



Course Syllabus

OTS 501 L1

Old Testament Introduction 1: Genesis - Esther

Fall 2025

Class Information

Day and Time: Tu 4:45 – 7:15

Room Number: E207

Contact Information

Instructor Name: David Brooks

Instructor Email: dbrooks@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 214-818-1324

Instructor Office Hours: MW 12:30 – 2:30 and by appointment

Course Description and Prerequisites

An advanced study of the books of Genesis through Esther, emphasizing the historical framework of the Old Testament, problems of interpretation, and the contribution of these books to biblical theology and godly living

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course you should be able to:

- A. Construct a timeline of the major OT events and characters in these 17 books;
- B. Locate on a map the major OT sites;
- C. Discuss the issues relating to the historical background, purpose, structure, genres, and message of each book;
- D. Evaluate and articulate in a clear and scholarly manner the critical issues of the Pentateuch and Historical Books, such as origination, composition, and unity of the books;
- E. Describe the general content and major theological emphases of the Pentateuch and Historical Books;
- F. Apply the major theological principles from these OT books to biblical theology (especially how they prepare for the advent of Christ) and systematic theology and integrate them into your worldview.

Required Textbooks

Merrill, Eugene H., Mark F. Rooker, and Michael A. Grisanti. *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011. (ISBN: 9780805440317)

Walton, John H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. (978-0801027505)

Course Requirements and Assignments

- A. Tests on material from the professor's presentations and Merrill, Rooker, and Grisanti's textbook (MRG). Tests will be taken on Canvas.
- B. Quiz: Map and chronology: Identify the countries, cities, bodies of water, and topographic regions of Israel and the ANE on a map and locate on a timeline the people and events listed on the quiz.
- C. Book review of John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006). The complete description and rubric are available on Canvas. Submit the review on Canvas.
- D. Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) religions. In a 6- to 8-page paper describe the religion of either Canaan, Egypt, or Babylon during OT times. The complete description and rubric are available on Canvas. Submit the review on Canvas.
- E. The Christian and the Law (of Moses). A 5- to 6-page paper examining the relevance of the Mosaic Law to the Christian. The details of the assignment are on Canvas. The paper is to be submitted on Canvas, also.
- F. Textbook reading report. Report how much of the textbooks you read (MRG and *The Old Testament Story*). For MRG the requirement is for pp. 1-360 this semester.
- G. ☐ Read from the critical reading list below. When a book is listed, do not read the entire book, but the chapters designated in the books. The books are on reserve in the Wallace Library. Several of the reading selections are journal articles and can be accessed online or in the Wallace Library.
- Read at least 200 pages from the following reading list. For each article or chapter, write two paragraphs: one summarizing the main idea(s) of the scholar, with his reasons/evidence, and one giving your reaction to those ideas. Your reaction must include evidence supporting your opinion. Paragraphs should not exceed 200 words each (so, a maximum of 400 words per article or chapter).
 - Submit your report on Canvas of the chapters/articles read, the total amount of pages read, and the paragraphs summarizing the readings. Remember: you only need to read a total of 200 pages, not all of the following.
1. Bimson, John J. *Redating the Exodus*. JSOT Supplements. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988.
 2. Childs, Brevard. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1979). "The Discipline of Old Testament Introduction," 27-45.
 3. Demsky, A. "Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah? The Synchronistic Approach." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65 (1994): 1-20.
 4. Hess, Richard. *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007. "Narrative and Legal Strands of the Pentateuch," 141-70; and "Priestly and Cultic Strands of the Pentateuch," 171-208.
 5. Kitchen, Kenneth A. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003. "The Empire Strikes Back—Saul, David, and Solomon," 81-158; or "Humble Beginnings—around and in Canaan," 159-240.
 6. Long, V. P. *The Art of Biblical History*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. "History and the Genre(s) of the Bible: Is the Bible a History Book?" 27-57.
 7. Shea, W. H. "Esther and History." *Concordia Journal* 13 (1987): 234-48.
 8. Whybray, R. N. *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*. JSOT Supplements. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987. "The New Approach," 133-36; "The Meaning of 'Tradition'," 136-39; "The Study of Oral Tradition," 139-84.

9. Wood, Bryant. "Did the Israelites Conquer Jericho?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March-April 1990): 44-57.
10. Younger, K. Lawson. *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990. "Israelite Conquest Accounts," 197-240.

Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
 - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

Attendance & Financial Aid:

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
 - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
 - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
 - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

Census Period Attendance Requirement:

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

Examples of Qualifying Activities:

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

Important Note:

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

Canvas:

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
 - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas

- Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
- Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
- Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
- Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
- Use Zoom in Canvas for all "live" (synchronous) class sessions

Important Note:

Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at 844-358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour

D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour
<i>Weighted grading for this course:</i>		
1.	Tests	45%
2.	Quiz	5%
3.	Book review	10%
4.	ANE religion	10%
5.	Christian and the Law	10%
6.	Reading report of the textbook (MRG)	10%
7.	Reading/summary critical reading	10%
	Total	100%

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

(Instructors may use, modify or replace these guidelines as appropriate for their course.)

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.

- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI re-writing tools – tools that take what you’ve written and help make it clearer, such as what Grammarly offers. However, you must cite Grammarly or other sources in your assignment/paper and submit both original draft of paper and the final paper.
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the new AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college’s academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student’s course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student’s work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students’ institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library's databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu or visit www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

Week	Date	Subject	Reading Assignments	Written Assignments
1	Aug 19	Syllabus, geography, historical overview	If using digital book, find the MRG chapters corresponding to	

Week	Date	Subject	Reading Assignments	Written Assignments
			pages on Amazon “see inside” Table of Contents	
2	Aug 26	History of OT criticism, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch	MRG 1-70	
3	Sept 2	Genesis	MRG 73-121	Geography and history quiz
4	Sept 9	Genesis	MRG 123-89	
5	Sept 16	Exodus		Test 1: Prolegomena - Genesis
6	Sept 23	Exodus	MRG 190-214	Book review
7	Sept 30	Leviticus and Numbers	MRG 217-50	
8	Oct 7	Deuteronomy	MRG 251-68	ANE religions
9	Oct 13 - 17	Student Development Week—No classes meet		
10	Oct 21	Joshua	MRG 271-87	Test 2: Exodus - Deuteronomy
11	Oct 28	Judges and Ruth	MRG 288-306	
12	Nov 4	Samuel	MRG 307-17	The Christian and the OT Law
13	Nov 11	Kings	MRG 319-29	
14	Nov 18	Chronicles	MRG 330-42	Test 3: Joshua - Kings
Week of Nov 24 - 28: Reading Week and Thanksgiving—No classes meet				
15	Dec 2	Ezra-Nehemiah, and Esther	MRG 343-60	
16	Dec 9	Final Exam		Final Exam: Prolegomena - Esther; Reading reports (2)

Selected Bibliography

Archer, Gleason L., Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. 4d edition. Chicago: Moody, 2007.

Beitzel, Barry. *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible*. Chicago: Moody, 2009.

Childs, Brevard S. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

Coogan, Michael D. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster: Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011

Craigie, Peter C. *The Old Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1986.

- Fretheim, Terence E. *The Pentateuch*. Interpreting Biblical Texts, ed. Gene M. Tucker and Charles B. Cousar. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. Pp. 19-170.
- Gaebelein, Frank E., ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vols. 1-4. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979-88.
- Gower, Ralph. *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*. 2d ed. Chicago: Moody, 2005.
- Hamilton, Victor. *Handbook on the Pentateuch*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Harrison, Roland K. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2d ed. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.
- Hoerth, Alfred J., Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds. *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999.
- Howard, David. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody, 1993.
- Kaiser, Walter C. *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998.
- LaSor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush. *Old Testament Survey*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Livingston, G. Herbert. *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.
- Longman, Tremper, III, and Raymond B. Dillard. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.
- Matthews, Victor H., and James C. Moyer. *The Old Testament: Text and Context*. 2d edition. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.
- Merrill, Eugene H. *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991.
- Merrill, Eugene H. *Kingdom of Priests*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Schultz, Samuel J. *The Old Testament Speaks*. 5d edition. New York: HarperOne, 1999.
- Wegner, Paul D. *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1999.
- Wood, Leon. *A Survey of Israel's History*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986.
- Yamauchi, Edwin M. *Persia and the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1990.
- Young, Edward J. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.