

AIM – Summer 2026 – Core Course

Old Testament Survey I – Syllabus

Instructor

Rev. Jonah Bissell

(802) 779-2075 (text or call)

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Location	Zoom	<i>Link to be emailed</i>
	In-Person	Penney Memorial UBC, Founder’s House, 7 E Crescent St, Augusta, ME – 04330
Time	Zoom	Tuesdays from 6:30-8:30PM (<i>see below</i>)
	In-Person	Saturdays from 10:00AM-2:30PM (<i>see below</i>)
Dates	Zoom:	6/9, 6/30, 7/7, 7/28, 8/4
	In-Person:	6/20, 7/18, 8/15

Required Texts

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Basic Books, 2011 (236 pages).

Nelson, Richard. *The Historical Books*. Abingdon Press, 2011 (skip chapter 9; 161 pages).

Enns, Peter. *Inspiration and Incarnation, 2nd Edition: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*. Baker Academic, 2015 (chs. 1-3 = 102 pages).

Recommended Study Bible

The SBL Study Bible (NRSV). HarperCollins, 2023.

Course Overview

This course will train students to interpret the Pentateuch and Historical books of the Old Testament according to their literary genre. Rather than focusing on the content and historical background of such texts, this course is designed to equip students to exegete and expound such texts from a Christian perspective for the benefit of a local congregation. Our focus then will be relentlessly practical, teaching students how to engage these texts as Christian Scripture for the spiritual benefit of believers today.

Objectives

In this class the students will:

1. Consider the Pentateuch and Historical books of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture designed to edify and guide believers today.
2. Distinguish between genres such as *narrative* and *law*, discerning how best to interpret both according to their literary genre.
3. Situate the Pentateuch and Historical books of the Old Testament within their ancient Near Eastern literary context.
4. Exegete texts from the Pentateuch and Historical books of the Old Testament (in translation), discerning their spiritual import for Christians today.
5. Develop sermons based on narrative and legal texts from the Old Testament, which could be preached in an American Baptist church context.
6. Reflect theologically on Christian Scripture: its nature, production, reception, and function.

Required Reading + Video Content: The reading and video assignments noted (in bold-italics) are important background material and should be completed *before* the next class. *Please take notes* on the readings and the video content so you are ready to discuss them in the next class.

Assignments: Three assignments will be due for this course. Written assignments should be typed and submitted digitally to the instructor via email (jonah@freeportbaptist.org).

- **Narrative Sermon:** Write a 10-page (2500 words) exegetical sermon based on a passage of Biblical narrative in the Pentateuch or in the Historical Books, employing the interpretive principles we covered in the course (due 7/7).
- **Law Sermon:** Write a 10-page (2500 words) exegetical sermon based on a passage of Biblical Law in the Pentateuch, employing the interpretive principles we covered in the course (due 8/4).
- **Reflective Essay:** Write a 5-page (1250 words) reflective essay on chs. 1-3 of *Inspiration and Incarnation*, by Peter Enns. Discuss whether/how Enns's arguments affect your understanding of the OT and how it might change the way you read/teach/preach the OT moving forward. *If you disagree with Enns on any points, feel free to articulate that in this essay. However, make sure such disagreements are supported by evidence and rational argument* (due 8/21).

Evaluation

1. Participation	20%
2. Narrative Sermon	30%
3. Law Sermon	30%
4. Reflective Essay	20%

Class Schedule¹

Unit 1: Tuesday, 6/9 from 6:30-8:30PM on Zoom (2 hours)

- Greeting + Personal Introductions
- Introduction to the Course
- The Old Testament as Christian Scripture
- Study: 2 Corinthians 3:7-4:6

For 6/20: Watch Bible Project Videos for Genesis and Exodus; Read Alter

Units 2-3: Saturday, 6/20 from 10:00AM-2:30PM In-Person (4 Hours)

- General Introduction to the Pentateuch
- Introduction to Genesis + Exodus
- Introduction to Biblical Narrative
- *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Robert Alter)
- Case Studies: Examine particular examples of Hebrew narrative
- NT Use of the OT: Narrative
- Value of OT Narrative for Christian Teaching and Preaching

For 6/30: Watch Bible Project Videos for Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy

Unit 4: Tuesday, 6/30 from 6:30-8:30PM on Zoom (2 hours)

- Review of Introduction to the Pentateuch
- Introduction to Biblical Law
- Introduction to Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy
- NT Use of the OT: Law
- Discussion: How might we teach and preach Biblical Law as Christians/pastors?
- Exercise: Try such a reading on select passages from OT Law

For 7/7: Read Nelson, Chs. 1-4 + Narrative Sermon Due

Unit 5: Tuesday, 7/7 from 6:30-8:30PM on Zoom (2 hours)

- *The Historical Books* (Richard Nelson), Chs. 1-4

For 7/18: Watch Bible Project Videos of Joshua, Judges, Ruth; Read Nelson, Chs. 5-6

¹ Bible Project Videos total about 2 hours of instruction.

Units 6-7: Saturday, 7/18 from 10:00AM-2:30PM In-Person (4 Hours)

- Introduction to the Historical Books (General)
- Introduction to Joshua, Judges, & Ruth
- NT Use of the OT: Historical Books
- Exercise: Approach a text, ask students to read the text according to its genre *and* through a Christian lens, and then formulate a teaching outline based on such study.

For 7/28: Watch Bible Project Videos of 1-2 Samuel/1-2 Kings; Read Nelson, Chs. 7-8

Unit 8: Tuesday, 7/28 from 6:30-8:30PM on Zoom (2 hours)

- Review of Introduction to Historical Books
- Introduction to 1-2 Samuel & 1-2 Kings
- NT Use of the OT: 1-2 Samuel/1-2 Kings
- Exercise: Approach a text, ask students to read the text according to its genre *and* through a Christian lens, and then formulate a teaching outline based on such study.

For 8/4: Watch Bible Project Videos of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Read Nelson Ch. 10 + Law Sermon Due

Unit 9: Tuesday, 8/4 from 6:30-8:30PM on Zoom (2 hours)

- Introduction to Ezra, Nehemiah, & Esther
- Exercise: Approach a text, ask students to read the text according to its genre *and* through a Christian lens, and then formulate a teaching outline based on such study.

For 8/15: Read Enns Chs. 1-3

Units 10-11: Saturday, 8/15 from 10:00AM-2:30PM In-Person (4 Hours)

- Review of course topics
- *Inspiration and Incarnation* (Peter Enns), Chs. 1-3
- Questions about anything from the course?
- Bible Study: Engage in an in-depth Bible Study of a key OT passage, reading the text through a Christian lens and reflecting upon it together.

For 8/21: Enns Reflective Essay Due