



Course Syllabus
WYB1008HF – Introduction to the
Old Testament I
Wycliffe College
Toronto School of Theology
Fall 2025

Instructor Information

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Course Identification

Course Number: WYB1008HF
Course Format: *In-person and online (Teams) for distance students*
Course Name: Introduction to the Old Testament I
Course Location: Wycliffe College
Class Times: Tuesdays, 10 am-noon (ET); September 9–December 2, 2025
Prerequisites: None

Course Description

Introduction to Old Testament literature, history, and theology, with emphasis on application of, and implications for reading the Old Testament within the church. Focused on the Primary History (Genesis-Kings), the course traces the text's story-line and attends to difficult questions raised by its subject matter, social and historical location, and presentation. Classes engage students through lectures, small discussion groups, readings, and assignments as listed below.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts/Bibliography

The textbook for this course is available through the U of T Bookstore's website, which offers shipping or in-store pickup for physical texts. Enter your UTORid into the Bookstore's textbook tool at https://uoftbookstore.com/buy_textbooks.asp to get a personalized list of all the textbooks for the courses you're enrolled in. You can also purchase most of the texts through booksellers like Indigo or Amazon.

The textbook is also available from The Graham Library, which has acquired the eBook edition of Hess' *the Old Testament*. Please use the following link

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=4901264>

- Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016. ISBN 9780801037146 (Note this text will also be used for *Introduction to the Old Testament II* in the Winter term).
- A modern translation of the Old Testament is also required, e.g., the *New Revised Standard Version*, the *New International Version (2011)*, *Tanakh: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*.
- Additional readings as noted on the course outline below and posted to the weekly Modules in Quercus.

Recommended Books and Resources

- An audio version of the Bible is available for download here: <http://www.bible.is/apps>.
- <https://thebibleproject.com/> This is a crowd-funded project with great video presentations of biblical books and other topics. It will be helpful to watch the video for each biblical book before you read it and the textbook.
- For help in building your OT library see <http://bestcommentaries.com/>. Great guides to classic commentaries include two older works: Brevard S. Childs, *Old Testament Books for Pastor and Teachers* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977) and Charles Spurgeon's *Commenting and Commentaries: A Reference Guide to Book Buying for Pastors, Students, and Christian Workers* (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988).
- Check out another great resource www.bibleodyssey.org

Course Website(s)

- Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your uteri and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus). Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>.

Evaluation

Requirements

- Attendance is mandatory and expected. Consistent lateness or absence can result in penalty up to and including course failure. If you know you will be missing a class, it is helpful to let me know ahead of time.
- Missing two or more classes will require some make-up reading and/or additional work. If you know you will be away from two or more classes, please make arrangements with me ahead of time for this make-up reading/work. Failure to do so will negatively impact your mark.
- Preparation for each class is also expected and will enrich in-class discussion and the experience of you and your colleagues. See the course outline for assigned biblical text, textbook, and additional readings.
- All written assignments are due on Quercus before each class begins on the due date, unless otherwise indicated on the course outline/assignment.
- Plagiarism is a serious offense. The minimum penalty for a plagiarized paper is the grade of zero. If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly.

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in these areas:

- (1) **Participation in class and online (8%)** – In addition to participating in the regular activity of the class, including the reading of the required texts, students are expected to contribute to in-class or online discussions, and seminars. A rubric for participation assessment is found in the Marking Rubrics tab in Quercus.
- (2) **Meet-and-greet with professor (zoom, or in-office) (2%)** – Sign up for a 15-minute slot during September on the “Meet and Greet” in the Pages Tab on Quercus. Relax! This is an informal time, for us to get to know one another a bit, and for me to hear any questions or concerns you have about class. No preparation is needed, and you can’t fail this 2%.
- (3) **Inductive Study of Genesis (25%; due on Quercus by 10:59 am on September 30, 2025).** 7-8 pages of written work excluding any title or content pages, typed in 12-point font and double spaced with one-inch margins) – For this assignment, simply work with the biblical text. No further engagement of secondary resources is required (such as commentaries, annotated Bibles, textbook). You may use an Atlas or Dictionary for place names or puzzling terms, but make sure to cite it properly. Use the inductive study guideline found in the “How-to” tab in Quercus.
- (4) **Final Thematic Paper (35%; due on Quercus by 10:59 am on December 2, 2025).** 8-10 pages of written work excluding any title or content pages, typed in 12-point font and double spaced with one-inch margins). – The call of Abram in Gen 12:1-3 is pivotal to Genesis-2 Kings and your paper will investigate its influence. The paper will consist of four sections. In the first section discuss Genesis 12:1-3 and outline the Lord’s promises to Abram. In the second section discuss how the passage relates to the rest of Genesis (both before and after the passage). In the third section, discuss how the passage relates to Exodus-Deuteronomy. In the fourth section, discuss how the passage relates to Joshua-2 Kings. The primary purpose of this assignment is to ensure that you have a grasp on Genesis-2 Kings as a whole. You obviously cannot include everything in this paper; look for examples that are typical or especially pertinent. As with the inductive studies, you are not permitted to consult secondary literature. Use the thematic study guidelines found in the “How-to” Tab in Quercus.

- (5) **Short assignments to respond to readings (3.75% each for a total of 30%; due as noted below and on course outline)**. These short assignments will engage you in the readings critically and reflectively and thus help you to prepare for class. They are designed to introduce you to different types of assignments and writing that you might encounter in future courses.
- a. Open-book quizzes (3) – these will help you read Hess with attention. Due by 10:59 am on September 23, October 21, and November 4. On the Friday morning before this class, I will release the quiz, which asks you questions from your reading in Hess and/or the Bible.
 - b. Reading notes (2) – these will help you engage readings for content and critical interaction. Due by 10:59 am on November 18 and November 25
 - i. For November 18, read the Ackerman article. In no more than one page, single-spaced state: (1) the article’s author, title, and source; (2) the article’s main argument or thesis in 1-2 sentences; (3) the *method* in 1-2 sentences (for instance, is it engaging history? archaeology? narrative art? or ??); (4) 1 or 2 critical comments about what you (dis)agree with *and why*; and (5) 1-2 thoughtful questions about the article or its implications that could help our class discussion.
 - ii. For November 25, read the Abernethy chapter, “The Heart of Kingship in 1-2 Samuel” in *God’s Messiah in the Old Testament*. In 200-300 words, answer this question: *Abernethy explores the problematic request for a king, the failure of Saul’s kingship, and the positive and negative aspects of David’s personal and royal life. Personally reflect on 1 or 2 ways that Abernethy’s discussion of these positive and negative aspects of monarchy have raised helpful understandings or troubling questions for you. For instance, you might reflect on whether Abernethy’s explanation for the inclusion of David’s failures is satisfying (why? why not?). Or you might reflect on how this chapter brings new or nuanced understanding of Jesus, the one born and died as “king of the Jews” (Matt 2:2; 27:37). There are many other ways you could engage this chapter; the idea is that you engage personally and reflectively on the chapter’s material.*
 - c. Online discussion groups (3) – these will help you express your thinking, listen and respond to your colleagues so as to learn together and prepare for class. To prepare for classes on October 7, October 14, and November 11, follow these instructions:

After you do the week’s assigned readings, prepare a thoughtful answer of approximately 200-300 words to one or more of the posted questions **by Monday at 11:59 am ET at the latest** so that others can respond to your post. After you and others have posted their answers, start engaging one another in ongoing conversation about their posts and other issues raised in the chapter and readings. Here, further engagement and reference to the class materials will be an important part of these conversations. As you reflect together, you are encouraged to ask questions to take the conversation deeper, voice disagreement and suggest alternate understandings or possibilities, and respectfully listen to and engage others’ comments and perspectives. **At the least, you must engage at least one other student’s post and complete this by class time.** See Discussion Board posts: guidelines and rubrics below.

Initial Post (due no later than Monday at 11:59 am ET Oct 6, Oct 13, and Nov 10, 2025).

The rubrics below establish the requirements necessary for our posts to become a rewarding part of the learning experience. They also indicate how contributions to the discussion boards will be graded. In

each discussion board there are 8 points available for each initial post, and 2 points for the subsequent responses.

Please note that the discussion boards are primarily intended to take us further in understanding the texts and their ancient contexts. It is important that in your initial posts especially you back up the points you make by drawing on evidence from the Bible and/or the week's readings.

Please also note that in the category 'Relevance' the reference to reading does NOT mean that all initial posts must include quotations. It means rather that you must display a level of knowledge of the topic consistent with having done the required reading. Quotations from the readings may sometimes help you to make a point well, but in short writing assignments it is often just as helpful to indicate when a point made is based upon the work of a particular scholar by inserting a reference within brackets, e.g., "(Hess, 127)".

CATEGORY	Exceeds Standards (8)	Meets Standards (6)	Approaches Standards (4)	Below Standards (2)
Relevance	entirely relevant to the topic with superior use both of reading and of evidence drawn from the biblical text	entirely relevant to the topic with clear evidence of reading and engagement with the biblical text	somewhat relevant to the topic with some evidence of reading and engagement with the biblical text	largely irrelevant to the topic with little or no evidence of reading or engagement with the biblical text
Coherence	entirely coherent and easy to follow	entirely coherent and easy to follow	largely coherent and possible to follow	significantly incoherent and difficult to follow
Presentation	appropriate length, written in complete sentences with proper use of words, and a good standard of spelling and punctuation, commentary bibliography included	appropriate length, written in complete sentences with proper use of words, and a good standard of spelling and punctuation, commentary bibliography included	only occasional failures to meet the standards	frequent failures to meet the standards

Response Posts (due no later than class time on Oct 7, 14 and Nov 11, 2025)

The rubrics below establish the requirements for response posts. In each discussion board, students are expected to respond to at least one post by other students, although I hope that the discussion will be sufficiently engaging that you may want to do more and especially that authors of initial posts will want to reply to the responses they receive.

Responses are intended to be short (a few sentences each) and should further the discussion. Response posts that are unclear, irrelevant, or simply repeat points already made by other students will be deemed not to further the discussion.

Productive responses will usually fall into two categories: (i) "curiosity" questions/comments, i.e., the response seeks clarification or expansion from the author of the initial post, or (ii) "persuasive" questions/comments, i.e., the response seeks to prompt the author of the initial post to deeper reflection in some way.

Response posts should meet the standards set out above for initial posts in the categories of "Coherence" and "Presentation." In addition, response posts should also meet the following standards:

CATEGORY	Meets/Exceeds Standards (2)	Approaches Standards (1)	Below Standards (0)
General	the whole reply furthers the discussion or clarifies it	parts of the reply further the discussion or clarify it	the reply fails to further the discussion or clarify it

Questions	all questions asked are succinct, relevant, and courteous	most questions asked are succinct and relevant; all are courteous	most questions asked are either not succinct or not relevant; some fail to be courteous
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Grading System - Basic Degree Students

1000, 2000 and 3000 level courses use the following numerical grading scale (see section 11.2 of the BD Handbook):

90-100 (A+)	Exceptional
85-89 (A)	Outstanding
80-84 (A-)	Excellent
77-79 (B+)	Very Good
73-76 (B)	Good
70-72 (B-)	Acceptable
0-69 (FZ)	Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

Policy on Late Assignments and Course Extensions (BD; Dec 2024)

Late Assignments and Extensions (BD). Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Under exceptional circumstances (such as medical incapacitation of yourself or an immediate family member, death in the family; NB pleading too much work or other course assignments due will not be considered an exceptional circumstance!) a student may request a short extension to be determined with the instructor. Instructors are not obliged to approve a request for an extension or accept papers that are late where no extension has been requested. If the instructor chooses to accept a late assignment, where an extension has **not** been requested and approved before the due date, then **for that assignment one percentage point per late day will be deducted**. The final deadline for the submission of assignments is the date set by the instructor in the syllabus, the examination day scheduled for the course, or the last day of exam week for the semester in which the course is taught, whichever is sooner. If the student fails to submit the assignment by the agreed deadline a mark of zero will be calculated for the assignment.

Policy on Course Extension (BD) Students with documented medical difficulties or exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) who are unable to submit their work by the end of the term must talk with their instructor and request a course extension. The deadline for obtaining a course extension is the examination day scheduled for the course or the last day of examination week, whichever is sooner. The course extension, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline, with an absolute deadline of the last day of the examination week within the twelfth month following the end of the course. (The course extension must also be approved by the Basic Degree Director and confirmed by the Registrar.) Under extraordinary situations a student may request an extension on the initial extension. To do this, students must complete a second course extension form, include sufficient documentation (e.g. a doctor's letter) and receive the approval of both the instructor and the BD director.

An approved course extension will appear on the student's record as an SDF. If the student completes coursework before the new deadline approved by the professor and the student's college, the grade SDF

will be changed to a letter and number grade. If the student does not complete the work by the deadline set by the professor and no further extension is granted, the professor will assign a zero for the unsubmitted work and submit a final grade (numerical or letter, including FZ) or, if the student successfully petitions for one, a permanent incomplete (INC). For late papers (with or without a course extension) students will receive a grade but minimal comments.

Policy on Use of AI for course work. Use of AI generated material (such as ChatGPT or other AI sources) is prohibited for all coursework unless specifically allowed by the professor. Should a student be found to use generative AI without permission, the assignment will be considered as plagiarized and will be graded at zero.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted to ACORN. Grades are not official until they are posted to ACORN. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy found at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-26-2012>, policies found in the TST conjoint program handbooks, or college grading policy. Professors do not have access to course evaluations until all grades are submitted to Wycliffe College.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Wycliffe Plagiarism Policy (November, 2022)

1. In cases of academic dishonesty, Wycliffe College will follow the policy and procedures in the [University of Toronto's 'Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters'](#), as understood in the TST *Basic Degree Handbook*, section 15.1.2-4 (see appendix).

Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>), a student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm

2. When a professor has reasonable grounds to suspect academic dishonesty, the professor shall notify the student and invite the student to discuss the matter. If it is established that a violation

- of the policy has occurred, or if the student fails to respond to the professor's invitation, a report shall be made to the program director and copied to the Registrar and to the student.
3. If the student is a member of another college, the professor shall make an additional report to the Principal, who will bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate college head.
 4. We recognise that in many cases the first occurrence can be a useful teaching moment. When an incident is a first offense, it lies within the professor's discretion to issue a warning, to ask for work to be resubmitted, or to assign a zero for the assignment. In any event, notification of action taken shall be reported to the program director and Registrar.
 5. When it is determined by the program director or the Registrar that a student has committed a second offense of academic dishonesty, the matter shall be referred to the Principal.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. Students should check utoronto email regularly for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students in conjoint programs must be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Wycliffe College

BD Level

Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

AREA OF OUTCOME	COURSE OUTCOMES	ACHIEVED THROUGH COURSE ELEMENT
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	By the end of this course, students will	This outcome will be achieved through these course elements
IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC SKILLS	-critically analyze and evaluate a thesis and its presentation -demonstrate basic-degree-level writing skills	-preparation of a critical book note(s) - inductive study, final paper, quizzes, discussion boards, and reading notes
IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES	-identify the content, structure, and themes of the books of Genesis-2 Kings -discuss and debate explanations of Old Testament violence -identify the basic timeline of events in the Old Testament -identify and evaluate examples of interpretation of Old Testament texts throughout history, including current issues in Old Testament scholarship	- quizzes and reading notes on scripture and readings; inductive study on Genesis; final thematic paper -online discussion -course readings and quizzes/reading notes -quizzes/reading notes on textbook; reading and discussion of premodern and modern examples of biblical interpretation
IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION	-read and analyze a biblical book and suggest ideas for its application for the church today -reflect on the Old Testament presentation of God, and one's personal faith	-inductive study on Genesis -course lectures and in-class discussion, online discussion groups
IN RESPECT OF MINISTERIAL AND PUBLIC LEADERSHIP	-formulate possible responses to inquiries posed to student regarding Old Testament violence	-online discussion groups, class discussion and lecture

Course Schedule

Week 1

Sept 9

Course introduction; Reading the Bible in the Church

Reading: Ch. 1, "Reading Scripture on the Journey of Faith Seeking Understanding" in *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* by Billings; and "Prologue" in *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story* by Bartholomew and Goheen

Week 2

Sept 16

The Bible: Colliding Worlds

Reading: ch. 2, "The Bible in Real Time and Space," in *Epic of Eden* by Richter

Optional but encouraged: post on the "Introduce yourself" discussion board before this week's class if you've not yet done so

Week 3

Sept 23

Genesis 1-2: Good Beginnings

Reading: Hess, ch. 1 (Optional: Hess, Introduction)

Due: Open Book Quiz #1 on Hess, Genesis

Week 4

Sept 30

Genesis 3-11: Perfection and Brokenness.

Due: Genesis Inductive Study; all students should have met with professor in "Meet and Greet"

Week 5

Oct 7

Genesis 12-50: Perfection, Brokenness, and . . . Repair.

Reading: Come prepared to discuss the ways the following commentators draw meaning for readers out of Genesis 12:1-9: "Genesis 12:1-3 The Call and the Promise," and "Genesis 12:4-9 Migration from Haran to Bethel" in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. by Sheridan; and "Genesis 11:27-12:9" in *Story of God: Genesis* by Longman

Due in week before this class: Discussion Board #1

Week 6

Oct 14

Exodus: Marriage Prep.

Reading: Hess, ch. 2

Due in week before this class: Discussion Board #2

Week 7

Oct 21

Exodus-Leviticus: Provisions for Fellowship.

Reading: Hess, ch. 3

Due: Open Book Quiz #2 on Hess, Leviticus

Oct 28

Reading Week; No class

Week 8

Nov 4

Numbers-Deuteronomy: Wilderness and Hop.

Reading: Hess, chs. 4-5

Open Book Quiz #3 on Hess, Numbers-Deuteronomy

Week 9

Nov 11

Joshua: The Problem of Land and Love.

Reading: Hess, ch. 6

Due in week before this class: Discussion Board #3

Week 10

Nov 18

Judges-Ruth: Spiraling Downward and Standing in Faith

Reading: Hess, chs. 7-8; come prepared to discuss ch. 5 "Ravish Them and Do to Them Whatever You Want" in *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel* by Ackerman.

Due: Reading Notes #1

Week 11

Nov 25

1-2 Samuel: Prophets and Kings

Reading: Abernethy, "The Heart of Kingship in 1-2 Samuel" in *God's Messiah in the Old Testament* by Andrew Abernethy; (Optional: Hess, ch. 9).

Due: Reading Notes #2

Week 12

Dec 2

1-2 Kings: A Failed Project?

Reading: Hess, ch. 10

Due: Thematic Study

Draft