

**Old Testament History and Religion**  
**BIB 1001: Section 11, Fall 2022**

Point Loma Nazarene University  
Fall 2022

Professor: The Rev. Prof. Kevin Portillo, M.Div.  
Email: [kportill@pointloma.edu](mailto:kportill@pointloma.edu)

Tues. & Thurs. 12:25pm - 1:20pm

Office: PLNU Balboa Campus

Schedule an Appointment: <https://calendly.com/chaplainkp/30min>

**Course Description and Purpose**

This course is one of the components of the “Foundational Explorations (General Education)” at PLNU, under the category of “Biblical Foundations.” PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world’s diverse societies and cultures.

This course is designed to introduce academic study and interpretation to the Old Testament that will increase personal devotion and understanding the OT as Christian Scripture. The class will provide an introduction to (1) the literature and content of the Old Testament in its social, historical, literary, and theological contexts; and (2) the critical study of the Old Testament. This course is designed as a *journey* through the story/drama of God and God’s people. Entering into the drama of God’s creation and redemption will introduce the student to the basic content of the Bible and will equip the student with the tools and skills necessary to continue entering God’s drama throughout his or her life.

Cognitive development will be cultivated through textbook readings, classroom discussions/lectures, and periodic quizzes and examinations. Social development will be encouraged through small group discussions and presentations as through the relating of biblical revelation to contemporary issues. Spiritual and Christian development will be nurtured through dialogue with the Christian scriptures in community. From the time of Jesus Christ, Christians have always held the Old Testament as central to their worship and were shaped by God through it, and our prayer is for God to continue to use the Old Testament to challenge, to teach, and to shape us in our contemporary settings.

**Course Learning Outcomes (School of Theology and Christian Ministry)**

*The student who successfully completes this course will be able to:*

- 1) Identify the historical contexts of the Old Testament.
- 2) Articulate the unity of the Old Testament in its canonical context within the diverse literature of the Christian canon.
- 3) Articulate and appreciate the ways in which the Bible, understood as given by divine inspiration, functions as the church's central norm for Christian discipleship, faith and practice; and,
- 4) Articulate the basic content of the books of the Old Testament and the methods appropriate to the interpretation of those books.

## **PLNU Mission: To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send**

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

## **Foundational Explorations Mission**

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

### **Course Texts**

1. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (NRSV). Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.
2. Brad E. Kelle, *Telling the Old Testament Story: God's Mission and God's People*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2017.

### **Course Requirements**

1. Class Participation and Attendance: In this abbreviated journey through the story of the OT, class attendance is a necessity for optimum academic achievement. *If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (more than THREE [3] classes), the faculty member can file a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (more than SIX [6] classes), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material.*

*\*NOTE: Giving false information on the daily roll sheet (i.e. signing someone else in or having someone else sign you in) is an act of cheating that is equal to cheating on an exam. It will subject you to the academic dishonesty penalties of the university, including failure of this course and possible expulsion from the university.*

2. Readings: The OT is the primary text for this course. All readings are required. ***PLEASE BRING YOUR BIBLE TO CLASS! I will be using the NRSV translation of the Bible, which is the translation of one of your required texts: *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*.*** It is important to keep up with the readings on a session by session basis or the information will quickly become overwhelming. *A significant part of the student's grade comes from quizzes over the assigned reading material (see below).*

3. Quizzes and Mid-Term Exam: There will be 6 *Quizzes & 1 Mid-Term Exam* that covers various reading assignments and associated class lectures. The dates of the quizzes and exams are listed on the course schedule and study guides will be provided.

4. “The Tribes of Israel”: Group Presentation on an OT Book: In addition to more traditional methods of presentation by the professor, our course will have a significant element of small group work and discussion during various class sessions. Rather than a course in which the professor simply imparts a massive amount of information for students to regurgitate, students will work together to read closely, think collaboratively, and formulate thoughtful responses to texts and issues (an additional, hoped-for benefit of such assignments is to invite the students into the practices of true liberal arts education, namely, academic reading, thinking, collaborating, and writing, rather than outcome-based standardized test taking). The major instance of such work will be that each student will participate in an assigned small group and make a class presentation on an assigned book from the OT (groups and books will be assigned in class). The presentation should be **10 minutes in length** and **follow the instruction sheet attached to this syllabus. You can either: Create a Powerpoint Presentation and Present In-Class or Create a YouTube Video Presentation, and we will watch it in-class together.** Each group member will receive the same grade for the presentation. Due dates are listed on the course schedule

***(NOTE: a one-page handout and powerpoint presentation OR YouTube Video Link must be emailed to Prof. Portillo by noon on the day before your presentation).***

5. Biblical Interpretation Paper: Write a 1,000 word Biblical Interpretation Paper following “The Biblical Interpretation Paper Guide” provided at the end of this syllabus. The paper will cover the historical, cultural, literary; and cultural content of an Old Testament story/ passage. You may select your own passage. Further instruction will be given in the class as well as guidance on how to write a biblical interpretation paper. Additional resources are given in *Canvas*. Also, use the “Biblical Interpretation Paper Guide” at the bottom of the Course Syllabus. This paper is due in ***Canvas* by 11:59pm on Tuesday, November 29th.**

6. Final Exam: As the culmination to the semester, there will be a final, comprehensive Final Exam. It will cover all the material from the previous quizzes. A study guide will be provided in class. The final exam will take place *in the classroom* on the scheduled day and time for the class’s final exam according to the university’s final exam schedule.

## Course Policies

1. Grading: The student's grade will be based on a combination of class participation, reading, assignments, and exams as follows:

<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
120 (20 pts each)	6 Reading Quizzes
80	Take-Home Mid-Term Exam ( <i>Canvas</i> )
100	Group Presentation on OT Book
80	Biblical Interpretation Paper
120	Final Exam

\*Total: 500 (possible points)

<u>*Grading Scale</u> :	94-100 A	84-86 B	74-76 C	64-66 D
	90-93 A-	80-83 B-	70-73 C-	60-63 D-
	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	50s F

2. Attendance: In this abbreviated journey through the story of the OT, class attendance is a necessity for optimum academic achievement. *If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (more than THREE [3] classes), the faculty member can file a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (more than SIX [6] classes), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation.* See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material. Please note that it is the student's responsibility to obtain notes, etc. from other students for any missed classes.

*\*NOTE: Giving false information on the daily roll sheet (i.e. signing someone else in or having someone else sign you in) is an act of cheating that is equal to cheating on an exam. It will subject you to the academic dishonesty penalties of the university, including failure of this course and possible expulsion from the university.*

3. Laptops, iPads, etc.: Students are *not* permitted to use laptop computers, iPads, or similar devices in the classroom during the class sessions (if you have documented reason to do so from the Disability Resource Center or other extenuating circumstances, please discuss with the professor).

4. Late Work Policy: In order not to be considered "late," all assignments must be submitted by the day and time listed as the due date. *Grace Period*: If the student "forgets" or otherwise misses an assignment, she or he may submit it up to one week after the due date for no more than half credit. *No assignment will be accepted for credit of any kind more than one week after the original due date.* (NOTE: Any *extra-credit* assignments must be submitted on or before the due date and will not be accepted late for credit of any kind).

5. Inclusivity: The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the school urges students, faculty, and

staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. This course will strive to practice sensitivity toward and foster respect for issues of inclusivity in matters of language and conduct. Each student should seek to enrich this inclusive atmosphere in both their class contributions and personal interactions.

6. Academic Honesty: Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

7. Academic Accommodations: If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU's Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at [DRC@pointloma.edu](mailto:DRC@pointloma.edu). See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

8. PLNU Copyright Policy: Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

### **Course Credit Hour Information**

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 2-unit class delivered over 16 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 75 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes.

### **State Authorization**

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1: Introduction to the Course

#### **1. Thurs. Sept. 1**

Starting Points (Pt. 1): Introduction to the Course

Readings: None

### Week 2: What is the Old Testament? Why Study It? (Pt. I)

#### **2. Tues. Sept. 6**

Starting Points (Pt.2): What Is the OT and Why Study It?

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. xv-xvi ("Introduction") and pp. xvii-xx ("To the Reader")

2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. xv-xviii

#### **3. Thurs. Sept. 8**

What Is the OT and From Where Did It Come (Pt. 1)?: Inspiration and Function

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. 2255-2260 ("Inspiration of Scripture")

**\*Quiz #1 take in class, not on Canvas: The books of the OT (be able to write in order of Protestant canon).**

### Week 3: What is the OT? How Should We Interpret? (Pt. II)

#### **4. Tues. Sept. 13**

What Is the OT and From Where Did It Come (Pt. 2)?: Origins and Backgrounds

a. Origins, Composition, and Canonization

b. Geography, Culture, and History

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. 2274-2279 ("Culture and Religion among the Ancient Israelites")

2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, ch. 1.

#### **5. Thurs. Sept. 15**

How Then Should We Read the OT? Methods for Biblical Interpretation

& How to Write a Biblical Interpretation Paper

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. 2261-2267 ("Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation") & pp. 2268-2273 ("Varieties of Readings...")

### Week 4: Introduction to the Pentateuch

#### **6. Tues. Sept. 20**

Introducing the "OT Story": To Form a People and Find an Instrument

Readings: 1. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, ch. 2

**\*Quiz #2 on Canvas over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* articles, "Inspiration," "Culture and Religion," "Guidelines for Reading," and "Varieties of Readings"—*Complete this quiz on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight.***

**7. Thurs. Sept. 22**

A. Introduction to the Pentateuch

B. Genesis 1—11: The Primeval History (Pt. 1): The Creation Stories

- Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Genesis  
2. Genesis 1—2

**Week 5: Genesis**

**8. Tues. Sept. 27**

Genesis 1—11: The Primeval History (Pt. 2): Creation Goes Haywire

- Readings: 1. Genesis 3—9  
2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 29-47

**9. Thurs. Sept. 29**

Genesis 1—11: The Primeval History (Pt. 3): Creation Goes Haywire

- Readings: 1. Genesis 10—11  
2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 48-54

**\*Quiz #3 on Canvas over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* Introduction to Genesis and the main characters and events in Gen 1-11-- *Complete this quiz on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight***

**\*Organize groups for small group presentations**

**Week 6: Genesis & Exodus**

**10. Tues. Oct. 4**

Promise to Restore Creation & the Calling of a People: The Ancestral Narratives (Genesis 12—50)

- Readings: 1. Genesis 12—13; 15—17; 20—22; 50  
2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 55-70

**11. Thurs. Oct. 6**

The Creation of a People (Pt.1): The Exodus from Egypt (Exod 1—15)

- Readings:  
1) *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Exodus  
2) Exod 1-15  
3) Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 70-79

**Week 7: Exodus & Leviticus & Numbers**

**12. Tues. Oct. 11**

The Creation of a People (Pt.2): The Exodus from Egypt (Exod 1—15) & Into the Wilderness (Exod 16—18)

- Readings:  
1) Exodus 16-18

**13. Thurs. Oct. 13**

The Formation of a People (Pt. 1): Covenant and Law in the Wilderness

- Readings: 1. Exod 19—23 and *New Interpreter's Study Bible* intro to Leviticus  
2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 81-95

**Week 8: Deuteronomy & The Promised Land**

**14. Tues. Oct. 18**

The Formation of a People (Pt. 2): Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History, and the New Generation

- Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Deuteronomy  
2. Deuteronomy 1—6; 12—15; 28—30  
3. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 102-109

**\*Quiz #4 on Canvas over the main characters in Gen 12—50 and *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Exodus and Leviticus-- *Complete this quiz on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight***

**15. Thurs. Oct. 20**

Entrance into the Land: Joshua and Judges

- Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Joshua and Judges  
2. Joshua 1—12; 24  
3. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 111-123

**Week 9: Kings, Exile, & The Prophets**

**16. Tues. Oct. 25**

Two Kingdoms in the Land (1—2 Kings) and Descent into Exile

- Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to 1 Kings & 2 Kings  
2. 1 Kings 11—12; 2 Kings 15—25  
3. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 123-134

**\*TAKE-HOME MIDTERM on Canvas-- *Complete this midterm on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight***

**17. Thurs. Oct. 27**

The Divine Voice to the People: Understanding the Prophets

- Readings: 1. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 163-165

**Week 10: The OT Prophets (Pt. I)**

**18. Tues. Nov. 1**

Group Presentations on OT Books: Hosea, Micah, and Nahum

- Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Hosea, Micah, and Nahum

**\*Group Presentations on Hosea, Micah, and Nahum (email your 1-sheet handout & powerpoint presentation to Prof. Portillo by noon on Mon, Oct. 31)**

**19. Thurs. Nov. 3**

The Prophet: Amos

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Amos  
2. Amos 1—9  
3. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 165-171

**\*Quiz #5 on Canvas over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings-- Complete this quiz on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight**

**Week 11: The OT Prophets (Pt. II)**

**20. Tues. Nov. 8**

Group Presentations Jeremiah and Habakkuk

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Jeremiah and Habakkuk

**\*Group Presentations on Jeremiah and Habakkuk (email your 1-sheet handout & powerpoint presentation to Prof. Portillo by noon on Tues. Nov. 9)**

**21. Thurs. Nov. 10**

Speaking to the South: Isaiah

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Isaiah  
2. Isaiah 1—7; 11  
3. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 171-175

**Week 12: Life in Exile & Israel's Response (Pt. I)**

**22. Tues. Nov. 15**

Life in Exile: Rethinking the Story (Group Presentations on Psalms, Esther, Daniel 1—6)

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Psalms, Esther, Daniel

**\*Group Presentations on Psalms, Esther, and Daniel 1—6 (email your 1-sheet handout & powerpoint presentation to Prof. Portillo by noon on Tues. Nov. 16)**

**23. Thurs. Nov. 17**

Responses to the Exile (Pt. 1): Group Presentations on Job and Lamentations

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Job and Lamentations  
2. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 151-157

**\*Group Presentations on Job & Lamentations (email your 1-sheet handout & powerpoint presentation to Prof. Portillo by noon on Tues. Nov. 30)**

**\*Quiz #6 over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Psalms, Isaiah, and Amos-- Complete this quiz on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight**

**Week 13: THANKGIVING BREAK**

**24. Tues. Nov. 22 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**25. Thurs. Nov. 24 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14: Life in Exile, Post-Exile, & Israel's Response (Pt. II)**

**26. Tues. Nov. 29**

Responses to the Exile (Pt. 2): Honest Expressions of Grief and Prophetic Voices of Hope (Lament Psalms, Isaiah 40—55; Jeremiah; Ezekiel)

- Readings:* 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* Introduction to Ezekiel  
2. Psalm 6, 13, 28, 30, 31, 32, 88, 89  
3. Isaiah 40—43

**\*Biblical Interpretation Paper due on Canvas by 11:59pm tonight.**

**27. Thurs. Dec. 1**

Beginning Again: The Post-Exile (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Isaiah 56-66, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

- Readings:* 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah  
2. 2 Chronicles 36; Ezra 1—4; 8—10  
3. Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp. 135-149

**Week 15: The End of the Old Testament & Jesus Christ**

**28. Tues. Dec. 6**

The End Is the Beginning: The Ending of the OT Story

*Readings:* Kelle, *Telling the OT Story*, pp.179-194

**29. Thurs. Dec. 8**

The Old Testament & Jesus Christ, the Gospel.

How is the Old Testament related to Jesus Christ?

Marcionism, Gnosticism, and the Response of the Church Catholic

**Final Examinations Week: Dec. 12-16**

**\*FINAL EXAMS WEEK: *The final, comprehensive Final Exam will take place in the classroom on the day and time scheduled for this class according to the university's final exam schedule (on school's website under "Academics").***

**The Tribes of Israel:  
GROUP PRESENTATION ON AN OT BOOK  
Instruction Sheet**

**GOAL:** The goal of this presentation is to give a substantial but overall introduction to your assigned biblical book, *informed by modern biblical scholarship's work on the book*. Think of your group as answering the question, "What is the book of x, what is modern biblical scholarship saying about it, and how does it fit into the overall story of the OT?" You have only **10 minutes**, so you will want to plan your presentation carefully in advance, yet you should still give a thorough presentation and have creative elements (like powerpoint, illustrations, music or video clip, etc.).

**1) PREPARATION:** To research your presentation, you should draw from two sources:

- a) Read the introduction for your book in the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* (you should also consult the study notes in the Bible for some of the significant passages in the book)
- b) Find the commentary on your book in the multi-volume commentary series entitled *The New Interpreter's Bible* (these volumes are located in the reference room or stacks of the library). Read carefully (and use!) the Introduction to your book given in the commentary.

**2) SUBMIT (EMAIL) TO PROFESSOR BY NOON THE DAY BEFORE YOUR PRESENTATION (kportill@pointloma.edu) Two Items:**

a) Word document of a **1-page handout** (single sided only) that has the most important points you want the class to remember from each of the 4 areas of your presentation listed below. I will make copies for you to distribute this to the class for your presentation.

b) Your **powerpoint** presentation OR Youtube Video link.

***\*Failure to email these by noon the day before your presentation will result in 4 points subtracted from your presentation for EACH missing element (possible 8 total)***

**3) PRESENTATION:** For your 10-minute presentation, you should include at least the following elements:

- a. An introduction/survey of the major content, themes, structure, and distinctive elements of your book (*i.e., what is this book and what is in it?*)
- b. A survey of the major critical interpretive issues that have been and are discussed in modern biblical scholarship (these might include the date, setting, genre, etc.). Give the class a rundown on the various views on the major issues and provide what you take to be the best options on these issues (*i.e., where did this book come from, how did we get it, what issues do scholars discuss about it?*)
- c. Walk the class through one (maybe two, but watch your time!) passage(s) from your book that, in your mind, illustrates the main content, themes, and interpretive issues for the book
- d. How does your book fit into the overall story of God in the OT as we have presented it in this course (effort to restore creation, form a people as an instrument, etc.)?

**\*\*NOTE: Be creative! Scripture was always meant to be taught in engaging and captivating ways for the formation of a people. Use your gifts, skills, and resources. Use slideshows, music, video clips, animation, illustrations, comedy, etc. Make sure, however, that there is substantive content and watch your 10-minute time limit!**

## **Biblical Interpretation Paper Guide**

1. To find the meaning of your selected passage chose a thought-unit of reasonable size. If it is too large, you will not be able to provide adequate detail. If too small, you may not have enough content to demonstrate a structural meaning. A non-narrative thought-unit could range from six to 15 verses; a narrative passage might be considerably longer (cf. Jesus and the Woman at the Well [John 4]; David and Bathsheba [2 Samuel 11-12]). Briefly explain why your passage is a legitimate thought unit. Look for indicators such as change of subject, speaker, location, genre, etc.
2. The goal of the assignment is to learn how to find an appropriate meaning by analyzing the structure, setting, and content of the thought-unit. As you begin this task, read, re-read, and re-re-read your passage before you begin researching your passage. After four or five readings of the text, begin to note (by writing down) what you observe about the passage and any questions that are raised in your mind.
3. Think about and, if necessary, investigate the purpose(s) of the book in which your chosen passage finds its place. You may find this information in an introduction to the Old/New Testament or in the opening of a standard commentary.
4. Now look intensely at the passage itself. Begin this point by noting carefully the genre of your book/ passage [Use *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* to start here]. Probe the text by asking relevant questions of it. Find the parts of which it is composed. Make an outline of the passage.

### **Questions to ask of your text:**

- (1) What is the historical context of your passage? This includes pertinent political, cultural and social factors, and especially the occasion and purpose of the text. What situation called forth the text from the author? Who is writing/speaking to whom and why? What outside information do we need to know in order to understand what is being said? Are there possible and/or identifiable multiple historical contexts? For example, in the NT the gospels have the dual setting of Jesus in his ministry and also that of the evangelists and his church. In the OT one might think of the setting of the person Ruth as well as the setting of those for whom the book of Ruth was initially written.
  - (2) What is the literary context of your passage? What is the larger argument/story-line that your passage is a part of, and what part does your text play in that argument/story-line? What is the writer's line of thought and where does your passage fit within it?
  - (3) What is the content of your passage? Unpack the "meaning load" that the passage is carrying. Trace the line of thought/argument within the text. Identify the meaning of key words, the significance of key events, etc. Be able to outline your passage. Know how it hangs together and the point(s) that is/are being made. How does it speak to the situation and what is it saying? This is where you finally get at what specifically the author intended to say, what the passage meant when it was first spoken/written and heard/read.
5. Identify the main point or theme of the passage [the BIG IDEA], then ask and answer the question: What does each part of this piece have to do with the main idea or theme? How do the various sections relate to each other?
  6. If there are ideas, metaphors, word-pictures, or terms that you do not understand, research them in a Bible or theological dictionary, or in a commentary. This paper is not primarily a research paper, but finding help is OK!

7. Pull together the preceding by explaining or re-creating what this passage meant to its original hearers (in its literary setting). Conclude this step by explaining the theological witness of the text. What does your passage reveal about the nature of God or what it means to belong to the people of God?
8. Finally, provide a [BRIEF!] personal response to what you have discovered. What does this passage mean to you? Do not do this step before you have completed the steps above. No more than 1 paragraph should go to this section. The main purpose of this paper is to allow the text to speak for itself and then, offer conclusions and responses from the text.
9. Find an argumentative edge and write your paper.

**Bibliography:** Use at least three translations of the Bible (NRSV, NASB, ESV, NKJV). Also use a Bible dictionary and/or biblical handbook where pertinent. Consult two or three commentaries, but only after you have done your own work on the text.

**Format:** Turabian/Chicago Style *or* MLA