Description/Goals

1) To gain familiarity with these two short stories, their theological themes, and the major critical issues posed.
2) To develop skills in close reading.
3) To become better acquainted with features of Hebrew narrative style.
4) To gain proficiency in reading and assessing scholarly positions on critical issues, and to gain confidence in dialoguing with the “experts.”
5) To reinforce knowledge acquired in the introductory Hebrew Bible course (major theological themes, genres, etc.).
6) To become aware of how critical issues may be intertwined with theological questions, and to work on seeing the ramifications.

Finally, it is hoped that you will leave the course feeling a greater appreciation for the beauty and complexity of Ruth and Jonah, as well as some degree of confidence about teaching and preaching these two stories.

Format
Text assignments should be prepared using the commentaries as an orientation point, along with the secondary resources listed on the daily schedule.

REQUIREMENTS:

1) One exegesis paper, 11-13 pages in length (2,750 to 3,250 words) from either Ruth (due 4/26) or Jonah (due 5/19). MTS Students have the option of doing a thematic study, 11-15 pages in length. See instructor. (50 %)

2) Participation includes the following:

   a) Thoughtful participation in class discussions, reflecting familiarity with the biblical text and assigned reading, including your preparation of the weekly study guide (distributed in advance). (30%)
   b) Two reports on an essay, commentator perspective, or designated segment of the study questions (either in Ruth or Jonah). These should be between 25 to 35 minutes in length, depending on the material; allow an additional 15 minutes for discussion. Some may be done in partnership. (20%)
Additional Notes:

1) Some of the books and commentaries listed below will be on reserve in the library.
2) Readings that are not in the required textbooks will be available on the course site.
3) Under certain circumstances alternative projects (such as a Bible study or thematic paper) may be proposed in lieu of an exegetical paper. Please see instructor to make arrangements.

BOOKS FOR RUTH

Required:


Supplementary (if budget allows):

Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kenski. Ruth. JPS Bible Commentary. Jewish Publication Society, 2011. ISBN: 97808276-0744-6. Price (used, like new) $34.00 to 38.00 at Amazon.com

Additional Resources for Ruth:

James McKeown. Ruth. The Two Horizons Commentary. 2015.
BOOKS FOR JONAH

Required:


Supplementary commentary for Jonah (if budget allows):


OR:


Additional Resources for Jonah:


Schedule of Readings – Ruth

*Note: Reports and student led discussions are marked in boldface or by an asterisk.*

2/4 Introduction/Orientation.
(Please read all four chapters of Ruth before Feb. 11)

2/11 Text: Ruth 1 and Genesis 38

Phyllis Trible, "A Human Comedy" in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 166-175.
K. Sakenfeld, 17–36.
General Reading: D. Fewell and D. Gunn, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, 1-12 (please read within the first two weeks of class). (Available on course site.)

Supplementary Bibliography:


2/18 Text: Ruth 2

Sakenfeld, 1-16 (introduction).
Sakenfeld, 37-50.


Supplementary Bibliography:


2/25 Text: Ruth 3

Sakenfeld, 51-66.
Trible, 181-187.

Supplementary Bibliography:

Kirsten Nielsen, Ruth: A Commentary, 66-76.


3/4 Text: Ruth 4 (*Student led discussion based on study guide.)

Sakenfeld, 67-88.
Trible, 188-196.

Additional Resource (available on course site; commentary on reserve):

Tamara Eshkenazi and Tikva Frymer Kenski, Ruth (JPS Bible Commentary) 69-92 (Ruth 4).

Supplementary Bibliography:


3/11 Overview – Approaches/Interpretations (Ruth)


**Reports may be chosen from the following:** (Available on course site.)


**Supplementary Bibliography:**


(Supplementary Bibliography, cont.)


3/18    Reading/Research Day

3/25    Spring Recess

Schedule of Readings: Jonah

4/1    Introduction: Limburg, 19-36.

Texts: Jonah 1 and 2 Kings 14:23-27
        Jonah 4:10-11

Limburg, 37-59.

P. Jenson, Obadiah, Jonah Micah, 41-57 (Jonah 1). (Available on course site.)


Supplementary Bibliography:

T. Fretheim, Message of Jonah, 73-91.

P. Jenson, Obadiah Jonah, Micah, 31-35 (The Genre of the Book). (On Reserve.)

P. Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” (To Each Its Own Meaning)

4/8    Text: Jonah 2
Limburg, 60-72.
J. Holbert (cont.), “Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh,” 70-74.
(Available on course site.)


Supplementary Bibliography:
T. Fretheim, Message of Jonah, 93-104.
Phyllis Trible, Jonah 2, New Interpreters Bible, Vol. VII.
J. Magonet, "Jonah" in Anchor Bible Dictionary.

4/15 Text: Jonah 3

Limburg, 74-88.

Additional Resources:
Uriel Simon, Jonah 3 (JPS Commentary) 25-34. (Available on course site and on reserve)

Supplementary Bibliography:
T. Fretheim, Message of Jonah, 105-115.
J. Magonet, "Jonah" in Anchor Bible Dictionary.

4/22

[Jonah] is a peculiar combination of life force and death wish.
Text: Jonah 4  (*Student led discussion based on study guide.*)

Limburg, 88-98.
Review: J. Ackerman, Satire and Symbolism, 217 (his compact summary of the story) and 245 (for his summation of the primary issue).
(Available on course site)
(Available on course site and on Reserve.)

Supplementary Bibliography:

Uriel Simon, Jonah 4 (JPS Commentary) 34-48 (supplement with xii-xiii).
Philip Jenson, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, 80-93 (Jonah 4).

** 4/26 Ruth Papers Due  **

4/29  Overview – Approaches/ Interpretations (Jonah)

Reread Jonah 4:9-11.
Maya Bernstein, “Why Do We Read Jonah During the Minchah Service on Yom Kippur?” September, 2009. (Available on course site.) ¹

Film clip: “Retelling Jonah.”

Reports may be chosen from the following:  (Available on course site)

*Barbara Green, “Beyond Messages: How Meaning Emerges from our Reading of Jonah” Word and World 27 (2), Spring 2007 (149-156).

*The role of Jonah in Jewish liturgical tradition (the reading of Jonah on Yom Kippur).


Supplementary Bibliography:


Phyllis Trible, “Jonah” NIB Commentary (p. 528). (On Reserve).


5/6 Research/Writing Day

5/13 Senior grades due
5/19  Jonah papers due

Addendum
**Additional Supplementary resources on Ruth from a cross-cultural perspective:**


