



Religious Studies 2201f/g (570)
Introduction to the Bible: Old Testament
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: JK. Kato

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Course Information

Calendar Description:

An introduction to the history of Israel, to the literature of the First Testament of the Christian Bible and to the interpretation strategies employed by its ancient and contemporary readers.

Antirequisite(s): [Religious Studies 2164F/G](#).

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50

Breadth: Category B

Subject Code: RELSTUD

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



Department of Religious Studies

Religious Studies 2201F Fall 2026
(JULY-AUGUST 2026 VERSION)

The Old Testament

(Studying The Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture)

Instructor: Dr. Julius-Kei Kato, S.S.L., Ph.D.

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I ENCOURAGE YOU though to communicate with me by sending me a personal/private message (PM) on the chat function of Microsoft Teams. I'll try to get back to you as soon as I can.

Office Hours: By appointment. Email me at jkato@uwo.ca or send me a DM at Teams

Facebook: I encourage students to like my public **FB page 'JK Kato-Spiritual Quests & Optimal Living'** where I occasionally post things relevant to the study of religion and spirituality. If there is any post directly relevant to this course, it will be labeled #kingsrs2201

Instagram: jkkato11

Blog where I post relevant essays, some of them relevant to this course – JKK's Pensieve: Spiritual but not-and yet Religious. Link: <http://spiritual-notandyet-religious-jkk.blogspot.com/>

Course Description

The Bible is one of the most influential books in the world. It is considered the revealed Word of God by both Judaism and Christianity; it has formed and shaped civilizations and cultures; it continues to influence us to this day directly and indirectly in many important ways. This course will survey the first part (of the two-part Christian Bible) known as the Old Testament. This is also known as "the Jewish Scriptures" or "the Hebrew Bible". We will explore the Old Testament as both *literature* and *history*, interacting with the different "worlds" related to the text.

[Course Objectives]

At the end of the course,

- [1] the students will have learned well these three worlds, namely, (1) *within*, (2) *behind* and (3) *in front of* the text" while always keeping in mind the sacred status that these writings have for different faith communities. [2] They will also have learned to read, appreciate, and interpret critically the Old Testament as it expresses the (a) history, (b) worldview, (c) religious faith of an ancient community known as "Israel."
- [3] Lastly, the students will have learned what the Old Testament suggests about how we, in this day and age, might find important clues to the perennial questions that face humanity.

Prerequisite(s): None

Texts

Required

There won't be any required SINGLE TEXTBOOK for this course. I will provide the students with appropriate readings every week which I will put in our OWL-Brightspace (and possibly also MS Teams) of this course. See the schedule of topics at the end of the document. However, I want students to think of the Bible itself as “the required text,” and the other readings as mere “commentary.”

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with Apocrypha (or the Catholic edition) is the preferred translation for this course. If you wish to use a different translation, please consult the instructor. It is available online (<https://www.biblegateway.com/>)

Other Texts for Reference

The following works will be very useful to understand the “Three Worlds” of the Bible and to get a good general idea of foundational issues regarding the study of the Bible. They are available at the library on reserve for this course:

Anselm Academic. *Understanding the Bible: A Guide to Reading the Scriptures*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2008.
Carmody, Timothy. *Reading the Bible: A Study Guide*. Paulist Press, 2004.
Frigge, Marielle. *Beginning Biblical Studies*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2009.
Carvalho, Corrine. *Primer on Biblical Methods*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2009. **(highly recommended)**
Kato, Julius-Kei. *Reading the Bible in a Secular Age: The New Testament as Spiritual Ancestry*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023.

On Catholic Principles for Interpreting the Bible, you can consult:

Harrington, Daniel. *How Do Catholics Read the Bible*. Sheed & Ward, 2005.
Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Pauline Books and Media, 1996.
(Pope) Benedict XVI. *The Word of the Lord (Verbum Domini)*. Pauline Books and Media, 2010.

Works on the historical background of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible:

Doorly, William. *The Religion of Israel: A Short History*. New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1999.
Finkelstein, Israel and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed: Archeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*. New York: Touchstone, 2001.
Miller, J. Maxwell and John Hayes. *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986.
Shanks, Hershel. *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Washington: Biblical Archeology Society, 1999.

All these materials are available at the King's Library.

Course Requirements, Evaluation & Readings

Here is how I will decide on your final grades:

- **Weekly Quizzes (15%)** | There will be an **open-book but timed** multiple choice quiz on the assigned readings every week. Although it is “open-book,” *you have to do* the readings IN ADVANCE in order to do well on this *timed quiz*. More detailed instructions will be given at the beginning of the course.
- **Class Attendance / Active and Critical Participation (15%)** | I will give you several opportunities to show class participation such as *questions, comments, etc. in or outside the classroom or on online forums*. But the major way by which I will gauge this category will be through your **Course Journal entries and your participation in the class whiteboard or in-person class**. See the more detailed

explanations below. ***I highly encourage people to put great weight on participation because I will give EXTRA CREDIT if I see that people TRY their best to participate actively.***

- **Midterm Exam (15%)** | Open-notes/open-books. It will cover all lectures and readings to date. In-person
- **Final Exam (35%)** | Open-notes/open-books. It will cover all lectures and readings from midterm to the end of the semester. In-person.
- **Research Paper (20%)** | The methodology on how to write this paper (based on the “three worlds”) will be taught during the semester.

(RS2201 Old Testament) Course Journal Entries

Students are highly encouraged to submit **at least 5 course journal entries** in the course of the semester. *This is the minimum. You are highly encouraged to submit more than 5 journal entries for a better grade.* A journal entry will be about any topic that was covered either in the readings or the lectures. It **can have** the following components: [1] ‘Points that **stood out to you** and why’ *accompanied by your critical reflections, comments, and even questions* (remember, if a particular point “strikes you,” it is because you need to hear that at this point in your life; [2] Regardless of whether they “stood out” to you or not, write down—what you think—are the most important objective points in the topic covered, *accompanied by some critical reflections.*

What I am particularly trying to observe in this exercise is the student’s critical reaction to material encountered in their reading or in the class lectures. It is **not enough** just to list down things without a short critical reflection. This critical reaction may take several possible forms (or a combination of the following): a question, further elaboration on a topic, statement of concurrence or disagreement with one’s reasons for doing so, sharing of a topic which came to mind occasioned by the reading, a personal reflection, etc. The model for this journal entry is the opinion section (editorials) of newspapers, serious journals or blog sites.

This category makes up 15% of your final grade. However, if you go beyond the minimum and do this project well (that means: more entries, more depth and elaboration in the individual entries), I will give you extra credit that will go toward your final grade.

[Length of Each Journal Entry] An entry does not have to be long. The expected length of a single journal entry is normally the amount equivalent to a full page (double-space, letter-size page / somewhere between 200-300 words). *But you’re always free to write more.*

IMPORTANT: You have to submit a critical reaction note within a week **after** a topic is covered in class. When a new topic is introduced in the next class, I will no longer accept journal entries of previous older topics. The rationale for this rule is that I would like you to work regularly on this reflective and introspective exercise and NOT CRAM at the end.

Form of Submission of Course Journal Entries

I will provide a weekly Microsoft form at our MS Teams form to submit your journal entries

Class Attendance & Participation

Class attendance will be taken at every meeting in the form of a weekly quiz. If there is a valid reason for an absence, please inform the instructor through a PM (private message) on our Teams chat and the absence will not be counted against you (on a case to case basis, the instructor may request documentation). **TAKE NOTE: Only those who are physically present or those who have a legitimate excuse (made known to the instructor) can take this weekly quiz!**

Written Assignment / Research Paper

The written assignment is valued at 20% of your final grade. It is a paper (**at least** 2500 words, normally, 9-12 pages, Font size #12, letter-size, double-spaced) which should contain an analysis and evaluation of a specific passage from the Old Testament chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. A paper proposal should be submitted electronically to the instructor for approval on a date to be announced. Other details will be provided in the course of the semester.

Midterm and Final Examinations

The midterm and final examinations, will include multiple choice, short answer, objective-type and essay questions. It may also involve discussing selected passages from the Old Testament regarding the worlds within, behind and in front of the text. As a general rule, the questions in examinations (midterm and final exams) will not require memorization or rote learning unless they are questions of very important data regarding the Old Testament (to be pointed out before the exams). What will be most required are: a basic knowledge of certain key notions and aspects concerning the course material (to be pointed out explicitly before exams), an ability to interact with and discuss the worlds “within, behind and in front of” the texts, and an ability to appraise the biblical texts critically. Exams will be OPEN BOOKS/OPEN NOTES. ***The students will be required to express in their own words the most important concepts emphasized in the course lectures and readings.***

NOTE WELL: IT WILL BE AN OPEN BOOKS/OPEN NOTES EXAM but conducted in-person with a fixed time limit (for those without special accommodation). A computer will be necessary during the final exam period. You will be asked open-ended questions that would require you stating IN YOUR OWN WORDS what we studied and learned during the semester. Engagement with course materials IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR in your answers. ***If I see that you are not engaging with WHAT WE STUDIED in this course, I will just assume that you have used AI (or other sources) and this negative assessment will be reflected in a low evaluation or non-acceptance of your answer.***

IMPORTANT - MANDATORY REQUIREMENT: For your answers in the final examination, I WILL NOW REQUIRE YOU TO MENTION EXPLICITLY the main sources where you are getting your answers from. This will take the form of CITING THE WEEK NUMBERS of the class resources that you are basing your answers on.

OTHER MATTERS

Accommodation for Medical & Non-Medical Reasons

Please inform yourselves about the processes regarding accommodation for various reasons. Documentation about either medical or non-medical academic accommodation is normally submitted to the Academic Dean's Office and not to the instructor.

Use of Electronic Devices / General Class Etiquette

At lectures, computers are allowed for purposes that are directly related to the course. Using electronic devices for other purposes (e.g. social networking, chatting, etc.) is strictly prohibited. The instructor will call the attention of students who, he suspects, are engaged in non-course-related activities.

Please see to it at all times that your behaviour during class hours is not disruptive to anyone (instructor or fellow-students).

Academic Honesty & Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are expected to know the policies and protocols about them.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Nevertheless, all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com .

Assigned Readings & Schedule

Readings will be assigned from both the course textbook and the Bible itself. The attached schedule lists a tentative progression of topics with corresponding readings. Passages and readings from the Bible can be assigned throughout the course.

Students are expected to cover the assigned readings before the class period of every week. Assigned readings are essential to your successful completion of the course, both for comprehending lecture topics and completing assignments and examinations.

Some Online Resources to Note:

Take note of the resources I will put on OWL-Brightspace!

Other Websites to Note:

- Electronic New Testament Educational Resources (ENTER) site < <http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Links.htm> >
- New Revised Standard of the Bible online site (NRSV) < <http://bible.oremus.org/> >
- Bible Odyssey (through the Society of Biblical Literature): <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/>

Other resources will be introduced in the course of the semester

Good luck and if you have any other concerns, know that I'm always available to discuss them personally with you.

JK Kato

READ CAREFULLY! Some other noteworthy points on how this course will be conducted this Fall Semester 2026

1. **[OWL-Brightspace and Microsoft Teams]** We will be using extensively these two platforms: OWL-Brightspace RS2201F and Microsoft Teams Channel for this course named **RS2201 [2026]**. Think of BRIGHTSPACE as a kind of "storage cabinet" where I will put documents in the "Resources" folder. The Microsoft teams channel is where we can interact more actively using the chat and whiteboard. I will also use the 'Assignments' function for quizzes and tests. All Western students have access to Microsoft products so you have to login to Microsoft using your Western account first.
2. **[Link to Microsoft Teams]** I will send an announcement when you can join our Teams. / Here is a tutorial on how to join an MS Team with a code:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ghK8kG2yFbo>
3. **[Learn the Functions to be Used at MS Teams]** IMPORTANT! Please familiarize yourself with how to use Teams, especially, **[1] the chat function; [2] the General announcements section; [3] the 'Assignments' section where you'll have your weekly quizzes and course journal forms.** A useful online tutorial for Teams is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-UfAvO18Uc>

Topics to be covered (tentative)

Note Well: *The readings will be made available in this course's OWL-Brightspace website [Resources-Readings folder]*. A complete list of readings will be given to the students at the beginning of the semester. Specific readings & passages from the Old Testament can be assigned as we progress through the course.

Week #	Tentative Date	Topics to be covered in lectures and readings
1	Sept 10	Preliminaries General Intro. to the Old Testament/Jewish Scriptures The Ancient Near Eastern World Worlds “behind” “within” “in front of” texts
2	Sept 17	Overview: Israel’s History, Worldview, Image of God / 2nd Temple Judaism
3	Sept 24	Torah 1: Genesis
4	Oct 1	Torah 2: Exodus
5	Oct 8	Torah 3: “The Law” Leviticus, Numbers
	Oct 15	FALL READING WEEK
	Oct 22	MIDTERM EXAMINATION
6	Oct 29	Deuteronomistic History 1: Deuteronomy Nationhood, Warriors, Monarchy Joshua, Judges
7	Nov 5 <i>Essay Proposal Due</i>	Deuteronomistic History 2 1 & 2 Samuel, 1& 2 Kings
9	Nov 12	Prophets 1 Prophets (Nevi'im) – Prophecy in Israel Prophets of the North - The Assyrian Crisis
10	Nov 19	Prophets 2 The Babylonian Threat The Exile and After
11	Nov 26	Writings 1 The Writings / Postexilic Israel / Psalms and Poetry
12	Dec 3	Writings 2 Wisdom in Israel Toward New Testament Times

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the “Special Examination” (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a multiple exam situation (i.e., you are scheduled to write more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

Good2talk is an online and phone resource for students, available 24/7, with services in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a Social Worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

6. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. **Check with you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality_Reports_-_TurnItIn.html.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

7. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

8. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

9. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.