Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (BIBHB500)
In Person
January 2026 (January 5–16, Monday–Friday 8:30am-12:30pm)
Instructor: Dr. G. Brooke Lester (Associate Professor of Hebrew Scriptures; he/him)
Revision: November 10, 2025.

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.

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

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: 978-0195305050. 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. 2nd Edition. ISBN-13: 978-0664235949. Amazon Paperback $14.39.
- AKM Adam. *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* Augsburg Fortress, 1995. ASIN: B007S6DGAK. Amazon Paperback $22.80.
- George E Tinker, et al. *The Peoples' Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocrypha.* Fortress Press, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1506482491. Amazon hardcover $37.49.

Delivery:
This course is in person (face to face). Complete attendance, every day and on time, is expected.

Pre-Work and Daily Homework:

1. *Pre-Work:* Students will need to read Coogan (160 pages) with care before our January term begins. I also recommending becoming familiar with Brown (140 pages).
2. *Daily Homework:* Students should plan at least three (3) contiguous, focused hours every afternoon or evening, for reading and writing assignments due the following day. I recommend that students arrange for frequent time in the Styberg Library.

Assignments:
Please expect the following:

- Daily assignments in reading and writing.
- A final thesis paper of about 2500 words, due January 26th.
- A complete draft of that paper due at the end of the day on January 14th.
- Peer reviews for the complete drafts of some 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.

Accommodations Policy:
Garrett-Evangelical is committed to providing a quality theological education and will provide reasonable accommodations for documented conditions. Students requiring specific assistance such as classroom changes, alternative ways of note-taking, different classroom procedures, or alternative testing formats are urged to request the appropriate accommodations from the director of academic studies/registrar. The director of academic studies/registrar can advise students on other support services and resources, for example, diagnostic testing. Students must complete a request for accommodations using the form available from the director of academic studies/registrar or through MyGETS documenting their condition(s) through appropriate verification methods.

Emergency:
Students may sometimes find themselves beset by an emergency that is likely to threaten progress in this course in ways that are hard to predict. In such a case, the student should contact the office of the Registrar without delay to document their emergency. Depending on the nature of the emergency, it may not be possible for the student to complete the course;

however, the instructor will work with the student and the Registrar to determine what options are available (including a Withdrawal from the course, an Extension for missing work, or other options). *All extensions must be arranged before the work is due, not after.*

A complete syllabus will become available before our term begins.