

Course Syllabus

School of Theology & Christian Ministry

HON 2001 Old Testament History and Religion

2 Units

Fall 2025 – Quad I

Meeting days/times: TR 9:30 am – 11:20 am

Meeting location: Bond 151

Final Exam: Friday, 10/17 by midnight

Instructor title and
name:

Dr Stephanie Smith Matthews

Phone:

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Office location and
hours:

Smee 211 & online Mon-Thurs by appointment

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.

General Education 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 Description

Within the context of the history of Israel, this course provides an overview of the literature of the Old Testament with special attention to its religious and theological meaning. This course (in conjunction with HON 2002 in sequential quad terms) highlights the theological unity of the Christian Scriptures, while exploring the literary diversity of the two-testament canon.

Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the historical contexts of the Old Testament.
- Articulate the unity of the Old Testament in its canonical context within the diverse literature of the Christian canon.
- 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,
- Articulate the basic content of the books of the Old Testament and the methods appropriate to the interpretation of those books.

General Education Learning Outcomes (GELOs)

This course is one of the components of the Foundational Explorations Program at Point Loma Nazarene University, under the category of “Responding to the Sacred.” By including this course in a common educational experience for undergraduates, the faculty supports the study of Scripture and

Christian heritage as foundational in the pursuit of knowledge and the development of personal values.

- [Link to GE courses and assessment plan](#)
- [Link to GELO's](#)
- [Links to an external site.](#)
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- GELO 3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of Christian Scripture, Tradition, and Ethics, including engagement in acts of devotion and works of mercy.
- The signature assignment assessing FELO3 will be within the **Final Project** (Oct 17). Focusing on the understanding of Christian Scripture portion of this learning outcome, students will respond in writing to a question in a way that applies a reading of Old Testament texts to an issue of theological importance, citing Scripture responsibly.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Students are responsible for having the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class.

All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

1. Michael Coogan, et.al., eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV w/Apocrypha)*, (5th ed; Oxford University Press, 2018), ISBN 0790276072
2. Matthew Richard Schlimm, *This Strange and Sacred Scripture: Wrestling with the Old Testament and Its Oddities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), ISBN: 9781426793042.
3. Additional resources available via the course Canvas page.

Assessment and Grading

Grades will be based on the following:

Grade Scale Based on Percentages

A B C D F

A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F Less than 59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Assignment distribution by percentage:

- 35% Readings and Weekly Homework
- 20% Midterm Exam
- 15% Discussion Leadership
- 30% Final Project

Descriptions of each assignment group may be found under “Assignments at a Glance” at the end of this syllabus and in Canvas.

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted. *Note: as a Quad 1 course, this final exam will be Oct 17.*

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In Old Testament History and Religion, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include discussions of the different views on the inspiration of Scripture and its interpretation. It is not uncommon within the scope of this class for students to voice differing opinions on topics such as gender roles, politics, and the role of the church in society. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family

about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of biblical studies, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In Old Testament History and Religion, students may choose biblical passages that may cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics may include reading about violent imagery and threats of violence, slavery, and other forms of human oppression and abuse. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include reassigning or proactively assigning peer review assignments, leaving class while the topic is discussed, or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of biblical studies and their interpretation, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

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 distance education outside California.

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.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

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](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

You are allowed, but not required, to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to revise writing and generate ideas for select assignments, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor. In this course we will discuss the implications of use of AI in relation to biblical interpretation.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

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. Thus, terms like “man” or “mankind” or the pronoun “he,” should not be used to refer to all humans. Instead “people,” “humanity,” “humans,” and “he or she” better acknowledge women as full persons.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

PLNU Course Modality Definitions

- Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction is fully online.
 - Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.
 - Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.
- Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.
- In-Person Courses: These are courses that meet in person with the instructor and students in a physical classroom setting. With approval by the area dean, this may include up to 25% of qualified class interactions through a Learning Management System (such as Canvas).

In some courses, a portion of the credit hour content will be delivered asynchronously and attendance will be determined by submitting the assignments by the posted due dates. See [Academic Policies](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog.

Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

A day of attendance in asynchronous content is determined as contributing a substantive note, assignment, discussion, or submission by the posted due date. Failure to meet these standards will result in an absence for that day. Instructors will determine how many asynchronous attendance days are required each week.

Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- [Appointment Calendar](#)
- [Links to an external site.](#)
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- [Website](#)
- Email: writingcenter@pointloma.edu

Assignments At-A-Glance

Note: Specific assignment information for weekly homework, instruction sheets and rubrics, and all due dates will be posted in Canvas.

Readings and Weekly Homework (35%): The OT is the primary text for this course. All readings are required. Please have your Bible with you for Zoom sessions. It is important to keep up with the

readings on a session-by-session basis or the information will quickly become overwhelming. Reading check-ups 1 and 3 will be online quizzes. For reading check-ups 2 and 4, you will fill out a worksheet and bring it to class. (FELO 1c)

Midterm Exam (20%): The quiz will be taken in class **on Thurs, Sept 25**. It will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and matching. The quiz will cover the contents of the mini-lectures and assigned readings from the first half of the quad (Tue, Sept 6–Tue, Sept. 20). (FELO 1c)

Discussion Leadership (15%): Each student will take a turn facilitating discussion in their breakout session over the assigned reading for that class session. Students will prepare discussion questions and/or group activity and submit to the professor two days before their assigned day. An instruction guide and rubric will be posted to Canvas.

Final project (30%): As the culmination to the quad, there will be a final project due (submitted online) during our final exam period. We will practice these skills during discussions, especially in the sessions after the midterm exam. You will have a choice of format (paper, video, visual presentation, etc.) A complete instruction sheet and rubric will be provided. Briefly, you will be asked to: Choose any passage (about 10 verses) from the Old Testament and reinterpret it in two ways:

1) A historical interpretation: how might the Hebrew people exiled from their land interpret this passage? How might they compare it to their situation? What message from God (hope, guidance, peace, etc.) might they find as they reinterpret this passage for their time?

2) A contemporary application for today: how might people today interpret this passage? How might they compare it to their situation? What message from God (hope, guidance, peace, etc.) might they find as they reinterpret this passage for their time?

Lomabooks Instructions for Students:

*This course is part of our course material delivery program, **LomaBooks**. The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas.*

You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your materials.

*For more information about **LomaBooks**, please go: [HERE](#)*