

Course title: History and Culture of the Biblical World	Credit number: 4
Type of lessons: seminar format	
Number of seminars: 2 hours per week	
Type of evaluation: research paper	
Place in curriculum: spring term	
Course prerequisites: none	
Course description:	
Course content:	
<p>The course focuses on three main topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The archaeology, political, economic and social history of Ancient Palestine ca. 1500 BC – 130 AD. This long period over a millennium covers the so-called biblical history from the prologue (the ancestor traditions) until the last Jewish revolt after the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem (Bar Kokhba). 2) The religion and culture of ancient Israel. 3) Second Temple Judaism and Christian beginnings. 	
Learning objectives:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <u>Contextual Bible Study</u>: Biblical texts reflect on experiences of real people, and for their adequate interpretation students should get in-depth understanding of everyday life in Ancient Israel. 2) <u>'Past to Present' Approach</u>: students should learn to evaluate Biblical events and demands in their original context and build this information into their own theological reasoning. 	
Required and optional reading	
(The 3-5 most important required and optional pieces):	
Required reading (author, title, year of publication, place of publication, publisher)	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coogan, Michael D. (Ed.): <i>The Oxford History of the Biblical World</i>. NY, Oxford University Press, 1998. 2. Anderson, Bernhard W. – Bishop, Steven – Newman, Judith: <i>Understanding the Old Testament (5th Edition)</i>. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006. 3. Aharoni, Yohanan – Avi-Yonah, Michael – Rainey, Anson F. – Safrai, Ze'ev – Notley, Steven R.: <i>The Carta Bible Atlas (5th Edition)</i>. Jerusalem, Carta, 2011. 	
Optional reading	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selected entries from Bible lexicons: <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary Vols. 1-6.</i>, Doubleday, 1992; <i>The New Interpreter's Bible Dictionary Vols. 1-5.</i>, Abingdon, 2009). 2. Lieu, Judith M. – Rogerson, J. W.: <i>The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies</i>. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008. 3. Miller, Patrick D.: <i>The Religion of Ancient Israel</i>. Louisville, Kentucky Westminster John Knox Press, 2000. 	
Course syllabus:	

Week 1 – Setting the stage. Archaeological research in the land(s) of the Bible. Geography, archaeological periods and terminology. History of research: oriental and Palestinian studies; Biblical Archaeology.

Week 2 - Palestine in the Bronze Age. The Ancient Near East in the second and first millennia BC. Palestine in the Amarna Age.

Week 3 – Early Israel in Palestine. Tribes, nomads and their lifestyle in the Ancient Near East. The religion and culture of the ancestors. The origin of Yahwism.

Week 4 – State formation and cities in Ancient Israel. Issues of leadership from chiefdoms to monarchy. City, temple, dynasty (cultural analysis and spheres of influence).

Week 5 – Ancient Israelite society. The royal household. Scribes, priests, prophets. Village society, animal husbandry. Widows, orphans.

Week 6 – The neighbors of Israel. Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Phoenicians and Arameans. Their influence on Israel and Judah in the Iron Age.

Week 7 – World powers of the Iron Age. Assyrians and Babylonians: capital cities, culture. The phenomena of ancient empires.

Week 8 – Ancient Near Eastern texts and the Bible. Ebla, Nuzi, Mari, Ugarit, Tell el-Amarna; monumental inscriptions and archival documents (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan).

Week 9 – Ancient Israelite religion(s). El, YHWH, Baal. Goddesses in ancient Israel. The problem of syncretism. Religious reforms in the Bible.

Week 10 – Archaeology and Culture of Hellenistic and Roman Palestine. Alexander the Great and the beginnings of Hellenism. The Maccabees. Herod the Great.

Week 11 – Everyday life in Early Roman Palestine. The influence of Roman occupation. Peasants, fishermen, masons: the life of ordinary people in Roman Palestine. Palaces and luxury. Political parties, sects.

Week 12 – Texts from the desert: The Dead Sea Scrolls. The settlement of Khirbet Qumran. The discovery of the scrolls. Qumran and the history of the biblical text.

Week 13 – Jews and Christians in Roman Society. Jews and Christians in the major cities of the Roman Empire. The Jewish war and the Bar Kokhba revolt. Flavius Josephus, Philo, Suetonius, Tacitus.

Course instructor in charge: Dr. habil. Előd Hodossy-Takács, university associate professor

Additional course instructor(s): –