

Old Testament Survey

Course Syllabus

Welcome to the online course Old Testament Survey, one of six courses we provide for Navigator staff toward a deeper and broader understanding of established theological topics, and a more skillful proficiency in time-honored theological practices prevalent in the Body of Christ worldwide. It is our hope that God will use this course to stretch and strengthen you, and to equip you for a lifetime of motivated and fruitful ministry.

General Information

There are four weekly activities involved in the fulfillment of course expectations— (1) viewing the weekly instruction video (with notes), (2) reading the assigned instruction material from the textbook and related articles, (3) writing original posts to assigned questions for group forum discussion, and (4) responding to group members' posts. There is an additional final assignment of a 3–5-page (double-spaced) essay or project/artifact to assess what you have learned about the Old Testament by integrating course material with an interpretation of a passage and its impact on your ministry context. During the dates of the course there will also be two opportunities to participate in video-conferences with the instructors and group members in lieu of that week's forum posts in order to provide real-time interaction over course material. And, of course, instructors will be available to respond to your logistical and content questions on an as-needed basis.

Specifics on course activities:

The structure of weekly assignments is purposely repeated in order to make expectations clear and routine. Expectations should be predictable, taking as much mystery as is possible out of planning your time.

- (1) **Weekly Instruction Video and Notes** – Each week an instruction video will be available on the course website for viewing that coincides with notebook pages for taking notes (available on the course website for downloading). Video instruction and reading material are designed to complement one another rather than repeat the week's instructional content.
- (2) **Weekly Assigned Reading** – Reading materials are designed to both inform and challenge your thoughts on and approaches to biblical interpretation. You may not agree with everything you read, and neither do we, but try to understand the writer's points without "knee-jerk" reactions or immediate dismissal. It may help to consider yourself in a face-to-face dialogue with the writer in which you extend appropriate interpersonal listening and probing skills. Remember, exposure to others' perspectives with critical consideration allows you to clarify your own perspectives.

You will want to have the week's writing assignments in view as you take notes from the videos and reading. This will be essential to the efficient and effective use of your time, as it will focus your notes on the issues assigned for forum discussion. Keep a log of questions that arise for you as you read.

Weekly reading assignments in the textbook will not necessarily follow the authors' sequencing of content, but will supplement the topic introduced by the week's video instruction. If references are made to sections not yet read, do not feel that you have to go back and read them in order to understand the majority of the assigned reading and respond to the forum questions. You may find the two *Pocket Dictionaries* that are recommended in the Course Description (*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* and *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*) to be very helpful in providing brief notes on words, people, and theological concepts mentioned by the writers. The glossary in the textbook is a helpful resource, as well (pages 333–336). In some instances a common dictionary will also be helpful, as academicians can tend to write in view of peer reviews.

In addition to the textbook, some weeks' reading will include an article from a recognized theologian in a scholarly journal. These journals can provide a wealth of insight and are where many discussions about issues in Biblical Studies take place among leading and upcoming scholars in the field. Some of these articles will be optional reading should they interest you. If you want to post a question from the optional reading in your response for the week that is acceptable.

- (3) **Weekly Group Forum Posts** – By Thursday of each week you will test your understanding and insights into the instruction material by posting an approximately 250-word response to assigned questions related to the week's content. In addition to the 250-word answer, there will be brief replies required related to the interpretation of a passage of Scripture, and your own questions raised by the instructional content.

Because completion of the course may be used by some for consideration for advanced credit by a seminary, we need standards of performance without becoming overly grade conscious. Assessment of your forum posts (and responses – #4 below) will be based on three criteria: **Completion** (of the week's assignment), **Focus and Organization of Thought** (how well the subject matter is treated – well-presented viewpoints/arguments, well-connected and well-sequenced thoughts), and **Depth** (insightful drawing on all of the week's instructional content – reading and video). A rating of "Adequate" or "Inadequate" will be given for each post toward a cumulative final course evaluation.

- (4) **Weekly Responses to Group Forums** – By Saturday of each week you have the opportunity to read and respond to the posts of other group members in an effort to broaden understanding beyond your own insights. The goal is not to engage in online debate, but to provide affirmation (with substance!) or seek clarification for understanding the post. The expectation is for two responses of 2–4 substantive sentences each.

Example Response

Heidi, in all three of your reflections there seems to be an underlying theme of longings for and expressions of the genuine experience of the gospel in community – the warmth and fullness of communication, the genuine experience of the presence and power of the Spirit of God, and wholehearted devotion to one another. As you have said, how could this not be irresistible to a world of people who sense their own alienation, powerlessness, and aloneness? Surely the communication of the gospel is experienced in its demonstration by Christians and by the church before it can be heard, because trust, the operative word for response to the gospel, is needed for humble and vulnerable listening and receiving. The

lives of the messengers and their relationships with one another are not incidental to the verbal presentation, but are, rather, essential.

Appropriate etiquette for online forums includes (1) remembering that you are interacting with a real person with real feelings, (2) respecting one another's church traditions, beliefs, and perspectives, as well as cultural and ethnic perspectives, (3) recognizing the limitation of expression (tone of voice, body language, gestures) in online communication and choosing words carefully so as to avoid misunderstanding or being inflammatory (*Note: Most people write to be understood and need to work at writing in order to avoid being misunderstood.*), (4) posting and responding promptly out of courtesy to others' time and effort, and (5) avoiding unhelpful informality, such as texting acronyms, excessive poor spelling and punctuation, and unfocused comments or attempted humor. Online communication is informal by its nature, but can become ineffectively so. You may need to find a friend to help by editing for you at first.

What if you fall behind? – Life and ministry responsibilities can be unpredictable, and require time you had not planned. If you foresee or experience unavoidable time constraints, communicate with your instructor to work out a plan. Do not allow yourself to get more than one week behind, as you will find it increasingly difficult to maintain momentum and to catch up. Remember that other participants are counting on your timely posts, as well, for their own learning experience.

Final Integrative Essay or Artifact/Ministry Tool – At the close of the course you will be required to produce either a final integrative essay or an artifact that you can use in your daily ministry.

Integrated Essay - The integrative paper gives you an opportunity to bring together thoughts and lessons from the course material in an interpretation of a passage. The interpretation should major on the lessons covered in the course. The potential topics are listed in the weekly assignments handouts. In order to accomplish this in 3-5 double-spaced pages, the paper will need to be content-dense. Do not include anecdotes, personal stories, or long Bible quotations. Bible references are adequate, unless a particular phrase is needed to make a point. If you include a direct quotation or a "borrowed thought," list its bibliographic reference in an endnote in Turabian format (see example below). Please give credit where credit is due. (endnotes not included in the page limit)

Example Endnote

¹ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), p. 28.

Papers should consist of three parts: (1) a clear and concise introduction paragraph indicating what your paper will accomplish, (2) the treatment of the passage (the bulk of your content), and (3) a concise conclusion that demonstrates ideas for an integration of the central teaching of the passage with your ministry context. Interpret your passage in light of what you have learned about deriving meaning.

Select one of the following passages for your paper:

1. **Outline a Book, a section of Psalms or the prophets:** Make an outline of any Old Testament book by explaining the major divisions of the text as well as key themes. Write out some practical applications from the book as well or point out the primary application. One example of a prophetic section would be the “servant songs” of Isaiah or Ezekiel’s imagery of the valley of dry bones.
2. **Character study of an OT figure:** Do a character study of an OT figure such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samson, Naomi, Ruth, Samuel, David, or a figure of your choice. Explain their story, their contribution(s), and the key application(s) to take away from their life. This assignment *is not* just regurgitating what story of a person. Assume your audience is familiar with their life and that your study builds upon what is stated in the text. Note: applications do not have to be positive but can be warnings of what not to do.
3. **Come up with an assignment of your own.** This would need to be sent to the instructor for approval.

Artifact or Ministry Tool – Create a tool that you can use in your practical ministry context. This could be an outline of a book, a character outline/study of a certain individual or individuals, a teaching tool, or something you could use to bring greater understanding of the word of God to those you minister to. This allows you to create something from this course that you can directly apply to your ministry context. Feel free to discuss what this could look like with your course mentors and they will be happy to provide some examples of how this has been done in previous courses.

Final integrative essays or artifacts are due at the assigned time listed in the weekly assignments. This will come after the completion of the course.

Each week’s assignments include suggestions for incremental progress in the completion of your essay. This will enhance integration of the learning content and possibly prevent last-minute anxiety due to procrastination. Should you need more time to complete your essay just ask the instructor to reach an appropriate agreement on a due date.

Old Testament Survey – Overview of Weekly Topics

Week 1. *Introduction to the Old Testament and the Creation Era*

Week 2. *The Patriarchs*

Week 3. *The Exodus Era*

Week 4. *The Conquest and Judges Era*

Week 5. *The Early Kingdom*

Week 6. *The Divided Kingdom*

Week 7. *The Exile and Return Era*

Week 8. *The Inter-Testamental Period*

Week 9. *The Prophets*

Week 10. *The Wisdom Literature*