

William Propp
Winter, 2013

HINE 112A
GREAT STORIES FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE

Course aim: to cultivate an enhanced appreciation for the techniques of ancient Israelite literature, through comparison with other ancient and modern narratives. All stories will be read in English; students with advanced knowledge of Hebrew (Judaic Studies 102 or equivalent) may enroll for 5 units in HINE 112a. Topic for 2014: the Tragedy of Saul.

Instructor: William Propp. Office HSS 4012; phone 534-6187; email wpropp@ucsd.edu. Office hours: MonWed 10-11.

Required Readings:

1. The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible/Tanakh (any translation)
2. Adele Berlin, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (at UCSD bookstore)
3. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (at UCSD bookstore)
4. E-reserves code is **wp112a**

Assignments and Grading:

1. 2-page (ca. 600-word) literary analysis (5%)
2. Same paper rewritten and expanded into 3-4 pp. (ca. 600-800 words) (20%)
3. Choose a biblical story (ca. 15-50 verses) and rewrite it from another character's viewpoint (or characters' viewpoints), also changing the narration as necessary. Submit a one-page (ca. 300-word) commentary explaining your new version as Alter or Berlin might (30%).
4. 5-page (ca. 1,500-word) analysis of another biblical story, 15-50 verses long (30%)
5. Biblical literacy midterm (10%)
6. Class participation (5%)

N.B. For assignments 1, 2 and 4, you must submit a marked-up first draft along with your final draft. If you have a special research-paper requirement for your college, see me.

Attendance:

You and I have a standing social engagement three times a week. If you are going to stand me up (or drop the course), please have the courtesy to email me. I will likewise contact you if I cannot make it. Repeated “no-shows” will be disastrous for your participation grade.

1. 1/6 **Introduction**

Discussion: what is the Bible; how to cite it; who were the Israelites?
Basic Geography

Terms: Bible, exegesis, canon, Tanakh (Torah [Pentateuch]-Nevi'im [Prophets]-Ketuvim [Writings]), Old Testament, Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha, A.D./B.C./C.E./B.C.E., Jew, Israelite, Hebrew, Aramaic, God/Elohim/LORD/Yahweh, Qumran, Septuagint, LXX, Midrash, United Kingdom of Saul, David and Solomon, the separation of Israel and Judah, Assyrian and Babylonian conquests, Covenant, Temple, sacrifice, kingship

***Assignment (due class 3):** write a 500-600-word literary analysis of either Genesis 4:1-16 or Exodus 2:11-14. **Do no research** (you're on your honor here). You must submit a marked-up penultimate (not “rough”) draft.*

2. 1/8 **Basic Concepts and Assumptions**

Reading: Levitt Kohn and Moore, chaps. 1-2; Alter pp. xvi-xlvi (e-reserves)

Discussion: What is a literary approach to the Bible? Does it differ from traditional Bible Study? What special challenges confront a translator from Hebrew to English? What are the advantages of prior knowledge of the Hebrew Bible? What are the disadvantages? How can you protect yourself? Does religious conviction matter? Can one be an atheist biblical scholar? Who should not take this course?

3. 1/10 **Biblical Accounts in Light of Modern Discoveries**

Readings:

Genesis chaps. 6-9 (version in your Bible **and** Friedman's version on e-reserve, in that order)

Gilgamesh tablet XI (e-reserve)

Exodus chaps. 1-3 (Propp's translation plus comments (e-reserves))

4. 1/13 **Characters**

Reading: Berlin, 13-42

5. 1/15 **Viewpoint**
Reading: Berlin, 43-82, 135-139
6. 1/17 **Modern vs. Biblical Narrative**
Reading: the Book of Jonah
Father Mapple's Sermon (e-reserves)
7. 1/22 **Literary Convention**
Reading: Alter, 3-62
8. 1/24 **Narrative Techniques**
Reading: Alter, 63-113
9. 1/27 **The Bible's Reticence**
Reading: Alter, 114-189
10. 1/29 **Applied Biblical Storytelling**
Reading: Genesis 22
Discussion: how might a modern writer tell the same story? From whose perspective?
***Assignment (due class 1/31):** Choose a biblical story (ca. 15-50 verses) and rewrite it (in the biblical style!) from another character's viewpoint (or characters' viewpoints), also changing the narration as necessary. Submit a one-page (ca. 300-word) commentary explaining your new version as Alter or Berlin might. Be as creative as you need to be.*
- 1/31 **Biblical literacy quiz** (based on Levitt Kohn, Moore)
- 2/3 How to write
- 2/5 How to write contd. (?)

For the rest of the course, we will slowly read the Story of Saul (1 Samuel chaps. 8-2 Samuel 1). Come to class each time prepared with 3 things you noticed by reading slowly that would otherwise have escaped your attention, or with 3 questions.

The re-write of your first paper is due on 2/14; the second paper is due the last class session. There is no final exam.

Key passages in Alter:

20-21 “Accustomed as we are...verbal formulas?”

32-33 “From this distance...God’s universality.”

35-36 “Let us direct...host of other characters.”

47-62 entire chapter

65-68 “In regard to the proportions...interior speech or dialogue.”

74-75 “From all I have said...force of language.”

79-80 “Of the two other general...time of the story proper.”

91-94 “Up to this point...*master, slave, and house.*”

95-97 “1.*Leitwort*...trial in the wilderness.)”

97-101 “Such attention is particularly crucial...obscure warning.”

114-126 “How does the Bible...typical methods of presentation.”

178-189 entire chapter