N.B. This is not an up-to-date syllabus and is for informational purposes only.

University of Toronto  
Centre for the Study of Religion & The Toronto School of Theology  

WYB5016/RLG3143S: Hebraica

Professor: J. Glen Taylor  
Office: Room 218, Wycliffe College  
Time: Mondays 2-4 p.m.  
Phone: (O) 416 946-3541; (H) 416 944-2546  
Office Hours: By appointment  

Textbook:  


Course Description:  
From the calendar of the Centre: “A critical examination of the relevance of comparative (especially northwest) semitic philology and historical Hebrew grammar to the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and to the teaching of Biblical Hebrew.”

Method of Evaluation:  
Quizzes, assignments, term project.

Teaching Methods:  
Lectures, student presentations, discussions of readings.

Learning Outcomes:  
The purpose of the course is to provide an understanding of the background and context of Classical Hebrew so that they will be better teachers and researchers of Hebrew and, in turn, of the Hebrew Bible.

By the end of the course the student will be able to:  

1) identify the entire range of possible proto-semitic phonemes that correspond to a Hebrew root. This will be determined through a quiz and summarily through the term project.  
2) look up cognate words in Akkadian, Arabic, Ugaritic and comparative Northwest semitic dictionaries and lexicons. This will be determined through performance in a practicum and summarily through the term project.
3) understand and, at least partially reconstruct, proto-Northwest Semitic precursors to Tiberian classical Hebrew. This will be determined through a quiz and summarily through the term project.

4) read and interpret most of the editorial and masoretic marginal notes in BHS. This will be determined through work in class and possibly an assignment and summarily through the term project.

4) identify key historical developments within, and key distinguishing features of, Classical Hebrew. This will be determined through exercises and summarily through the term project.

5) recognize and identify (and roughly date) various Hebrew/proto-Canaanite scripts. This will be determined through work in class and summarily through the term project.

6) understand and explain common theories regarding the origin(s) of the Semitic Alphabet.

7) understand key differences between various sub-groupings within Northwest Semitic. This will be determined through a quiz and summarily through the term project.

8) have a rudimentary knowledge of and experience with reading selected Ugaritic, Biblical Aramaic, Moabite and Phoenician texts. This will be determined through the student’s work in class.

The course at the outset does not assume a knowledge of any Semitic language apart from biblical Hebrew. However, since it would be pointless to compare Hebrew with other languages in the abstract, texts in other Semitic languages will be studied, often with appropriate aids. Concerning Hebrew, it will be assumed that students have had at least two years of Hebrew and either French or German or both.

The course has two main components that combine to provide a context for understanding the background to and development of biblical Hebrew: textual studies and topical studies. In addition to often having content relevant to the study of the HB/OT (in some cases the texts will be biblical), the texts will provide a context or point of reference for the study of various topics related to the early history of the Hebrew language.

Tentative Course Schedule:

January 7: Hebrew grammar check up. Introduction to the Study of Semitic Languages and Northwest Semitic in particular

Course Requirements:

Weekly assignments, readings, participation 40%
Quizzes 20%
During term project (summative binder) 25%
Presentation or extra assignment 15%

Assignments on selected texts and topics will be given weekly. The term project is due by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday March 18th.
PRELIMINARY SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE COURSE
The Akkadian Verb and Its Semitic Background
by N. J. C. Kouwenberg
Languages of the Ancient Near East - LANE 2
xx + 666 pages
Eisenbrauns, 2010


Bergsträsser, Gotthelf. Introduction to the Semitic Languages; Text Specimens and Grammatical Sketches, Translated with Notes and Bibliography and an Appendix on the Scripts by Peter D. Daniels. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983 [German orig., 1928].


J.F. Diehl analyzes imperatives in the Hebrew Bible that are followed by other imperatives (chapter 2), by imperfects (chapter 3), by perfectum consecutivum (chapter 4), or by imperfects that are separated from a preceding waw by a further element ("w.x.imperf") (chapter 5). These various kinds of continuations might be considered implicit hypotactic and are confronted with explicit hypotactic constructions (chapter 6). Within chains of clauses that consist only of imperatives or of imperatives and imperfects, the emphasis is is on the last element of the chain, whereas in these chains that consist of imperatives and perfectum consecutivum, emphasis is on the imperatives. Chains ending in "w.x.imperf" may emphasize the first or the last clause.


Garr, W. Randall. A Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.


Web-related bibliography

The whole of Lane's Arabic-English lexicon is downloadable at <http://www.studyquran.co.uk/LLhome.htm>.
