

William Propp  
Winter, 2009

HINE 112A  
GREAT STORIES FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE

Course aim: to achieve an enhanced appreciation for the techniques of ancient Israelite literature, through comparison with other ancient and modern narratives. We will analyze biblical stories, retell them in modern dress, convert modern stories into quasi-biblical narratives, and throughout the course improve our biblical literacy.

Instructor: William Propp. Office HSS 4012; phone 534-6187; email [wpropp@ucsd.edu](mailto:wpropp@ucsd.edu).  
Office hours: Wed, Fri 2-3.

Required Readings:

1. The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible/Tanakh (any translation)
2. Adele Berlin, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (at UCSD bookstore)
3. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (at UCSD bookstore)
4. Coursepack (at AS Soft Reserves)
5. Books on Reserve at SHH
  - i. Robert Alter, *The David Story* (SHH Reserves)
  - ii. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*
  - iii. Richard Friedman, *The Hidden Book in the Bible*
  - iv. Richard Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah*
  - v. Richard Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*
  - vi. Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses*
  - vii. The Bible (Revised Standard Version)

Assignments:

1. 2-page literary analysis (10%) (**use translations in coursepack**)
2. Same paper rewritten and expanded into 3-4 pp. (20%)
3. An English short story of your choice rewritten in 1-2 pp. in the biblical style (10%)
4. 5-page analysis of another biblical story, 15-50 verses long (30%) (**if possible, use translation on reserve [Torah and Samuel]**)
5. Biblical literacy final (20%)
6. Class participation (10%)

1. 1/5 **Introduction**

Discussion: what is the Bible; how to cite it; who were the Israelites?  
Terms: Bible, exegesis, canon, Tanakh (Torah-Nevi'im-Ketuvim), Old Testament, Hebrew Bible, Torah, Pentateuch, Scripture, Apocrypha, A.D./B.C./C.E./B.C.E., Jew, Israelite, Hebrew, Aramaic, God/LORD/Yahweh, Qumran, Septuagint, LXX  
Basic Geography

**\*Assignment (due class 3):** write a 500-600-word literary analysis of *either* Exodus 2:11-14 *or* 1 Kings 21:1-28 (**using translations in coursepack**)\*

2. 1/7 **Basic Concepts and Assumptions**

Reading: Levitt Kohn and Moore, chaps. 1-2; Alter pp. xvi-xlvi

Discussion: What is a literary approach to the Bible? Does it differ from traditional Bible Study? What special challenges confront a translator from Hebrew to English?

3. 1/9           **Modern Discoveries**

Reading: Gilgamesh tablet XI  
Genesis chaps. 6-9 (2 versions)  
Birth of Sargon  
Exodus chaps. 1-3

Discussion: How does ancient mythology affect our understanding of the Bible?  
How does the recognition that the Bible is a composite affect our understanding?  
How do modern, academic Biblical Studies differ from traditional Bible Study? Are they compatible? In which camp does a pure literary approach fall?

3. 1/12           **Characters**

Reading: Berlin, 13-42

4. 1/14           **Viewpoint**

Reading: Berlin, 43-82, 135-139

5. 1/16           **Modern vs. Biblical Narrative**

Reading: the Book of Jonah  
Father Mapple's Sermon

6. 1/21           **Literary Convention**

Reading: Alter, 3-62

7. 1/23           **Narrative Techniques**

Reading: Alter, 63-113

8. 1/26           **The Bible's Reticence**

Reading: Alter, 114-189

9. 1/28           **Applied Biblical Storytelling**

Reading: Genesis 22

Discussion: how might a modern writer tell the same story?

**\*Assignment (due class 11):** take any English short story; xerox it and rewrite it in 1-2 pages as the Bible might tell it; submit both stories\*

10. 1/30           Genesis chap. 1

11. 2/2            Genesis chaps. 2-3

12. 2/4            Genesis chap. 24

RECEIVE PARTICIPATION GRADE (TENTATIVE)

13. 2/6	Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-28:9
14. 2/9	Genesis 28:10-33:20
15. 2/11	Genesis chap. 34
16. 2/13	Genesis chap. 37
17. 2/18	Genesis chap. 38
18. 2/20	Genesis chap. 39
19. 2/23	Genesis chaps. 40-41
20. 2/25	Genesis chaps. 42-43
21. 2/27	Genesis chaps. 44-46
22. 2/30	Exodus chaps. 24, 32
23. 3/1	Judges chap. 13
24. 3/6	Judges chap. 14
25. 3/8	Judges chaps. 15
26. 3/10	Judges chap. 16
27. 3/13	Judges chap. 17

---

Key passages in Alter:

20-21 “Accustomed as we are...verbal formulas?”

32-33 “From this distance...God’s universality.”

35-36 “Let us direct...host of other characters.”

47-62 entire chapter

65-68 “In regard to the proportions...interior speech or dialogue.”

74-75 “From all I have said...force of language.”

79-80 “Of the two other general...time of the story proper.”

91-94 “Up to this point...*master, slave, and house.*”

95-97 “1.*Leitwort*...trial in the wilderness.)”

97-101 “Such attention is particularly crucial...obscure warning.”

114-126 “How does the Bible...typical methods of presentation.”

178-189 entire chapter

William Propp  
Winter, 2009

**COURSE READER**  
HINE 112A  
GREAT STORIES FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE

1. Biblical Studies is Not Bible Study, Israelite Religion (Levitt Kohn and Moore, *A Portable God*, 1-7, 21-42)
2. The Bible in English, Names of God (Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, xvi-xlvi)
3. Exodus 2:11-15 (Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 4)
4. 1 Kings 22:1-28 (Tadmor and Cogan, *1 Kings*, 39-41)
5. Gilgamesh – Tablet XI (Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* 109-20)
6. Genesis 6-9 (Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, 38-53)
7. Composite Genesis 6-9 (Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 50-60)
8. The Birth Legend of Sargon (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 819-20)
9. Exodus chaps. 1-3 (Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 3-6)
10. Comment 1:22-2:10 (Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 153-60)
11. Father Mapple's Sermon (Melville, *Moby Dick*, chap. 9)