6AAT3050 LAW AND ETHICS IN THE HEBREW BIBLE
(Level 6 - 15 credits)

2015–16: Semester 2

Tuesday 11.00 – 1.00 pm, Strand K2.40

Module tutor: Dr Meg Warner
meg.warner@kcl.ac.uk, Room 3.11
Office Hours: Thursday 2.00 – 3.00 pm

Module Syllabus
1. Introduction

Outline / What is our topic?

Module educational aims

- To introduce students to a variety of biblical texts of different genres (law codes, narratives, prophetic texts, poetry, and wisdom) that address legal and ethical issues.
- To help students to examine - from literary, anthropological, sociological, gender, and historical perspectives - the functions of biblical law in the context of ancient Israel, and to think more generally about the role of law in the creation and transmission of cultural values and identity.
- To help students think about how ancient legal material may be applied to contemporary ethical issues, whilst remaining aware of the difficulties inherent in cross-cultural thinking.

Module learning outcomes

Generic skills:

- Ability to read critically and interpret ancient texts in translation.
- Ability to analyse and evaluate secondary literature.
- Ability to think cross-culturally yet with sensitivity to historical and social differences.
- Ability to write critical essays on primary and secondary source material.

Module-specific skills:

- Ability to interpret a variety of biblical texts in English, with awareness of the significance of their original language.
- Ability to explore, from a variety of methodological perspectives, ancient legal material in its own historical context.
- Ability to develop strategies for the responsible and sensitive application of ancient legal material to contemporary ethical issues.

Module content: description and teaching plan

Biblical law is often characterised as a restrictive set of long redundant rules; the orders of a demanding divine sovereign; or the opposite of love. Here we move beyond the world of telegrams and anger in which law is usually situated to consider fascinating alternatives:

- Biblical law as a means for instilling and transmitting social and cultural values
- Law as a receptacle for tradition
- Law as protection against divine anger and human injustice
- A legal system for imposing cosmic order and adapting to change
- Law as a teaching tool
- Law as vehicle for divine / human engagement that approximates erotic love

The Hebrew Bible’s legal texts provide at once a brilliantly illuminating spotlight on
the ancient world, and - especially when read in conjunction with narrative and other biblical genres - a focus for considering ethical dilemmas that remain as challenging today as when the laws were framed.

Lectures, seminars and participation / How can I get involved?

In each session there will be a lecture with a chance also for general discussion. Prepare for each class by reading ahead in the selected texts.

Apart from materials that will enable you to take notes, bring this module syllabus to every lecture. This is for a very practical reason. Since I may wish to refer to books/articles during a lecture, it helps if you can consult the reading lists there and then. It is also important that you bring the texts that you have read actively and annotated to clarify their structure and to add your questions and observations. You will not wish to be the only member of the group who cannot follow a text that is being discussed because you don’t have the text before you with your own annotations.

KEATS & Maughan Library / Where do I find relevant sources?

The main resources for this module are found on KEATS. Look at what is planned for each session and prepare accordingly. For the Maughan Library, look at the “Subject Resources” page for TRS: http://libguides.kcl.ac.uk/trs. If you notice books that would be good to have in the library, please bring these to the attention of your module tutor.

2. Module plan & Readings

SECTION A: BACKGROUND AND GENERAL READING

Important Note: Prioritizing your Reading

• Works which are particularly recommended are asterisked (*). It should be beneficial for you to read some of these items.

• Core works receive two asterisks (**). It is essential for you to read some of these items.

(a) Primary Sources

**The Old Testament / Hebrew Bible. Please use a good translation approved by the module tutor. That means that you should read the NJPS (New Jewish Publication Society), the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) or the NKJV (New King James Version). There are many other translations of the Old Testament / Hebrew Bible, and some of them may be appropriate, but please ask me before reading them, as many other translations are not suitable for academic work. All three versions are available online for free:

NJPS: http://www.taggedtanakh.org

NRSV: https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/

**Roth, Martha T., Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor: With a Contribution by Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. (SBLWAW, 6; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1997).**

(b) Secondary Sources: Printed


** Barton, John, Ethics in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014).**


**Brettler, Marc Zvi, How to Read the Bible (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005).**


**Crouch, C. L., War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East: Military Violence in Light of Cosmology and History (BZAW, 407; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).**


*Gill, R., ed., The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics (2nd ed.; Cambridge:


**Lipton, Diana, *Longing for Egypt and Other Unexpected Biblical Tales* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008).


**Stemberger, Günter, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).**


Wright, Christopher J. H., Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983).


(c) Reference Material


**Gertz, Jan Christian et al., T & T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament (London / New York: T & T Clark, 2012).**

SECTION B: SESSION TOPICS AND SUGGESTED READING

Important Note: Prioritizing your Preparatory Reading

• Works which are particularly recommended are asterisked (*). It should be beneficial for you to read some of these items in preparation for the session.

• Essential core readings receive two asterisks (**). It is necessary for you to read some of these items in preparation for the session.
**Week 1 Introduction: Forms of moral reasoning (Tuesday 19 Jan)**


**Week 2 The multiple voices of the Hebrew Bible: an Introduction (Tues 26 Jan)**


Week 3 Laws, Lawcodes and the idea of ‘normative law’ (Tuesday 2 Feb)


**Barton, John, Ethics in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014) 127-56.


Roth, Martha T., Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor: With a Contribution by Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. (SBLWAW, 6; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1997).

Weinfeld, Moshe, The Place of the Law in the Religion of Ancient Israel (VTSup, 100; Leiden: Brill, 2004).


Week 4 Oral Law and the role of interpretation in Judaism (Tuesday 9 Feb)


**Lipton, Diana, ‘Terms of Endearment: A (Very) Fresh Look at Biblical Law’, in Longing for Egypt and Other Unexpected Biblical Tales (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 172-


**Stemberger, Günter, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 1-44 (especially 31-44).

Week 5 The Ethics of warfare (Tuesday 16 Feb)


**Barton, John, Ethics in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014) 102-04.


Reading Week – NO lecture

Week 6 Imitatio Dei and imago Dei (Tuesday 1 Mar)


**Week 7 Poverty and Social Justice (Tuesday 8 Mar)**


**Week 8 Law as theology (Tuesday 15 Mar)**


2005), 188-196.


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**Week 9 Marriage & Gender in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Judaism (Tuesday 22 Mar)**


**Week 10 Summary and Outlook (Tues 29 Mar)**


**Revision Class:** Tuesday 3 May, time and venue TBA

3. Assessment / How will my work be assessed?

- Coursework essay (3,500 words, contributing 40% to your module mark) on an essay question listed at the end of this syllabus.
  
  Due: Thursday 18 February, **BEFORE 4pm**, on KEATS

  Feedback will be available on KEATS no later than Thursday, 10 March 2016. Feedback tutorials will offer further guidance on improving your work.

- Unseen written exam (2 hours, contributing 60% to your module mark): 2/3 out of at least 5/7 questions must be answered (TBC)
  
  The examination will take place in **Period II (May-June 2016)**.

**Scope of assessment**

Coursework essay questions generally relate to some topics covered in the first half of the module. Examination questions normally deal with most of the remaining topics, but care is taken to avoid overlap across both sets of questions. Some examination questions may be formulated so as to encourage analysis, in the same answer, of topics that were investigated in different sessions,
What is a good essay/exam answer?

- Good essays and examination answers will demonstrate a nuanced grasp of any topic, an awareness of its religious/political/social/historical/etc. contexts and a capacity to develop a well-reasoned argument that is convincingly supported by reference to suitable evidence and is presented in a structured manner using clear English.
- For more details please see the link to marking criteria below (“Essential Information”).
- Best approaches to essay writing will be discussed as part of the teaching programme in the module. Students should seek advice if they are unsure of anything.]

Essential information: How do I submit my essay?

- **The Faculty of Arts & Humanities cover-sheet** needs to be the first page of the submitted essays; please follow this link:
  [http://www.kcl.ac.uk/trs/study/handbook/assessment/taught/submission.aspx](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/trs/study/handbook/assessment/taught/submission.aspx)
- **The candidate number** (e.g. W01234) on the cover-sheet needs to be accurate and of the present academic year. Your work cannot be attributed to you on the College systems, if this information is incomplete or wrong.
- **The word limit** includes all footnotes/endnotes, but excludes the bibliography, which you should provide. There is a 5% tolerance: no penalty will be incurred for essays that are up to 5% over the word limit. Beyond that tolerance band, two marks will be deducted for every 5% of excess words until 50% is reached. After 50%, three marks will normally be deducted for each further 5% of excess words.
- The **presentation of your work**, including the insertion of **page numbers**, quality of **referencing** and bibliographical information and the standard of English, has a strong bearing on the mark given for it.
- **Submission BEFORE 4pm**: Your work must be submitted via the assessment submission section of the KEATS area for the module, by the published deadline, i.e. **before 4pm** on the relevant day. Work with a Turnitin time stamp of 4.00pm counts as a late submission (see next point).
- **Late submissions** will be treated as follows:
  Unless an extension has been granted by the Chair of the UG Programme Board of Examiners on the basis of a Mitigating Circumstances Form (MCF), supplied with supporting evidence, or comes to be granted retrospectively:
  - Work submitted within 24 hours after the original deadline will be marked, but the mark for this element will be capped at the pass mark of 40%.
  - Work submitted more than 24 hours after the original deadline will not be marked, and the submission will receive a mark of zero.
- **Mitigating Circumstances Forms**: MCFs can be downloaded from the Policy Zone of the College
website.

**Extensions retrospectively:** An extension may be granted retrospectively, providing the MCF with supporting documentation is submitted no later than 7 days after the missed assessment and supporting documentation has been received no later than 21 days after the missed assessment. Please note that extensions are granted by the TRS Assessment Board Chair and NOT by individual module tutors.

- **Plagiarism:** Please make sure that you understand the College rules on plagiarism. Information is available at: [http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/help/plagiarism/index.aspx](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/help/plagiarism/index.aspx), and you should also have been enrolled on a KEATS plagiarism module.

- **Oral presentations and plagiarism:** The College’s rules on plagiarism apply to oral presentations, handouts and Powerpoint presentations just as they do to written work submitted for assessment. You must acknowledge any and all sources used in presentations and accompanying material, and must present all material in your own words except for explicitly acknowledged quotations from others.

- **Collusion** also counts as misconduct. Think twice before circulating your work to other students.

- **Marking:** Your essays for this module will be assessed according to Model 3: [https://www.kcl.ac.uk/trs/study/handbook/assessment/taught/markmodels.aspx](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/trs/study/handbook/assessment/taught/markmodels.aspx)

  **Essays:** First and second markers will apply the Faculty’s Undergraduate Marking Criteria: [http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/study/handbook/sguides/assessment/ugmarkcrit.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/study/handbook/sguides/assessment/ugmarkcrit.pdf)

  **Classroom presentation and participation** are assessed in line with these Marking Criteria: [https://www.kcl.ac.uk/trs/modules/level6/files/TRS-Marking-Criteria-for-presentations.pdf](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/trs/modules/level6/files/TRS-Marking-Criteria-for-presentations.pdf)

5. **Essay Questions**

Please choose ONE question:

1. **Discuss whether and how we can we speak of ‘The ethics of the Hebrew Bible’?**

   **Readings:** See especially the suggested readings for weeks 1 and 2.

2. ‘Laws are written and collected in order to place appropriate limits on the behaviour of individuals’ Do you agree or disagree? Use examples of legal texts and principles found in the Hebrew Bible in your answer.

   **Readings:** See especially the suggested readings for week 3.

3. **Discuss the roles of the Hebrew Bible and Oral Law in the interpretation of biblical law. Chose one or two biblical laws to illustrate your discussion.**

   **Readings:** See especially the suggested readings for week 4.

4. **Discuss and evaluate the ethical dilemmas that war with foreign nations presented to Israelite and Judean prophets**

   **Readings:** See especially the suggested readings for week 5.