

Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary  
Fall, 2024  
BIBHB 651: Covenants, Crises, and Hope in the Hebrew Bible

Meeting Days/Time: Thursdays at 9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon CST  
Meeting Place: Online (Teams)

Instructor: Kenneth Ngwa  
Email: [Kenneth.ngwa@garrett.edu](mailto:Kenneth.ngwa@garrett.edu)

### Course Description

The course examines the linguistic, religious, cultural, political, and ethical dimensions of the concept and the functions of covenant in the Hebrew Bible. Of particular importance is the way the concept is deployed in the various narrative genre, administrative functions, ecological relations, ritual and religious life, and socio-economic and political life and commitments. The course further examines the political, religious and social implications of broken covenants, and the ongoing work of communal renewals of covenants – how they are reimagined, expanded, restricted, and contested in light of gender, race/ethnicity, geographical location, and political ideologies within ongoing communal life. The course thus examines the significance of covenant language, allegiance, and values of justice, communal survival and thriving, and faith for ancient and contemporary communities.

### Course Objectives

- A. To offer students concise language and conceptual definitions and understandings of the concept of covenants in the Hebrew Bible
- B. Engage in discussions on the religious, political, gendered, ethnic/racial, and ethical implications of covenants for structuring relations between the divine, human, and non-human creation.
- C. To equip students for non-supersessionist theological discussions on covenants.

### Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- A. Demonstrate familiarity with the multi and polyvalent character of covenants, including its social, political, gendered, ethnic/racial, and religious markers.
- B. Demonstrate distinctive aspects of covenant language and work in different biblical genres.
- C. Articulate coherent working understandings of covenant terminology and theologies in church and scholarship.

### Required Student Participation:

Each student is **EXPECTED** to read the required assignments for each session, attend class sessions regularly and on time, and be actively involved in classroom discussions. The classroom space will function as a healthy and safe space for discussions. This means that everyone is expected to listen carefully to their peers, engage one another in respectful ways even when they disagree (significantly), and see themselves as vital contributors to the overall healthy experience of the class.

Furthermore, in light of the course objectives and outcomes above, each student is expected to develop **TWO** papers, a theoretical paper (5-6 pages max.) and a final paper (15-20 pages max). These papers should be both theoretical and hermeneutical. The papers may be in the form of a

sermon, a research paper, or a “policy paper.” The theoretical paper is **due by midnight CST on October 24**. The theoretical paper should form the bases for the interpretive project or paper. Students will do in-class presentations on their final projects, receive feedback, and revise and submit their work for a final paper (due on **Thursday December 12, by midnight CST**).

Please Note:

All papers should be submitted by email to the instructor as Word documents. All papers should be double-spaced, font size 12, with footnotes or in-text citations, and complete bibliographic details. It is expected that **ALL** scholarly work **MUST** be cited and appropriately referenced. **Plagiarism is UNACCEPTABLE** and will lead to a failing grade in the course.

Papers shall be evaluated on the following basis.

- A. Clear definition of working theory and engagement with scholarship
- B. Clear thesis statement and methodology
- C. Good use of evidence (textual or otherwise)

### **Student Services**

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving ([melanie.baffes@garrett.edu](mailto:melanie.baffes@garrett.edu) or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a continuing student who has already established accommodations with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator and your professors will see your accommodation letter.

### **Grading**

Active Participation in weekly class meetings = 35%

Theoretical Paper on Triple Consciousness = 20%

Final presentation and paper = 45%

Final Grade Scale: Grades: 90% and above = A range; 80-89% = B range; 70-79% = C range; 60-69% = D range; below 60% = F

Required Text:

Daniel I. Block, *Covenant: The Framework of God's Grand Plan of Redemption*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2021.

## Schedule

### **Thursday, September 5: Introductions, Course Overview, and Definitions of Covenants**

Readings:

Block, *Covenant*, 1-10

William P. Brown, "The Character of Covenant in the Old Testament: A Theocentric Probe," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 16 (1996), 283-293.

### **Thursday, September 12:**

Scott Hahn, "Covenant in the Old and New Testaments: Some Recent Research (1994-2004),"

*Currents in Biblical Research* 3/2 (2005), 263-292.

### **Thursday, September 19: Creation, Covenant, and Hope - I**

Readings: Genesis 1-3; 6-9

Block, *Covenant*, 13-43.

Richard Acosta Rodriguez, "The word of God for Safeguarding Creation: Bible-based Reflections to Reestablish the God-humanity-creation Covenant," *Anglican Theological Review* 103/2 (2021), 112-131

### **Thursday, September 26: Creation, Covenant, and Hope - II**

Readings:

Genesis 6-8

Block, *Covenant*, 44-66.

Kenneth Ngwa, "Follow the Raven: Hermeneutics Beyond the Ark," *Multiracial Biblical Studies*.  
Unpublished Essay.

### **Thursday, October 3: Asynchronous Work**

Begin working on a 5–6-page paper on (1) the concepts and types of Covenants in the Hebrew Bible and (2) how these covenants are related to socio-political, religious, ecological, gendered, and racial/ethnic determinants of communal life. Your paper does not need to provide "answers" to all the questions you identify; you can signal directions for further research and inquiry.

### **Thursday, October 10: Covenants, Ancestors, Ancestresses, and Stories of Origins - I**

Readings

Genesis 11-12; 15; 25; 29; 1 Sam 2:1-10

Block, *Covenant*, 68-92

Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, "Beyond the Blessed/Cursed Dichotomy: The Barren Matriarchs as Oracles of Hope," *The Covenant Quarterly*, 69/1-2 (2011), 47-64.

Susan Ruth Andrews, "Between Text and Sermon: Genesis 16:1-16," *Interpretation*, 68/3 (2014), 305-307.

### **Thursday, October 17: Covenants, Ancestors, Ancestresses, and Stories of Origins - II**

Readings:

Genesis 16-17; 21

Block, *Covenant*, 92-204.

Robin H. Jarrell, "The Birth Narrative as Female Counterpoint to Covenant," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 26/3 (2002), 3-18.

Josiah Callaghan, "Covenant Partners: An Egalitarian Reading of Genesis 17:15-16," *Priscilla Papers*

33/4 (2019), 18-21.

**Thursday, October 24: : Covenants, Rituals, and the Temple (Worship) - I**

Readings:

Deuteronomy 26; 29-30

Block, *Covenant*, 229-272

Thomas Romer, "The Mysteries of the Ark of the Covenant," *Studia Theologica*, 77/2 (2023), 169-185.

**Thursday, October 31: Covenants, Rituals, and the Temple (Worship) – II (The New Covenant)**

Readings:

Leviticus 26: 40-45; Jeremiah 31: 27-40; Ezekiel 34:23-31; 37:21-28; Isaiah 54:4-10

Block, *Covenant*, 275-297.

Joseph Gileneau, "The Nature and Role of Signs in the Economy of the Covenant," *Worship* 39/9 (1965), 530-550.

**Thursday, November 7: Covenants, Politics, and National Characters - I**

Readings

Block, *Covenant*, 303-330.

Marvin Sweeney, "Berit Olam, the Eternal Covenant: Is the Conditional Covenant Really Conditional?," *Conversations with the Biblical World* 38 (2018), 1-19.

Brian Neil Peterson, "'Jacob's Trouble': The Shechem Fiasco and the Breaking of Covenant in Genesis 34," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 176/703 (2019), 272-291.

**Thursday, November 14: Covenants, Politics, and National Characters - II**

Block, *Covenant*, 331-366

Samuel Emadi, "Covenant, Typology, and the Story of Joseph," *Tyndale Bulletin* 69/1 (2018), 1-24.

**Thursday, November 21: Thanksgiving Week. NO Class.**

**Thursday, November 28: Covenants, Prophets, and Sages**

Block, *Covenant*, 331-366.

**Thursday, December 5: Student Presentations**

**Thursday, December 12: Final Papers Due**