

## Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (BIBHB500-X)

Online, asynchronous (no required synchronous sessions)

Fall 2026 (September 8 – December 16)

Instructor: Dr. G. Brooke Lester (Associate Professor of Hebrew Scriptures; he/him)

Revision: March 2, 2026.

***Dr Lester may revise the syllabus occasionally, to correct errors or to improve the student experience.***

### Contact Information:

Instructor: Dr Brooke Lester: [brooke.lester@garrett.edu](mailto:brooke.lester@garrett.edu).

- Dr. Lester may be reached by email. He checks email twice/day, and will respond within 36 hours. (See "Emergencies" in this syllabus.)
- Office location: Shaffer 731. Office hours Fridays noon-1:00 or by appointment.

Teaching Assistant: TBD

### Course Description and Objectives:

This course will introduce the learner to the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures--Torah, Prophets, and Writings--with emphasis on their order and contents, the historical and cultural settings from which they arise, their literary forms, their religious themes, and some of the kinds of interpretive approaches that communities of readers have taken since the advent of modernity.

### Learning Goals:

- Students will develop basic historical understanding about the Hebrew Bible, the authors and settings of its writings, and its socio-cultural, political, and ideological environment in the ancient Near East.
- Students will gain acquaintance with interpretations from multiple perspectives.
- Students will acquire basic skills in exegesis of Hebrew-Bible texts.
- Students will develop skills in expressing and contextualizing what they have learned to broader audiences.

### Required Textbooks:

- Michael D Coogan. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*. Very Short Introductions. Oxford University Press, 2008. Annotated Edition. ISBN-13: 978-0199885442. Amazon paperback \$11.82. Amazon Kindle \$4.79.
- Michael Joseph Brown. *What They Don't Tell You, Second Edition: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2015. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. ISBN-13: 978-0664235949. Paperback \$14.39. **(Note: The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition is currently grossly overpriced on Amazon. If necessary, please try other vendors for this 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.)**
- AKM Adam. *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* Augsburg Fortress, 1995. ASIN: B007S6DGAK. Amazon Paperback \$22.80.
- George E Tinker, et al, eds. *The Peoples' Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocrypha*. Fortress Press, 2009. ISBN-13: 978-1506482491. Amazon hardcover \$37.40

**Delivery:**

This course is asynchronous, but not self-paced. By “asynchronous,” we mean that there are no synchronous sessions (neither in-person nor by videoconference). By “not self-paced,” we mean that there are regular deadlines.

**Assignments:**

Please expect the following:

- Orientation Week: These short first-week assignments must be completed, on deadline, in order for the student to continue in the course.
- Close Reading: four (4) close-reading exercises.
- “Translating” the academy to laypeople: four (4) exercises.
- A final thesis paper of about 1500 words.
- A complete draft of that paper due **at the midterm** of the course.
- Peer reviews for the complete drafts of three classmates.

**Late Work Policy:**

This course is not simply a checklist of required tasks, but a designed learning experience. For that reason, all work must be completed according to instructions and on deadline.

Most assignments may receive partial credit if slightly late: a full letter grade will be deducted during each 24-hour period after deadline. (So, an "A" assignment will receive a B during the first 24 hours of lateness; a C during the next 24 hours; and so on.)

Peer reviews, however, will not receive any credit if they are submitted after deadline.

**Grading:**

Close Reading Exercises: 30%

“Translating” the Academy Exercises: 30%

Research Report: 4%

Peer Reviews: 16%

Final Paper : 20%

**Please see the course Canvas site for schedules and deadlines.**

**AI Policy:**

1. Students with approved accommodations may use AI in the ways specified in those accommodations.
2. Students may use spell-checkers.
3. Students may use a grammar checker such as Grammarly, though the instructor thinks that this often produces poor results and does not do much to teach grammar.
4. Beyond that, the use of generative AI (such as ChatGPT) is entirely prohibited. Course work is designed in such a way that discourages the use of generative AI. Let’s agree to

show up as who we are. Learners learn better when allowed to submit work that reflects their own abilities and (current) limitations.

**Other Academic Policies can be found at this link:**

[https://mygets.garrett.edu/ICS/Registrar\\_and\\_Advising/Common\\_Syllabus\\_Policies.jnz](https://mygets.garrett.edu/ICS/Registrar_and_Advising/Common_Syllabus_Policies.jnz)