Hebrew Bible for the 21st Century: UC Davis Qualifying Exam List

Goals:

1. To have your own view of the most engaging and significant texts, main discoveries, and biggest questions in the field, arrived at by slow reading of primary sources together with reflection on the most important theories.

2. To know only one literature or history is to know none. Within biblical studies have a main ancient comparative literature and a main historical context to place the comparison (for some models with respect to NWS epigraphy, Mesopotamian scholarship, and early Jewish and Christian scholarship, see The Invention of Hebrew, From Adapa to Enoch, and The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity respectively).

3. The role of theory is to find interesting and important questions our data may be able to answer. The main innovation of this reading list is to centralize great biblical scholarship that results from putting rigorous reading and analysis in dialogue with big ideas.

Note: Material in BLACK should be read in detail; material in BLUE is either from previous seminars or for more general familiarity (know main arguments and a couple of key examples).

Biblical Literature as a Whole: Surveys and Alternatives to Surveys
The Hebrew Bible seen through canon (1,2, 4-6), literature/gender (3), & history of religions (7)


2. Rofé, A. Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible. Jerusalem: Simor, 2009. More than a big annotated bibliography, this is a fresh, readable rethinking of everything from the ground up with frequent, helpful citation of concrete evidence of language and literary pattern, but still in clear dialogue with classic theories; compare structure w Eissfeldt, Driver, and:

3. Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. Reading the Women of the Bible. New York: Penguin 2002. A big-picture literary and political vision of the whole Tanakh from the viewpoint of one of the big human questions: what does gender difference mean, what are “woman” and “man” for?

For each of these three, read the intro sections then compare their treatments of two books you’re very interested in and two you’re less aware of. Then compare the organization and assumptions of one classic earlier intro and three more recent ones. What sort of implicit claim does the organization of each make about what the big picture of the Hebrew Bible might be?


**Prose Narrative:**
The Myth of Birthing the Hero Heroic Barrenness in the Hebrew Bible

**Narrative Composition and Interpretation**

12. Shectman, Sarah. *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist and Source-Critical Analysis* (Introduction, skim, and select one section to focus on more deeply)


### Poetry, Proverbs, Poetic Critique, and the Art of Translation


2. Vayntrub, Jacqueline. *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms*

3. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (read enough to have a specific idea of where he differs with, and how he might read a specific text differently than, Kugel or Vayntrub)

4. From Reiner, *Your Thwarts in Pieces*

5. From Veldhuis, *A Cow of Sin*


### Law and Ritual


Prophecy
1. Wilson, R., Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), to be read with the discussions in Eissfeldt and Rofé.

Deuteronomistic History

Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah

Apocalyptic Literature
2. Cross, short note on apocalyptic lit at end of CMHE
   “Apocalyptic Historiography,” ch. 3, and “Visions and Pseudepigraphy,” ch. 4

Ancient Media, Book History, and Textual Criticism


5. A. Leo Oppenheim from *Ancient Mesopotamia*, passages on “stream of tradition”


   chapter 2. A Response to Criticisms..


   6. A Typology of Scribal Error (cf. McCarter’s typology & focus esp. on debate w Carr)

   7. Assessing the Text-Critical Theories of the Hebrew Bible after Qumran (cf w White Crawford)

12. The Untimeliness of Biblical Philology


10. Liv I. Lied and Hugo Lundhaug, Introduction to *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions*, and Lied’s chapter on 2 Baruch therein

**Political history, ideology, and political thought**


   The Joshua Generation Conquest and the Promised Land


4. Mario Liverani, articles on:

Material culture, lived experience, and pragmatics
4. Pioske, “David’s Jerusalem in Samuel-Kings: Commemorating a Davidic Past” ch 2, and “Conclusion,” in David’s Jerusalem (to be read with his treatment of Chronicles, above)

Language

Early Jewish Literature