 - Ruth, Esther, Daniel

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

11

For the Next Class

Read what you can on Blackboard; otherwise the material will be summarized in class

- **Topics:** The World of the Old Testament—peoples and places. Introduction to *Torah*; Documentary Hypothesis and other theories of composition; Exegesis and Exegetical Method.
- **Reading:**
 - Rasmussen, xi–xviii (packet, 3–7)
 - Jackson, “God’s Testament to Ancient Israel,” and Brown, “Approaches to the Pentateuch,” SS3 3–23 (packet, 18–28)
 - Bandstra, 9–16, 18–20, 34–47 (online)
 - Huntsman, “Teaching through Exegesis: Helping Students Ask Questions of the Text” (packet, 150–159)

8/29/2009

1. Rel A 301 Introduction

12