



TYNDALE
Seminary

**Course Syllabus
WINTER 2012**

**OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY AND HISTORY
OLDT 0511**

**JANUARY 10 TO APRIL 17, 2012
TUESDAYS, 1:00–3:50 PM**

INSTRUCTOR: DR. REBECCA G. S. IDESTROM

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Course Resource Page: <https://www.mytyndale.ca>

Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-3:00 PM,
Tuesdays, 4:15-5:30 PM, by appointment

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to provide the student with a general introduction to the historical, sociological and religious world in which the Old Testament was produced, as well as the discipline of Old Testament theology and the major theological emphases of the Old Testament.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Through this course, the student will learn the following:

A. Knowledge and Understanding

1. to be able to identify and describe the major theological streams within the Old Testament and their emphases.
2. to demonstrate a knowledge of key events within the history of Israel.
3. to demonstrate a knowledge of the contents of the three major canonical units of the Old Testament (Law, Prophets, Writings).
4. to be acquainted with the history of interpretation of the Old Testament, including current issues in Old Testament scholarship.
5. to demonstrate an understanding of the key issues in the discipline of Old Testament theology.

6. to appreciate the importance of knowing the theology of the Old Testament for understanding the New Testament.

B. Discipline-specific Skills

1. to be able to know and use the necessary tools, skills and various methods for interpreting the Old Testament.
2. to be able to do an inductive study on a biblical book.
3. to assess and evaluate various approaches taken to the Old Testament.
4. to critically evaluate books and articles written on the Old Testament.
5. to seek practical ways in which the message of the Old Testament can be appropriated in the life of the Church today.

C. Transferable Skills

1. to be able to use the available resources for studying the Old Testament.
2. to foster the ability to communicate effectively in writing and orally by participation in discussion groups.
3. to develop critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate and synthesize a wealth of material.
4. to learn self-disciplined study habits and the ability to meet fixed deadlines as set out by the course outline.
5. to foster a desire for life-long learning in the study of the Old Testament.
6. to develop a strategy for the contemporary appropriation of the Old Testament.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED TEXTS:

Richter, Sandra L. *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. ISBN # 978-0-8308-2577-6
 Wright, J. H. Christopher. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006. ISBN # 10: 0-8308-2571-1.

B. RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Wald, Oletta. [*The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*](#). Revised Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2002.
 House, Paul R. [*Old Testament Theology*](#). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998.
 LaSor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush. [*Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*](#). Second Edition. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The following written assignments and discussion groups will help foster the skills of critical analysis and exegesis, the ability to evaluate various approaches and perspectives taken to the Old Testament, and deepen the student's knowledge of the overall message of the Old Testament.

1. Book Review Discussion Groups (15 % of the final grade).

During the course of the semester the students will read and discuss the textbook by Sandra L. Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*. See below the instructions for the discussion groups. The discussion groups will be held on the following dates: January 24, January 31, February 7, 2012.

Book Review Discussion Groups Instructions:

During the course, there will be three in-class discussion times of approximately 30-40 minutes each. These discussions have five purposes:

- a. to challenge students to develop their critical, thinking skills.
- b. to enable students to improve their skills in developing and expressing theological arguments in a group context.
- c. to empower students to foster ability in leading fellow students in discussion.
- d. to have students take responsibility for their fellow students' education by mutually supporting one another.
- e. to encourage students to listen respectfully to views not their own.

Responsibilities of the student as group participant:

Having read the assigned chapters carefully for the day of the discussion groups, each student in the group should come prepared with some questions arising from their reading as well as some thoughtful reflections on the material. Some possible questions to ponder are: What struck you about the reading? What new and helpful insights did you find in the reading? Do you agree with Richter's views and argument? Do you find Richter convincing or are there weaknesses in her arguments? Each student also needs to report to the group whether they have read all or only some of the assigned chapters for that day. (Their answer needs to be taken into consideration when assigning a grade.)

After the discussion, each student will assign a participation grade for each member of the group and submit the grade to the teacher by emailing it to her or to her research assistant (grade from zero to five, with five being highest). Base the grade on the following criteria:

If the student's comments during the discussion reflected an informed reading of assigned material, allocate a higher grade.

- If the student has contributed their fair share (not too much, not too little), allocate a higher grade.
- Consider a grade of 4.5-5.0 if the individual has excelled with respect to the above two criteria.
- Consider giving a grade of 4 if the individual has contributed capably with respect to the above two criteria.
- If the student has dominated discussion in inappropriate ways, reduce their grade.
- If the student has not contributed or contributed only minimally, reduce their grade.
- If a student has contributed but their contributions were not informed by a careful reading of the material, reduce their grade.
- Has the discussion led to a better understanding of the textbook and to a critical interaction with it? If not, reduce the grade.
- If the student has not completed reading all the chapters assigned for that day, reduce their grade.

The average grade should be between 3.0-4.3. If the student has excelled, give a 4.7. If their contribution is outstanding, give a 5. If the student's contribution is less than adequate, give a grade of 2.5 or below.

All grades are confidential (leaders may give fraction grades: e.g., 3.7).

Discussion Group Schedule:

Discussion around Sandra Richter's book *The Epic of Eden*.

- **January 24, 2012** First Discussion Group: Introduction and chapters 1–3, pp. 15–91.
- **January 31, 2012** Second Discussion Group: Chapters 4–6, pp. 92–165.
- **February 7, 2012** Third Discussion Group: Chapters 7–9, plus Frequently Asked Questions, pp. 166–233.

2. Inductive Study (worth 30 % of the final grade) due February 28, 2012.

Do an inductive Study on one of the following books: Joshua or Judges, following the instructions below.

Inductive Study Guidelines:

The purpose of inductive studies is to draw you into intensive, direct study of the biblical text and to suggest a method of Bible study which can be used in any book. Inductive studies also provide background for detailed studies of individual passages and texts within the books which you examine. Avoid the use of annotated Bibles, commentaries and other reference works. However, you may use an atlas or Bible dictionary for place names or puzzling terms.

As a suggestion, first read the following sections in Oletta Wald's *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, on reserve in the library. Pay particular attention to the chart listing "[Specific Things to Observe](#)." On this chart, the point about "Repetition and Progression of Ideas" is important since the theme of a book is often related through repetition. Then do the following:

Read quickly through the biblical book noting references to places, dates and people. What patterns (or even lack of patterns) emerge from your study? (A photocopy of the book can help you in the process, so that you can mark the things that strike you as particularly important or unusual. You might even want to mark things on the photocopy with different colour pencils.) Then read the book again (or several times) in order to become thoroughly acquainted with the book. (You may even want to listen to the book read aloud by listening to it on a Bible CD). Note differences in literary style, e.g. poetry, biographical material (if any), sermonic material, etc. Note changes in person, whether in first or third person, speeches by the prophet, the Lord or other persons, etc.

Your study should be organized along the following sections:

1. Chapter Titles: Prepare your own table of contents to the book by giving short and distinctive captions to each chapter (do not give titles to smaller sections of each chapter). Do the captions as newspaper headlines. Be creative!
2. Structure and Genre: What major divisions can you discern in the book? How is the book structured? Look for paragraphs which belong together and therefore suggest the structure of the work. What types of material do you find in the book (genre)?
3. Themes: What are the major themes or topics of the book? What sub-themes are found in the text? Pay particular attention to repetitions of literary motifs and language. Ask yourself why these texts were preserved. What is the message of the book. What is the author's most pressing concerns? What is the book's dominant tone? Any exceptions? Support your answers with references to the text.
4. Questions and Future Projects: What questions emerge from your study? Take note of particularly intriguing, challenging or enigmatic passages that you may want to investigate further at a later date. What projects or topics would you like to explore further in the future?
5. Application: Formulate one or more generalizations arising from your study. What theological insights can be gleaned from the book? In what ways can you practically apply these truths in your life and in the life of the Church? Give specific suggestions. What ideas for preaching and teaching in the Church emerge from your study?

What to hand in:

You may use maps, diagrams or charts in presenting the results of your study. However, ten to twelve pages double-spaced (2500–3000 words) of written analysis is also expected, including answers to the questions posed above. Please note that this study should not be a detailed commentary on every chapter in the biblical book (then the study would be too long). Please summarize your results under different headings, like main themes, sub-themes, etc.

3. Reading Assignment (worth 20 %) due April 10, 2012.

The student will be given a list of required readings that will come from the required textbooks, the Bible, and selected articles or chapters found *on reserve in the library*. The student is expected to report that they have completed the readings, by keeping a record of what has been read and when it was completed. This record will be submitted along with the reflections on April 10 (see attached form). With some of the readings, the student is also required to respond to the reading by writing a reflective summary on the assigned reading. See specific instructions below.

Old Testament Reading:

Since this is a course that introduces the student to the Old Testament, it is important that the student becomes familiar with the Old Testament by reading it. Therefore, part of the required reading for this course is to read sections from the Old Testament. Please read Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Amos.

As part of your reading report, please comment on three texts from your reading of the Old Testament that you saw in a new light. State what struck you about them and why. Write one paragraph for each biblical text.

Pick two biblical characters which intrigued you in your reading of the Old Testament and write a prayer for each of them, as if you were that person (i.e. Noah, Abraham, Hagar, Miriam, Aaron, Hannah, David, Samuel, etc). Try to put yourself in their shoes and imagine what they would pray, based on what you know about them from the biblical account. Submit these prayers as part of your reading assignment.

Secondary Literature Reading:

Read the whole textbook, pages 21–535 by Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006).

You are to reflect on the reading of the textbook *The Mission of God* by Christopher Wright by submitting a four page double-spaced (approximately 1000 words) written response. In your report, pick two chapters from the textbook that you want to comment on specifically. What struck you about the reading of those chapters? What was helpful or problematic and why? In conclusion, evaluate the usefulness of the book overall by commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of it. For example, what are some things that you learned from it? What is Wright's approach and do you find this approach to doing Old Testament theology helpful? In what way has Wright's missional hermeneutic affected your reading of the Bible? How was this textbook helpful to you in general? What did it lack? What are some things that you wished that it had included? Support your answers with specific examples from the text (giving page numbers).

You also need to read all the articles and chapters listed below but give a written response to the readings written by Paul Copan and Philips Long only. For your reading report on the two readings, write a paragraph about one thing that may have struck you about the reading. Write a second paragraph giving a brief critique of the reading, indicating whether it was helpful or problematic, stating why. For each of the articles, you should not submit more than one page double-spaced (approximately 250 words per page).

Altogether the reading reports on the Old Testament, the textbook, and the articles/chapters will come to about 8 pages double-spaced (plus the length of the two prayers). Remember to include the completed reading report as well.

Please read the following articles/chapters found on reserve in the library and comment on the two chapters by Wright and Long:

- Read Chapter 1, pp. 11-57 and the Appendix, pp 548–559 in Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998).
- Read the following three chapters, Chapter 48 “Geography,” (pp. 619–631); Chapter 49 “The Chronological Puzzle,” (pp. 632–640); Chapter 50 “Archaeology,” (pp. 641–687) in William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament* (second edition; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996). You only need to read these chapters. No written response is necessary.
- Read “Authorship of the Pentateuch,” by T. D. Alexander (pp. 61-72) in T. A. Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003). You only need to read this chapter. No written response is required.
- Read Chapters 15–17, “Indiscriminate Massacre and Ethnic Cleansing? The Killing of the Canaanites” Part I, II, III pp.158–197 in Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011). Write your response to this reading.

- Read V. Philips Long, “History and Fiction: What is History?” in *The Art of Biblical History* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation; vol. 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 58–87. Write your response to this reading.

Please NOTE: Going over the allowable page limit by more than one page (or word count by 250 words) on any of the written assignments will result in a reduction in the grade.

4. Final Exam will be held on April 17, 2012 (worth 35 % of the final grade).

The exam will be based on the lectures given in class.

D. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

1. Your work should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- **Accuracy** (a fair and accurate presentation of scholarly judgment on the issues) – Is what I say correct? Is it valid? Have I understood the topic or question?
- **Critical Analysis** – Have I understood the main issues? Have I done sufficient research on the topic? Does my paper show critical reflection, interaction and dialogue with the biblical text and with authors writing on the subject?
- **Organization** – Does my paper follow a clear outline? Does my paper have a thesis statement? Is there a clear progression and development of an idea or an argument in the paper? Does my argument have a meaningful order?
- **Clarity** – Does what I say make sense? Will others clearly understand what I am seeking to express?
- **Good Grammar and Writing** – Is my paper clean of spelling mistakes? Is the text punctuated correctly? Does the sentence structure consistently adhere to basic rules of good grammar? Do I use inclusive language?
- **Well Documented** (thorough) – Is my work complete? Does my bibliography reflect sufficient research. Have I fully and accurately documented where I have relied upon the work of others? Have I provided complete information about my research sources? Will others be able to locate these sources on the strength of my documentation?

2. Matters of Style

You should submit written work in a style consistent with either the model outlined in [*The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*](#) (P. H. Alexander, et al, eds. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) or the [*Chicago Manual of Style Online*](#). For proper citation style, consult

the [Chicago-Style Quick Guide](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially [ch. 14](#). For citing scripture texts, refer to sections 10.46 to 10.51 and 14.253 to 14.254.

Written work ought to be free of spelling mistakes, punctuated correctly, and adhere to basic rules of grammar. It is expected that written work will be submitted in a clear, straight-forward style of academic prose (cf. the guidelines in Strunk and White, [Elements of Style](#)). Written work ought to betray clear organization, argument and coherent thought. The use of inclusive language is expected.

3. Plagiarism and Honesty

Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) current for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

In all work, you are obliged to pay careful attention to matters of intellectual property, honesty and integrity. Plagiarism is to be avoided at all costs and will not be tolerated in any form whatsoever. Plagiarism, by definition, is the use of the work of another person without proper acknowledgement. Examples of plagiarism include (but are not limited to) the following: copying a sentence or part of a sentence from a book or article without using quotation marks and citing the source; rephrasing another person's words without giving credit for the idea that you have borrowed by citing the source; copying the work of someone else and handing it in as your own. It is assumed that each assignment required for this course will be written independently. Please note that plagiarism in any form on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "F" for the assignment with no opportunity for resubmission.

4. Title Page and Documentation

The title page for all written work ought to include the following:

The title of the paper, name of the course, name of the professor, date of submission, and your name (if you have a Tyndale Campus mailbox, this must also appear on the title page).

Ensure that you have accurately and fully documented sources used in your paper (footnotes are preferred, endnotes or, in the case of a review. parenthetical references may be used). Documentation and notes should be consistent with the model provided in [The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies](#) or the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#).

5. Late Assignments

The assumption is, of course, that all written work will be submitted on and before the corresponding due dates. Should this not occur, the following policy

shall govern the evaluation of your work. For every week late, the grade will be reduced by 5 %, a half a letter grade (i.e. one week late: 82 % A- becomes 77 % B+; two weeks late, 82 % becomes 72 % B-, etc.). Please note that the deduction is accumulated weekly, not daily, and so a student will receive the same penalty whether the assignment is one or six days late.

Extensions will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, the hospitalization of yourself or a member of your immediate family, or an illness for which you require treatment by a physician. Reference to a heavy work load, other assignments, professional or ministry obligations or holidays do not constitute legitimate grounds for an extension.

Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing using the Tyndale Extension Forms, explaining the reason why the extension is needed. Such requests need to be submitted prior to the due date.

All assignments must be handed in by the last day of exams. No assignments will be accepted after that date (Friday, April 20, 2012), unless the student has a valid reason for an extension. In that case, the student must apply for an extension to the Registrar and not to the professor.

6. Criteria for the Evaluation of Written Work

Your work will be evaluated on whether you answered the specific questions given and whether you followed the general guidelines for submitting written work. For example, the evaluation of your inductive study will be based on whether you followed the specific instructions for doing an inductive study.

7. Submission of Written Work

See the attached 'Guidelines on Written Work.'

Students are required to retain a copy of all assignments (hard copy or electronic version). If a student wishes to submit written work by mail, they must be mailed directed to the Professor, c/o Tyndale Seminary. Alternatively, work may be given directly to the Professor in class on the due date. If the student does not have a Tyndale Campus mailbox and wishes to have all written work returned to them, they must submit written work with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Otherwise assignments will be returned in the student's campus mailbox. Unclaimed assignments are destroyed after six months.

E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Book Review Discussion Groups	15 %
Inductive Study	30 %

Reading Assignment	20 %
Final Exam	35 %
Total Grade =	100%

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Jan 10	Introduction to the Old Testament Why Study the Old Testament?
Jan 17	Introduction continued The History of the Discipline of OT Theology
Jan 24	The History of the Discipline of OT Theology continued Doing Old Testament Theology First Discussion Group
Jan 31	The Themes and Theology of the Pentateuch The Theology of Genesis 1–11: Creation and the Problem of Evil Second Discussion Group
Feb 7	Creation and the Problem of Evil Continued Third Discussion Group
Feb 14	The Abrahamic Covenant
Feb 21	The Redemption Theme: The Significance of the Exodus
Feb 28	Exodus Continued Inductive Study due
Mar 6	The Mosaic Covenant: Law and Worship
Mar 13	NO CLASS: Reading Week
Mar 20	Mosaic Covenant continued
Mar 27	The Theology of the Former Prophets (Joshua–Kings) The Writing of History in the Old Testament
Apr 3	The Davidic Covenant
Apr 10	The Theology of the Prophets (Latter Prophets) Reading Assignment due
Apr 17	Final Exam

Suggested Reading Schedule:

- Before January 17 read: Genesis; Richter, pp.15–46; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 21–69.
- Before January 24 read: Exodus; House, Ch.1, pp. 11–57 and Appendix, pp 548–559; Richter, pp. 47–91.
- Before January 31 read: Deuteronomy; Richter, pp. 92–165; T. A. Alexander, pp. 61–72.
- Before February 7 read: Joshua; Richter, pp. 166–233.
- Before February 14 read: Judges; LaSor, Hubbard and Bush, pp. 619–687.
- Before February 21 read: 1 Samuel; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 71–135.
- Before February 28 read: 2 Samuel; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 136–188.
- Before March 6 read: 1 Kings; Wright, *Mission*, 189–264.
- Before March 20 read: 2 Kings; Copan, “Indiscriminate Massacre?” pp. 158–197; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 265–356.
- Before March 27 read: Ezra; Long, pp. 58–87; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 357–392.
- Before April 3 read: Nehemiah; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 393–453.
- Before April 10 read: Amos; Wright, *Mission*, pp. 454–535.

V. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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- _____. [*Old Testament Theology*](#). Volume 3: Israel's Life. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009.
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Tyndale Seminary
 Old Testament History and Theology (OLDT 0511)
Required Reading Summary Statement
 Due: April 10, 2012

Dr. Rebecca Idestrom

Winter 2012

Please write yes or no to indicate if the reading has been done. If you have not completed the reading, indicate the exact percentage you have read.

READINGS	ALL	75-99%	50-74%	Less than 50%
Wright, <i>The Mission of God</i> (whole book)				
Richter, <i>The Epic of Eden</i> (whole book)				
House, <i>Old Testament Theology</i> (pp. 11-57, 548-559)				
LaSor, et al, <i>OT Survey</i> (pp. 619-687)				
Copan, "Indiscriminate Massacre?"				
T. A. Alexander, "Authorship				
Long, "History and Fiction"				
Genesis				
Exodus				
Deuteronomy				
Joshua				
Judges				
1 Samuel				
2 Samuel				
1 Kings				
2 Kings				
Ezra				
Nehemiah				
Amos				

 Student's Name

 Mailbox Number

 Date