

Course Title: Discovering Biblical Ancestors: History, Culture and Faiths, 2000-586 BCE

Course Number: TBD

Semester Summer **Year** 2010

Pacific School of Religion

Day: Monday-Friday, July 12-16, 2010. **Time:** 1:00-5:00 PM

Instructor: Jehon Grist, Ph.D., is Executive Director of Lehrhaus Judaica, the Bay Area School for adult Jewish education. He received his Ph.D. in ancient Near Eastern cultures from UC Berkeley after doctoral research at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and archaeological field research in Israel, the Gaza Strip, and Egypt. He has published articles and photos on the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, and the *Biblical Archaeology Review*. An instructor and assistant professor at UC Berkeley, and Cal State Fresno, Dr. Grist has spent the last 20 years administering Lehrhaus and teaching courses at various Jewish community and secular institutions in the Bay Area and Los Angeles.

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Course Description: This vividly illustrated lecture and discussion course will introduce students to the key personalities and events of the eras covered. From there, we will explore the material culture, religious systems and literature of the Eastern Mediterranean, with a focus on how they help us understand the character of Biblical Israel. We'll also be "visiting" classic Biblical sites: Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, and of course, Tell en-Nasbeh. A special focus of this course will be the roles of women in Biblical Israel. The instructor and Bade Institute staff will organize a small exhibit of artifacts from the Tell en Nasbeh collection for students to examine.

My approach to this course is to reverse the traditional order of text study followed by use of the material culture to corroborate the text. I want students to discover what the physical world of Canaan, Israel and their neighbors tells us *first*, then examine Biblical and other Near Eastern texts to create a holistic perspective.

Required Texts:

King, Philip J. and Lawrence Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Meyers, Carol. *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Israelite Women*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.

Brief additional readings to be distributed in class at instructor's option.

Session Schedule and Assignments:

Monday, July 12: Kingdoms, Cultures and Characters: An Historical Overview of Israel's Neighbors, ca. 2000-586 BCE. Introduction of Canaanite entities and their history: Hyksos, Ugarit, Habiru, Canaanite and Phoenician city-states, Moab, Edom, Philistines. All of these will be considered in the context of the contemporary influences of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Brief tours of representative archaeological sites will be included to introduce students to the character of each culture. We will also touch briefly on principles of archaeological method. Representative ancient Near Eastern texts will be introduced. A key goal in this session is to understand the context of foreign influences on the development of Israel as a cultural entity and state.

Assignment for Tuesday: read King/Stager, chapter 1-2.

Tuesday, July 13: What Was Biblical Israel? This session will start by tracing what we think we know about the Patriarchal, Exodus, Settlement and Monarchy Periods. A key theme in this exploration will be the influences of Israel's neighbors on her development as a state and culture. As in the first session, we'll visit Israelite sites and examine artifacts that inform her material culture, including pieces from the Bade Institute Collection. Biblical and Near Eastern texts will be incorporated where appropriate.

Assignment: King/Stager, pp. 85-121; 129-175.

Wednesday, July 14: Israelite 'Secular' Institutions/Professions: We'll examine the key institutions that sustained the State: farming, food production, crafts and arts, warfare, education, etc. Again, artifacts from the Bade Collection will be incorporated, as appropriate.

Assignment: Begin selecting a research topic and outlining areas to be addressed. Instructor will be available after class to consult. Read King/Stager, Chapter 6; Meyers, chapters 1-2.

Thursday, July 15: Israelite Religious Institutions: This session will focus on sacred sites, their material equipment, key practices, prophets and 'prophetic schools', and notions of life, death and afterlife. Special emphasis will be given to the roles and beliefs of women in religious institutions, both formal and informal, especially our rapidly emerging understanding of the Canaanite/Israelite goddess Asherah. In this session, text and archaeological evidence will be directly compared.

Assignment: Fine tune topic and write 2-3 page essay outlining the research question/s to be asked and approaches for answering them. Instructor will be available after class to consult. Reading: finish Meyers text (pp. 19-73).

Friday, July 16: Text vs. Archaeology: Cases Studies in How the Bible and Archaeological Discoveries Agree and Disagree. The instructor will briefly introduce and explore a few examples. Possible topics: David, Biblical Minimalists and Tel Dan; Asherah in the Bible, and in Archaeology; Exodus: Total Myth, Partial Myth and the Telescoping of History. For the remainder of the class, students will be invited to make brief presentations about their paper topics, based on reflection papers they will turn in today.

Learning Outcomes: Students will be expected to develop a basic understanding of the key historical events and cultural phenomena relating to Biblical Israel, and be able to assess how Israel's neighbors contributed to her identity. Throughout the course, Near Eastern and Biblical texts will be incorporated into the archaeological narrative, inviting students to test one against the other to develop the critical thinking skills that lead to more a more holistic understanding of the Biblical world. This testing process will form the core of student-teacher dialog and debate. With this preparation, students will be required to write a 10-15 page research paper on a closely defined topic that will require presentation and analysis of both archaeological and textual evidence, leading to a synthesis that attempts to objectively explain the phenomenon considered.

Requirements: Portions of the course will be offered in seminar format with group discussion of specific assigned readings. Oral participation will count for 20% of the final grade. By the end of the class, students will submit a 2-4 page reflection paper (20% of grade) on an instructor-approved topic, outlining the student's current understanding of the topic, along with a brief outline of a 10-15 research paper (60% of grade) exploring the topic in greater depth, due 30 days after class concludes.

Attendance Policy: Because of the intense schedule of this course, attendance is expected for all sessions for students seeking unit credit. If a student knows that he/she will have to miss a single class day, the student must consult with the instructor to arrange an instructor-approved make-up plan.

Grading and Plagiarism Policy: Please consult: <http://www.psr.edu/grades> and <http://www.psr.edu/plagiarism-policy>.

Incomplete Policy: Please consult: <http://www.psr.edu/extensions-lapsed-time-rule>.

Use of Technology in Classroom: Use of laptops is permitted for note taking. For all other uses, please consult: <http://www.psr.edu/use-technology-classroom>.

English as Second Language (ESL) Policy

1. Upon request by the ESL student to the PSR faculty, the faculty member will extend the deadline for papers one week to allow time for editing.
2. Upon request by the ESL student, PSR faculty will allow twice as much time for ESL students to complete in-class written exams.

The PSR curriculum aims to develop Progressive Christian leadership in students. A

Progressive Christian leader:

1. Is rooted in Christian tradition
Has the ability to re-appropriate tradition for new times/places
Can critically analyze texts and traditions
2. Understands the contextual nature of knowing and understanding
Understands one's own perception is limited
Understands the reality and value of multiple perspectives
Understands ambiguity and complexity and can hold the tensions related to difference
can critically evaluate a context and respond
3. Is self aware/spiritually grounded
Has an engaged spirituality
Is self-reflective and reflexive
4. Works in partnership
Is actively involved in ecumenical and interfaith conversations
Appreciates the value of diversity and moves beyond appreciation to engagement
Is socially connected and can work collaboratively
Is competent in cross-cultural situations
Nurtures the development of leadership in others
5. Can envision and engage in the creation of a more just world
Holds a liberation perspective
Has a global consciousness
Works for social change and has a systemic perspective
Is involved in institutional transformation