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**Fall Term 2022 Course Syllabus**

**Sacred Texts 220**

**Words of Faith:**

**Exploring Key Scriptural Concepts in the Old and New Testaments**

**Huron University College Land Acknowledgment**

Huron is situated on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Lenape peoples, whose sharing and stewardship of the land has been governed by the Dish with One Spoon treaty since time immemorial. We are guided by this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. Huron University College acknowledges its past role in perpetuating colonial and exclusionary relations. Because religious and ecclesial institutions were instrumental in such relations, we consider it our particular responsibility as a Faculty of Theology to work towards justice and reconciliation.

**Course Dates:** From November 10th – December 29th

Note: The final class may be moved to the post Christmas break or the class may be condensed to seven weeks upon instructor approval.

**Time:** Thursdays from 7 – 9 P.M. (CT), 8 – 10 P.M. (ET)

**Delivery:** Hosted via Zoom

**Instructor:** The Rev. Dr. Paul Shore, PhD

**Contact:** shorep@brandonu.ca (201) 571-0801

**Course Description**

This course will introduce students to some of the key words and ideas from both the Old and New Testaments, with special emphasis on the historical and cultural context(s) in which they are found.

We will also examine the relationship between the vocabularies of the two Testaments, focusing on the pivotal role of Greek in conveying and-- transforming-- ideas of the Old Testament to the world of the New.

A unifying theme is the compatibility of careful scientific investigation and faith. We shall see how Biblical terms in the same language are interrelated and may overlap. We shall also find that a wealth of concepts lie hidden beneath a single word that has been translated into English - such as the word “sin.”

N. B. While I’ll occasionally mention my own views on controversial points of Biblical interpretation, your grade will in no way be affected by the fact of you agreeing or disagreeing with me! Lively conversation is encouraged our class discussions together.

**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes**

We approach this study with humility and hope, recognizing that while we cannot go back in time and fully experience the lives of the people of the Bible, we can come to understand better the world in which they lived and thereby better carry out the proclamation of the Gospel. No previous knowledge of Biblical languages (or alphabets) will required, but be prepared to hear and see a few new words!

Have your Bible handy. The NIV is a good one to use, but if you have other translations (including the KJV), we can explore them, too.

This course seeks to do two things: increase your understanding of how Biblical knowledge has been transmitted to us today, and whet your appetite for further scriptural investigation. Remember: Biblical studies are a lifelong occupation!

**Required Text(s) [or Study Documents]**

Short excerpts from the following texts will be shared with the students in this course:

# **Harrison, R. K.** *Old Testament times: A social, political, and cultural context*

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005).

**ISBN** 0802833349, 9780802833341

**Strong, James.** *The New Strong's guide to Bible words: an English index to Hebrew and Greek words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., [2008])

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| **ISBN** | 9781418532185 1418532185 |

**Koester, Helmut**. *Introduction to the New Testament. Vol. 2, History and Literature of Early Christianity* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2019)

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| **ISBN:** | 9783110857566 3110857561 |

**Course Outline/Plan**

**Week 1: An Introduction to the Languages of the Old Testament**

1. Patterns and methods of transmission. Challenges facing translators. Ways in which the Old and New Testaments differ-- and why. Reconstructing meaning. Genesis: time and place. The current text of Genesis finalized centuries, even millennia after some of the events described. Where one believes that historical events emerge from legend is a personal decision. The word “sin” does not appear in the account in Genesis 3 of Fall and the expulsion from Eden. J, E, and P strands. Why the concern over sources?

“[Genesis’s] defining literary theme is anxiety about the successful transition from father to son.”-- Rachel P. Kreiter. The patriarchs of Genesis do not yet worship YHWH; they worship El (cognate with the Arabic Allah). YHWH will suggest his own name at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). El is also the name of a god worshipped in Mesopotamia before 2000 BC. Polytheism lurks in the background of many Genesis stories (e. g., the Tower of Babel). Human unity expressed, pre-Tower of Babel, through linguistic unity. At the end of Genesis, the story of Joseph is key because it prefigures aspects of other biographical accounts in the Bible, even that of the boy Jesus in the Temple. We shall also look at the improbable case of the hybrid word “Jehovah” as an example of how not just meaning, but the word itself, can change.

**Week 2: Deeper into Genesis: Laughter is Seldom a Good Thing in the OT**

1. “Isaac” (Yīṣḥāq) means “he was laughing,” “laughs,” or “will laugh,” a reference to both of Isaac’s parents laughing when told that Sarah would bear a son. The appearance of these multiple tenses leads us to the Hebrew imperfective aspect. Scarcity of resources a theme throughout Genesis-- and in much of the OT. This may explain the recurring themes of mistrust, rule breaking, and death. Poetry and prose. e. g., the angel who spoke to Hagar (Gen. 16:11-12). Relations between family members (Cain and Abel; Jacob, Leah and Sechem) are metaphors for larger societal relations. The Time of the Patriarchs and the “Bicameral mind.” Non-human, sentient beings in Genesis.

Distinctive features of the world of Genesis. Eden and the “Golden Age.”

**FIRST PAPER DUE**

**Week 3: Exploring the Psalms**

1. Many scholars now reject the idea that David composed them: but composition was an ongoing process, and David as originator of the cores of some Psalms cannot be ruled out. Five categories of Psalms (other lists also exist). Plants and animals mentioned in the Psalms. Kingship and communal and national sentiment and identity. Key role of the Dead Sea Scrolls in confirming the authenticity of a Psalm 151 reported in the Septuagint. The Psalms as sonic events-- then and now. Parallelism in the Psalms.

Functions of the Psalms in a world before diaries, newspapers, blogs and tweets.

The acoustics of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem must be considered when envisioning that performance of the Psalms. Psalms were performed in the belief that God’s presence was especially “concentrated” in the Temple. We meet “El Shaddai”: The Mighty One. Many Psalms are regarded by Christians as prophecies of Christ, among them 2, 8, 18, 22, 39, 40, etc. The “stage directions” of some Psalms remain obscure, but their secrets may yet be unlocked by archaeology and linguistics.

The story of God’s people is headed toward a glorious future-- more on this in Isaiah.

**Week 4: A Third Glimpse of the OT: Isaiah**

1. Background: the successors to the Davidic kingdom, Judea and Israel. The written word becomes the means of accessing the past and also the medium of Israel’s covenant with God.

The man Isaiah. The rise of Assyria and the great danger to Israel. One, two, or three “Isaiahs”? Pain and purification. The prophetic figure foretold at Isaiah 9:6. Prophecies: in what time frame do they occur? When God describes themselves like a woman. A closer look at Isaiah’s Hebrew. In the book’s final chapters injustice (wickedness, criminality) is attacked. Key takeaway: Thus while the passage of time is key in OT narratives, God is not restrained by our own perception of that passage. “Peace shall roll like a river.” God has made Israel his masterpiece. Key vocabulary terms in Isaiah. What “living God” means to Isaiah. Grace extended to all (including Gentile) sinners who trust in YHWH.

Quick summary of Isaiah’s moral vision. Between Malachi and Matthew.

Taking a break with SATAN: Names for the Adversary. Satan: The Hebrew means “adversary” or “accuser.” Root meaning has to do with opposition. In the sense of “accuser,” Satan speaks at Job 2:4-4: ...4 A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But now stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.” As an opponent, we find satan with a small “s” at 1 Kings I:14: “And the Lord raised up an adversary (satan) against Solomon...

Lucifer: This word is actually Latin, and means “light bearer.” It appears in the King James Version at Isaiah 14:12. The King James translators took the word directly from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Biblbe (c. AD 400). The Hebrew is *hêlēl* “shining one” also an epithet of the King of Babylon, who is the subject of Isaiah 12. There is also an association with Venus, the “Morning Star.”

“Beelzebub”: In Hebrew “Lord of the Flies.” Note that “beel” is cognate with “Baal” the Canaanite god-- and also the modern Hebrew word for husband!!.

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

**Week 5: The Gospels as Narrative**

1. Background: Unlike the OT, many of the writers and key players of the NT knew each other. Logos in the Septuagint and in Pagan Greek literature. Logos contrasted with rhēma. Why John’s Gospel is saying several things at once. When analyzing the Gospels, three factors to consider. The Holy Spirit-- connections to and distinctions from the “Spirit of God” in the OT.. A non-violent interpretation of the cleansing of the Temple. Mark, the “underrated” evangelist-- and his sources. Matthew ties Jesus to the OT, and makes Him teacher par excellence. John’s differences from and connections to the Synoptics. John and “the Jews.” “The Son of [the] Man.”

**Week 6: Luke and Acts**

1. Who is Luke? Theology expounded through a narrative arc. Jesus’ place in history. “My Father’s House.” “Nous” on the road to Emmaus. Signs and wonders. The Kingdom of God. The “we sections” of Acts. Differences between “Hebrew” (?) and Hellenized Jewish members of the Church. Possible famines and economic hardship during the first century AD. In Acts, the account of the young Church is a continuation of the Jesus-story. Clues about the world of Acts in the account of Stephen’s martyrdom.

Acts: A model for how Christian churches should grow.

Some of Luke’s readers were probably not Christians. Most were highly literate in Greek.

**Week 7: Paul’s Letters**

Origins and early life. The fact that Christ had not returned as many hoped, set the stage for the contribution of Paul, who proclaimed a risen Christ to the Roman world-- which was not always keen on monotheism.

“All things to all men.” “There is neither Jew nor Greek...”

Paul divides people into three categories based on their responses to apostolic teaching: those who are spiritual (*pneumatikos*, 2.13, 15; 3.1), those who are soulish (*psychikós*; 2.14) and the Corinthians who are carnal (*sarkivós*; 3.1, 3). Further Pauline terminology: sarks, sōma, hamartia. Paul, sin and the Law (Torah)

Words for Sin: The one English word “sin” translates several distinct Hebrew words; it’s a bit like having one word for copper, plastic, and steel. We begin with the Koine Greek word “hamartia.” The Hebrew terms include "Pesha": "to do a bad thing out of sheer rebelliousness (when you know better);" "Aveira:" "to break a moral rule; "Avon": "bad action because of a strong desire."

Three Greek words for “power.” Agapē in three contexts.

**Week 8: Continuing Your Inquiry**

A few observations about Revelations. Weighing evidence. How Church councils and traditions winnowed all the stories about Jesus down to the Gospels we have today. Strong’s: an invaluable online resource. Two questions for you to ponder.

**THIRD PAPER DUE**

**Method of Evaluation and Criteria for Grading** (only for students choosing to be evaluated for full course credit)

Two document studies (500 words each) and a Final Essay (1000 words) will be completed by each student seeking evaluation for full LTh credit.

1. Class Engagement/Participation – 25%

2. Reflection Paper #1 – 25% - due at second class meeting

3. Reflection Paper #2 – 25% - due at fourth class meeting

4. Reflection Paper #3 – 25% - due at eighth class meeting

Questions to guide each reflection paper will be presented in the class discussions.

**Huron Grade Descriptors**

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| A+ | 90-100 | One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level |
| A | 80-89 | Superior work which is clearly above average |
| B | 70-79 | Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory |
| C | 60-69 | Competent work, meeting requirements |
| D | 50-59 | Fair work, minimally acceptable |
| F | below 50 | Fail |

**Student Code of Conduct**

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work, and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: [https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf](about:blank).

**Statement on the Recording of Class Activities**

Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student’s own private use.

Online courses within the Licentiate in Theology Program are recorded for student engagement purposes. These recording are only used by the registered students of the class and made available through a restricted video hosting site to respect both privacy and intellectual property. Should a student be uncomfortable with this practice, they can contact the course instructor or the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca

**Support Services**

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should contact the LTh Program Director, Dr. Grayhame Bowcott at [grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca](mailto:grayhame.bowcott@huron.uwo.ca).

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THIS COURSE HAS BEEN [NOT YET BEEN] APPROVED BY HURON’S FACULTY OF THEOLOGY COMMITTEE

FOR THE SPRING TERM OF THE LTH PROGRAM, 2022.