

**OT 2298 History of Old Testament Interpretation – The Samson Narratives**

Spring 2007

Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley

Tues 11:10-2:00 p.m., CDSP 116

Gina Hens-Piazza ([ghenspia@jstb.edu](mailto:ghenspia@jstb.edu))

Chesung Justin Ryu ([cheseong@yahoo.com](mailto:cheseong@yahoo.com))

**Course Description and Goal:** A Study of the history of Old Testament interpretation for from the rabbis to the post modern era. A concurrent study of the Book of Judges with specific focus upon the Samson narratives will serve to illustrate the interpretative trends down through the ages as well as sample the broad range of interpretations of these traditions in Judges 13-16.

**Learning Outcomes**

- ability to trace the history of Old Testament interpretation across broad periodizations
- a grasp of the theoretical currents associated with various developments across this history with reference to the book of Judges
- an understanding of the historical, textual and literary dimensions of the Samson narratives
- an understanding of the main scholars' work who have impacted interpretation of these texts
- an ability to identify the connections between the currents of Old Testament interpretation and the developments in the interpretation of the Samson narratives in particular, and the Book of Judges in general
- the ability to conduct in-depth research on a topic related to the Samson texts and the history of Old Testament interpretation

**Course Requirements:**

1. Active participation in seminar sessions: Each week students will be asked to bring one-two pages of summary (including key points and discussion questions) of the required readings
2. Each student will lead a couple (few) discussions on the class reading materials.
3. A research exegesis paper (10-12 pages) on the Samson Narratives. Outline of this paper will be due April 24<sup>th</sup>. Final Paper is due May 15<sup>th</sup>.
4. Successful completion of in-class-essay exercise on the History of the Old Testament
5. Response paper for Bal's Book (Format will be handed out.)

**Required Materials**

Reader

Bal, Mieke. *Death & Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

## Class Schedule

[Assignment Code: - Reader, + Required Text, # On Lib. Reserve]

### **Week 1, Jan. 30 - Overview of OT Interpretation - Historical map / Intro to Judges**

# Anchor Bible Dictionary III, "Interpretation of History - History of OT Interpretation," 425-33.

# NIB (the New Interpreter's Bible) Old Testament Survey, - "The Book of Judges," (109-12)

### **Week 2, Feb. 6 - Hermeneutical Issues that develop due to the course of OT interpretation - Different commentaries on Samson narrative / Intro to Samson narratives**

- Schneiders, Sandra Marie. "Implication for Interpretation of the Relation of the Text to Its Subject Matter: The Problem of Methodology." In *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*. 2nd ed. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999. 110-127 (Terminology / Approaches / Exegesis, Criticism, and Hermeneutics)
- # Commentaries on Samson Narratives (TBA):
  1. Boling, Robert G. *Judges* Anchor Bible 6A. New York: Doubleday, 1975.
  2. Soggin, J. Alberto. *Judges, a Commentary* Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981.
  3. McCann, J. Clinton. *Judges* Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 2002.
  4. Schneider, Tammi. *Judges* Berit Olam. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000.

### **Week 3, February 13- Early Church and Medieval - OT Interpretation / Mary Ann Donovan lecture / Samson narrative in this period (14+6=20)**

- Krouse, F. Michael. "The Samson of the Patristic Period." In *Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press for Univ. of Cincinnati, 1949. 31-45
- Augustine, and Quincy Howe. "On Samson: Judges 13-16." In *Selected Sermons of St. Augustine*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966. 118-24

### **Week 4, February 20- Rabbinic Interpretations of OT / Deena Arnoff lecture**

- Ginzberg, Louis, and Boaz Cohen. "Samson." In *The Legends of the Jews*. Translated from the German Manuscript by Henrietta Szold. v. I, II, III, & IV. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909. (I: 59, 270; II: 144; III: 204-5, 414; IV: 47-49, 207-8, 431)
- Ginzberg, Louis, Henrietta Szold, and Paul Radin. *The Legends of the Jews*. V. 6 & 7. Johns Hopkins paperbacks ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. (VI: 144, 147, 201, 204-9, 250; VII: 415)

### **Week 5, February 27- Reformation Interpretation of OT trends / Luther, Calvin reading on Samson (34+26=58)**

- Prussner, Frederick C., and John H. Hayes. "The Earliest Developments in Old Testament Theology." In *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development*. Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press, 1985. 1-34.

- Wood, Arthur Skevington. *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation as Enunciated by Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967. 67-84; 85-96
- Krouse, F. Michael. "The Samson Tradition in the Renaissance." In *Milton's Samson and the Christian Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press for Univ. of Cincinnati, 1949. 63-79

**Week 6, March 6- The Turn to Historical Critical Studies / Comparative Religion approach to Samson**

- Moore, George Foot. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*. New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1900. 340-44; 348-51
- Hahn, Herbert Ferdinand, and Horace D. Hummel. "The Religio-Historical School and the Old Testament." In *The Old Testament in Modern Research*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966. 83-118
- Palmer, Abram Smythe. "Samson and the Lion and Foxes." In *The Samson-Saga and Its Place in Comparative Religion*. New York: Arno Press, 1977. 91-110

**Week 7, March 13- Historical Critical Studies (2) / Source, Form, Tradition, Redaction Studies on Samson**

- Hahn, Herbert Ferdinand, and Horace D. Hummel. "The Critical Approach to the Old Testament." In *The Old Testament in Modern Research*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966. 1-27.
- *The Interpreter's Bible: The Holy Scriptures in the King James and Revised Standard Versions with General Articles and Introduction, Exegesis, Exposition for Each Book of the Bible*. "Judges," Vol. v. II, ed. George Arthur Buttrick. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953. 781-83; 677-82.

**Week 8, March 20 - The Turn to Literary Critical Studies / Formalist Studies/ Close Reading**

- Muilenburg, James. "Form Criticism and Beyond." In *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.
- Powell, Mark Allan. "Scripture as Story." In *What Is Narrative Criticism? Guides to Biblical Scholarship*. New Testament Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. 1-10
- Exum, J. Cheryl. "Aspects of Symmetry & Balance in the Samson Saga." *JSOT* 19 (1981): 3-29.

**Week 9, March 26–30 – Spring Break**

**Week 10, April 3- Literary Study -Narrative Criticism, Characterization**

- Powell, Mark Allan. "Ways of Reading." In *What Is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. 11-34.
- Exum, J. Cheryl, and J. William Whedbee. "Isaac, Samson, and Saul: Reflections on the Comic and Tragic Visions." *Semeia* 32 (1984): 5-40.

**Week 11, April 10 – The Post-Structural/Post Modern Moves / Ideological Criticism and Intertextuality**

- Exum, J. Cheryl, and David J. A. Clines. "The New Literary Criticism." In *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*. Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994. 11-25.
- Beal, Timothy K. "Ideology and Intertextuality: Surplus of Meaning and Controlling the Means of Production." In *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Ed. Danna Nolan Fewell, 27-39. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- Gunn, David M. "Samson of Sorrows: An Isaianic Gloss on Judges 13-16." In *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*. Ed. Danna Nolan Fewell, 225-53. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

**Week 12, April 17- Feminist Criticism / *Death and Dissymmetry***

- Amit, Yairah. "'Manoah Promptly Followed His Wife': On the Place of the Woman in Birth Narratives." In *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner, 146-56. Sheffield: JSOT, 1993.
- Reinhartz, Adele. "Samson's Mother: An Unnamed Protagonist." In *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner, 157-70. Sheffield: JSOT, 1993.
- Bal, Mieke. *Death & Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. 1-93.

**Week 13, April 24- Deconstructive Readings / *Death and Dissymmetry***

- Bal, Mieke. *Death & Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. 95-247.

**Week 14, May 1- Cultural Studies and the OT**

- Exum, J. Cheryl, and Stephen D. Moore. "Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies." In *Biblical Studies, Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium*. Ed. J. Cheryl Exum and Stephen D. Moore, 19-45. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- Exum, J. Cheryl. "Why, Why, Why, Delilah?" In *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*, 173-237. Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

**Week 15, May 8- FINAL EXAM**

**Week 16, May 15 – Exegesis papers Due on/before May 15 (No Exceptions).**

(The instructors reserve the right to add or change the abovepp-- assigned readings.)