Course Description

Using various reading strategies (historical reconstructions, literary and sociological criticism, anthropological models, post-modernist, film theory, art history, liberationist views, etc.), this course explores narrative representations of marriage, sex, and violence as they appear in the Hebrew Bible. This course is not a "bible study." It assumes that the biblical stories are constructed in a specific historical context and are very particular representations of the political, economic, religious, and sociological ideologies of the authors. Previous work in biblical studies or literary criticism would be extremely beneficial. Due to the nature of the course, there will be some sexually explicit material and we will deal with several adult themes.

Course Objectives

By the completion of this course, I want you to have developed your critical thinking skills. I also want to sharpen your skills as a writer. You will also have an enhanced knowledge and understanding of not only the social world of ancient Israel but our social world today. I will challenge you on many levels.

Required Texts - Always bring to class on the day of discussion

* A Bible (DO NOT USE a paraphrased Bible) - Always bring a Bible to class

Course Requirements

Short Papers
There will be weekly reading-response papers (1 page each). The papers, which should be double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt. font, are due each Thursday unless otherwise noted. They will account for 40 points of your final grade.

Class Participation
This course will be successful only if you read and join in the discussions. Some days there is more assigned reading than others. Pace yourself. Read a little everyday and do not just try to read it all at once. Each week persons will be assigned articles in which they will be responsible for initiating class discussion. 20 points of your grade will be
determined by your positive class participation; this includes but is not limited to class
discussion, in-class assignments, group-work, and overall class preparedness.
I expect that you will come to each class already having read the material and ready to
discuss it.

Term Paper
Instead of a final exam, there will be an 8-12 page paper due toward the end of the
semester. I will allocate class time for a brief oral discussion of your work. This paper
will count for 20 points of your final grade.
I expect college level writing. This means I want complete sentences, a thesis
statement, and well-constructed paragraphs. College level writing also means that you are
able to determine which information is important and/or necessary, analyze it, and form
your own thoughts and opinions.
A Note on Plagiarism: If you do not know what plagiarism is, come see me or find out
elsewhere. I reserve the right to fail you for the course if you 1) copy even one sentence
from someone else's work and do not properly cite it, 2) copy even one sentence from a
paper on the internet, 3) use a paper that someone else wrote, 4) use a paper that you used
for another class (unless you check with me first). I am very serious about this. There are
other violations that are called plagiarism in addition to those mentioned here. Please see
your school catalogue -- it is very clear about what plagiarism is and the penalties for it.

Midterm Exam
There is one exam approximately mid-way through the course. It will be a take-home
exam and approximately 20 points of your final grade.

Attendance: After three unexcused absences, your average will drop one grade per
absence. An excused absence is one that is 1) due to an illness; you must have a
doctor's excuse; 2) excused because of a school-related activity. You must notify me
BEFORE class time if you will miss classes. It is your responsibility to make up any
missed assignments.

The World of the Hebrew Bible
Jan. 18: General Introduction (no reading assignment)
Jan. 23: Creating the Context(s) Read: From Families in Ancient Israel, 48-78
Jan. 25: Persia, Greece, Judaisms; Read: From Families in Ancient Israel, 78-92
Jan. 30: Read Bach, xiii-xxvi; Read: Mary Douglas, pp. 94-128 (on reserve)
Feb. 1: More on Mary Douglas; Read: Bach, 53-73 (Eilberg-Schwartz)
Feb. 6: The Mother of us all; Read Genesis 1-2:4; 2:5-3; Gender, Power, and Promise,
"Shifting the Blame," pp. 22-38 (on reserve)

Gendered Expectations: Gender Roles and Marriage in Ancient Israel
Feb. 8: What are the rules? Lev. 18-22; Read Countryman, 11-44, (on reserve)
Feb. 13: Read Countryman, 47-67 (on reserve)
Feb. 15: Marriage; Read: Gen. 24; 29; Ex. 2; Read: Families in Ancient Israel,
104-149
Feb. 20: Metaphors and Verbs for Marriage; Read: Streete, 1-19
Feb. 22: Adultery. Read: Lev. 20:10-16, Gen. 38; 2 Sam. 11; Read: Streete, 20-42
Feb. 27: Adultery and Abortion? Read: Numbers 5:13-31; Bach, 461-82
Mar. 1: Adultery and Abortion? Read: Bach, 483-518; Read: Article on Mifepristone (on reserve or internetxxx)

Who Goes There? Sex in the Hebrew Bible
Mar. 6: Read: Ruth 1-4; Read: Athalya Brenner "Love, Desire, and Sexual Activity," on reserve
Mar. 8: Read: Song of Songs; Josh. 2; Bach, 293-304; Midterm Exam due
Mar. 13: Spring Break
Mar. 15: Spring Break
Mar. 20: Homosexuality - the words and context; Gen. 18-19; Lev. 18-20
Mar. 22: Homosexuality (cont.) Read: TBA
Mar. 27: Incest: Read: Lev. 18:6-18; Ezekiel 16:6-14; Families in An. Israel 163-212
Mar. 29: The Rhetoric of Sex: Read: Gen. 19:30-38; Athalya Brenner, "Deviation from Socio-Sexual Boundaries, I: On Incest" (on reserve)
Apr. 3: Prostitution: Read: Hosea 1-3; Josh. 2, Gn. 38; Bach, 99-111; Streete, 43-51
Apr. 5: Prostitute as Metaphor: Read: Streete, 101-119

Violence
Apr. 10: Violence -- Read: 1 Kings 20; II Kings 9:30-37; Streete, 57-72
Apr. 12: Violence and Marriage: Read: Hos. 1-3; Ezekiel 16:15-34; Jer. 13; Streete, 85-100
Apr. 17: Violence and Sex; Read Judith (handout); Judges 4:1-22; Bach, 305-313; 367-74;
Apr. 19: No Class
Apr. 24: Violence and Sex and Marriage: Read: Judges 19; Streete, 76-100
Apr. 26: Class Presentations; Term Paper Due
May 1: Class Presentations
May 3: Wrap-up

*This syllabus is not a binding contract. I may change it depending on the needs and interests of the class.*