Biblical Prophecy
The Book of Jeremiah
NEJS 107A - Fall 2018
Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM
Lown Center for Judaic Studies 103

Instructor: Dr. Nathan Mastnjak
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I. Course Description

The prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible pose a particular critical challenge. While prophetic divination is known from elsewhere in the ancient world, the biblical prophetic books are without precedent in their literary complexity and scope. This course will approach the unique phenomenon of ancient Israelite literary prophecy through a close reading of the Book of Jeremiah in Hebrew. Attention will be given to its composition, relationship to other texts, manuscript history, ideology, and themes.

This course combines the exegesis of primary texts in Biblical Hebrew, critical readings of biblical scholarship, and the analysis of manuscript variants. The goal is the development of proficiency in professional research skills.

II. Required Texts

_biblia hebraica stuttgartensia_ – you must read from this book and not from a computer

All other readings will be distribution electronically

Recommended: the purchase of at least one commentary on Jeremiah is recommended (see recommended resources below)

III. Goals

Through engagement with the course materials, assignments, and each other, students will:

1. Gain expertise in biblical prophetic literature and especially the book of Jeremiah.

2. Advance in the mastery of the skills necessary for biblical philology (linguistic analysis, close reading, critical methodologies).

3. Achieve independence in the pursuit and communication of biblical scholarship.
IV. Course Requirements

1. Preparation/Participation—20%

Using commentaries and standard reference works, you will come to class prepared to read, translate, and discuss the texts (both primary and secondary) that you read prior to our class meeting. You should be able to analyze all the grammatical features of the text and discuss key interpretive issues.

2. Weekly presentations—30%

Beginning in week two, students will prepare a 10-15 minute presentation each week. These presentations will be of two types. Three times during the semester, students will present a Reading Report on a secondary source reading. All students will need to prepare for all secondary readings, but the student giving a reading report will be responsible for preparing an outline of this reading for the rest of the class (to disseminate before the day we discuss it in class) and for leading the discussion of this reading in class. Sign up on the first day of class for your selections.

In every week that you do not present a Reading Report, you will prepare a presentation on some aspect of the text. Students should address the weekly Presentation Prompts in the schedule below. This presentation is an opportunity to engage deeply with one feature or phenomenon in the text, to try out possible research topics, and to learn from each other in a truly collaborative seminar environment.

3. Outlines—5%

Using English translations, you will prepare two content outlines of the book of Jeremiah, one based on the MT, and the other based on the LXX. These will be due the second and third weeks of the semester, respectively. NOTE: the Oracles against the Nations (46-51 in the MT) must be divided according to nation. The outlines should be no more than 2-4 pages.

Due:
- MT Outline: Fri., Week 2
- LXX Outline: Fri., Week 4

4. Paper presentation—15%

You will research a topic related to the book of Jeremiah or prophetic literature more broadly conceived. In the final week of class, you will give a 20-minute presentation on your research. You must submit to me, in writing, your paper topic by week 10.
5. Research Paper—30%

You will turn your talk into a 15-20 page (double-spaced) research paper.

Those of you also enrolled in NEJS 110b Readings in the Hebrew Bible-Ezekiel may elect to prepare a single paper that will fulfill the paper requirements for both courses. Both instructors must approve your topic. If you choose this option, your paper should be 20-25 pages (double-spaced).

Due: Fri., week 16.

V. Other Policies

Academic Honesty: You must complete all assignments alone. In your writing, you must follow rules of attribution, meaning that you must cite all sources consulted in preparing your papers. As stated in the Student Handbook, “Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort.” Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are no credit for the work in question, failure in the course, and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the University.

Electronic devices: Students are permitted to use a laptop or ipad (or similar) device in class for two purposes and two purposes only: looking at readings assigned for class and taking notes. When reading/translating Hebrew, however, students must read from the BHS. Students may not use devices for looking at social media (e-mail, facebook, twitter, etc.) or other internet use. Cell-phones may not be used for any purpose. Recording of class in any format is also not permitted without prior consent of the professor for the specific session. Under no circumstance may a recorded session or any portion thereof be shared or distributed.

Students with documented disabilities: Students with disabilities certified by the Coordinator of Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs and First Year Services will be given reasonable accommodations to complete required assignments. Disabilities that are not documented and approved by the Office of Academic Affairs will not be given accommodations.

Late Assignments: Papers submitted late may suffer a 1/3 grade deduction per day late. For example, a paper that would have received a grade of A on the assigned date would receive an A minus if submitted one day late, a B plus if submitted two days late, and so on.

Preparation time: Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).
VI. Course Schedule

Week 1. Introduction to the Course

Primary Text: Jeremiah 1

Scholarship:


Week 2. The Deuteronomistic Redaction

Primary Text: Jeremiah 2

Scholarship:


Due: Outline of the contents of MT Jeremiah.

Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.
Week 3. The Poetic Oracles

Primary Text: Jeremiah 3

Scholarship:


Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.

Presentation Prompt (alternate): Discuss the possible relationship of one portion of this text with another text or tradition outside the book of Jeremiah. What is the nature of the relationship? If possible, discuss its function in the chapter. How does your chosen passage relate to the rest of the chapter as a whole?

Week 4. The Temple Sermon

Primary Text: Jeremiah 7

Scholarship:
Tuesday: no class


Due: Outline of the contents of LXX Jeremiah.

Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.
**Week 5. Jeremiah and the Davidic Monarchy**

**Primary Text:** Jeremiah 21:11-22:28

**Scholarship:**

**Presentation Prompt:** Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.

**Week 6. Prophetic Gender/Prophetic Lament**

**Primary Text:** Jeremiah 11

**Scholarship:**


**Presentation Prompt:** Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.
Week 7. The MT and LXX of Jeremiah I

Primary Text: Jeremiah 25 (MT)

Scholarship:


Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.

Week 8. The MT and LXX of Jeremiah II

Primary Text: Jeremiah 25 (LXX). NOTE: we will compare the LXX to the MT line by line. For this session only you are allowed to read from a computer.

Scholarship:


Presentation Prompt: What strikes you as most significant or interesting about the differences between the LXX and MT here? How do the differences in these passages affect how the two books are read as books?
Week 9. The Book of Consolation

Primary Text: Jeremiah 31

Scholarship:


Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.

Week 10. The Prophet and the Scribe

Primary Text: Jeremiah 36

Scholarship:


Presentation Prompt: What is interesting or significant about the treatment of scribes in this narrative?

Presentation Prompt (alternate): How does the LXX differ from the MT in its description of the scribes? How might we account for these differences?

Week 11. The Aftermath Narrative

Primary Text: Jeremiah 42:1-43:7 (reread all of 40-44 in English)

Scholarship:


Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of this passage and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah as a whole.
Week 12. The Oracles against the Nations

**Primary Text:** Jeremiah 51

**Scholarship:**

**Presentation Prompt:** Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.

Week 13. The Fall of Jerusalem

**Primary Text:** Jeremiah 52

**Scholarship:**


Friday: no class

**Presentation Prompt:** What strikes you as most significant or interesting about the differences between the LXX and MT here?

Week 14. NO CLASS (SBL/THANKSGIVING BREAK)
Week 15. Jeremiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Primary Text: 4Q385a (The Apocryphon of Jeremiah C)

Scholarship:

Presentation Prompt: Select any feature of the primary and present an in-depth interpretation of it. The feature that you chose may be a short passage or it may be a theme, image, or idea. Relate the chosen feature to the passage as a whole and to what you know of the book of Jeremiah. Consider relating the chosen feature to ideas, texts, or phenomena outside Jeremiah.

Week 16. Presentations
V. Recommended Resources

Commentaries


Monographs


*Key Articles (not otherwise assigned)*
