

REL 312
Ecstasy, Inspiration and Artifice:
Prophetic Experience and Prophetic Word
in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond
Fall 2009

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Office Hours: T-Th 1:00-2:00pm / W 1:00-2:00pm / F 11:00am-1:00pm or by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course we will study the phenomenological and sociological dimensions of prophetic activity, contextualize biblical prophecy within its ancient Near Eastern setting, and explore the various concepts of prophecy – and related notions of revelation, authority, etc. – to be found in the Hebrew Bible and in other texts and traditions. We will address the following kinds of questions: How do prophets claim authoritative, divine inspiration? What are the various ‘modes’ of prophetic expression? How do prophetic ‘speeches’ become prophetic ‘texts’? How much of prophecy is ‘inspiration’ and how much ‘artifice’ (not in its pejorative but its classical sense)? How does writing itself become a prophetic activity? And we will briefly chart the later development of notions of prophetic revelation as they unfold in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. We will also consider the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible from a modern perspective of social justice and liberation theology.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES:

- Use the basic vocabulary and methods of the academic study of religion
- Articulate clearly and knowledgeably the nature of biblical texts, the historical contexts in which they arose, and their scholarly interpretation
- Articulate clearly and knowledgeably major theological questions that have emerged in the history of tradition and the variety of answers that have been proffered for them
- Write respectfully about different religious traditions
- Articulate clearly and knowledgeably the role of religion in the manifold dimensions of social existence

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- New Revised Standard Version of the Bible
- [DP] David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002)
- [JO] Julia O'Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students will:

- Attend all classes and engage in critical discussion of the material for each class period. The importance of doing the readings and coming to class prepared for discussion cannot be overestimated, not least insofar as this will account for 15% of your final grade. Moreover, there will be weekly written responses to the readings that will be part of the participation grade.

Weekly Paragraphs: At the end of each Tuesday class session the professor will announce a question to guide student preparation of the next reading assignment. Students will write one paragraph in direct response to the question of around ten lines and no more than one page. The opening sentence should introduce the answer; the remaining sentences should articulate the answer via an interpretation of the assigned text(s). Also, students will compose one pertinent question in response to the reading. As an incentive for excellent writing, one percentage point of extra credit (to be added to the final grade) will be awarded to five students who write the best paragraphs on three randomly selected occasions. Often a copy of an excellent paragraph will be given to everyone at the next class, especially early in the semester, both as an exemplar and as a study aid. **Paragraphs must be posted to WebCT before each Thursday class and will not be accepted late.**

- Write one 12-14 page research paper on a topic of your choice (in consultation with the professor). The paper-writing process will consist of several successive drafts so that the final product is a well-revised and high quality paper. The paper is 30% of the final grade.
- Recite a prophetic text from memory (8-10 verses, minimum). 5% of final grade.

- Take a midterm and a final exam. Each 25% of final grade.

Summary of requirements and percentage points:

Participation	15%
Papers	30%
Recitation	5%
Midterm	25%
Final	25%

More on the papers: Writing is one of the most important – and one of the most difficult – things you must learn, and as such I take it quite seriously. Writing well requires foresight and planning, careful organization of the material, and the development of a compelling style or voice. Above all, it requires *practice*.

More on the Recitation: This may seem a bit odd, if not downright archaic to you – to have to memorize and recite a prophetic text. But it is one way in which to imagine not only the moment of prophetic speech, but also to experience one important way in which a prophetic message may have been passed along. It is also based on the simple fact that the spoken / heard word is a very different thing from the word on the page, and at the very least this exercise mixes things up a bit.

The passage should be a more-or-less distinct unit from one of the biblical prophets, it should be about 8-10 verses in length, and you should prepare it well ahead of time. You should recite it with feeling and any drama you can muster! Ideally the recitation will be in front of the entire class, though provisions will be made for those of you who are uncomfortable doing this.

Policy of Academic Honesty

The educational programs of California Lutheran University are designed and dedicated to achieve academic excellence, honesty and integrity at every level of student life. Part of CLU's dedication to academic excellence is our commitment to academic honesty. Students, faculty, staff and administration share the responsibility for maintaining high levels of scholarship on campus. Any behavior or act which might be defined as "deceitful" or "dishonest" will meet with appropriate disciplinary sanctions, including dismissal from the University, suspension, grade F in a course or various forms of academic probation. Policies

and procedures regarding academic honesty are contained in the faculty and student handbooks.

Plagiarism, cheating, unethical computer use and facilitation of academic dishonest are examples of behavior which will result in disciplinary sanctions.

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:

- word for word copying without using quotation marks or presenting the work as yours
- using the ideas or work of others without acknowledgement
- not citing quoted material. Students must cite sources for any information that is not either the result of original research or common knowledge.

Students with Disabilities

CLU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to **students with various documented disabilities** (physical, learning or psychological). If you are a student requesting accommodations for this course, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and register with the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities (Pearson Library, Center for Academic and Accessibility Resources, x3260) for the facilitation and verification of need. I will work closely together with you and your coordinator to provide necessary accommodations.

Course Evaluations Statement

All course evaluations are now conducted online. Your feedback is important to me and to the University. You will receive an email message when the website is open for your feedback. The link is: <http://courseval.callutheran.edu>

CLASS SCHEDULE – Assignments / readings due on the day listed

[1] Th Sept 3: Course Introduction – What is prophecy? What are prophets?

What is prophetic literature? How will we proceed in this course?

- Lecture: Prophetic Literature and the Hebrew Prophetic Canon

[2] T Sept 8: Prophetic Experience and Prophetic Authority in Israel

- Exodus 20, 31-35; Numbers 11-12; Deuteronomy 18, 34
- [JO] 1-27

[3] Th Sept 10: Ecstasies and other Prophets in Israel

- 1 Samuel 1-12, 19; 1 Kings, 19-21
- Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 37-49 [Web-CT]
- [DP] 1-18

[4] T Sept 15: Forms of Prophecy and Prophetic Literature in Israel

- [DP] 18-44
- Barton, *Oracles of God*, 141-53 [WebCT]

[5] Th Sept 17: Samuel, Redux

- 1 Samuel 1-10; Deuteronomy 17; 2 Samuel 7
- Barton, "Give Us a King!" [WebCT]
- Albright, "Samuel and the Beginnings..." [WebCT]

[6] T Sept 22: Other Early Prophets: Elijah, Elisha, and other Holy Madmen

- 1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 2-8 (read ch. 2 carefully)
- [DP] 226-36

[7] Th Sept 24: Speaking, Writing, Rewriting

- Clements, "Prophecy and the Prophets" [WebCT]

[8] T Sept 29: Isaiah of Jerusalem and the Call of the Prophet

- Isaiah 1-11
- [DP] 47-60

[9] Th Oct 1: Amos of Tekoa

- Amos (all of it – it's not very long)
- [DP] 184-89

[10] T Oct 6: Hosea

- Hosea (all of it – it's longer than Amos but not by much)
- [JO] 29-48; 63-75
- **PAPER ASSIGNMENT** – Topics Due

[11] Th Oct 8: Micah of Moresheth

- Micah
- [JO] 49-61

[12] T Oct 13: Nahum and Habakkuk

- Nahum
- [DP] 196-202
- [JO] 101-124

[13] Th Oct 15: Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 1-3; 18-19

- [DP] 97-103; 128-34

[14] T Oct 20: **NO CLASS – WORK ON PAPERS!**

[15] Th Oct 22: Jeremiah, Redux

- Jeremiah 25; 30-33; 36; 51; Damascus Document (handout)
- [JO] 77-100

[16] T Oct 27: Lamentations, the Letter of Jeremiah and Pseudepigraphy

- Lamentations; the Letter of Jeremiah
- **MIDTERM REVIEW SESSION**

[17] Th Oct 29: **MIDTERM**

[18] T Nov 3: Ezekiel son of Buzi

- Ezekiel 1-10; 28-29
- [DP] 137-56
- Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoires of My Nervous Illness* [WebCT]

[19] Th Nov 5: Ezekiel, Redux

- Ezekiel 37; 40-48
- [DP] 156-68
- [JO] 153-173

[20] T Nov 10: Haggai and Zechariah

- Haggai; Zechariah 1-8
- [DP] 205-09

[21] Th Nov 12: Jonah

- Book of Jonah (read carefully!)

FRIDAY NOV 13: FIRST DRAFT OF PAPER DUE BY 5PM

[22] T Nov 17: Malachi

- Malachi
- Blenkinsopp, "The Making of the Prophetic Canon" [WebCT]

[23] Th Nov 19: **NO CLASS – work on papers**

[24] T Nov 24: **NO CLASS – work on papers**

[25] Th Nov 26: **THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS**

SIGN UP FOR RECITATIONS – IN CLASS OR IN PRIVATE

[26] T Dec 1: Daniel and the Apocalyptic Tradition

- Daniel (esp. 7-12)
- Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End” [WebCT]
- **SECOND DRAFT OF PAPER DUE in class**

[27] Th Dec 3: Did Prophecy Cease?

- Levison, “Did the Spirit Withdraw from Israel?” [WebCT]

[28] T Dec 8: Some New Developments in the Prophetic Tradition

- Peshier Habakkuk; the Oven of Akhnai (handouts); 1 Corinthians 12-14
- Kugel, “David the Prophet” [WebCT]

[29] Th Dec 10: Film and Final Thoughts

- Scholem, “Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism” [WebCT]
- Film: *TBD*
- **FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER DUE IN CLASS**

FINAL EXAM – TBD