From the moment Columbus first landed in America to the time Spain, Britain, and France lost control of their kingdoms in the New World, the Old Testament shaped the cultures of their empires. The Book of Samuel taught kings, priests, and the people the contested foundations of monarchical authority and popular sovereignty. While priests sought to recapitulate the lives of Aaron, Elijah and Jonah, magistrates aspired to be like Moses and Joshua. Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, and Numbers served out lessons on territorial expansion and colonization and the proper way to design the arks and tabernacles that were local temples. By looking at the history of the Old Testament in these Atlantic empires unusual perspectives emerge: Blacks in late eighteenth century British America created exodus narratives and saw their communities as elect, modern Israels seeking migration to a Promised Land in Sierra Leone; Indians in Peru presented the silver mines of Potosi (and therefore their labor in the mines) as the “pillars” of the temple of Jerusalem and, therefore, of the Spanish Monarchy; Christian Ascetics sought to become African slaves of the Lord as their individual wills made metaphorical and actual use of the instruments of slavery to control the urges of their bodies; nuns set up cities of God and saw themselves as fully enfranchised citizens of republics, Israelite heroines like Deborah, Judith, and Jael, wielding swords against powerful occult enemies.

This seminar exposes participants to a variety of perspectives on the central role played by the Old Testament in the construction of colonial cultures in the Americas.

**Reading Assignments:**

Most weeks participants will read both primary and secondary sources. Readings are organized around large thematic units and one or two possible approached. Exposure to primary readings should allow participants to tryout other interpretations. From this perspective the seminar ought to be considered an experimental workshop.

**Writing Assignments:**

Each week participants should bring to class a one page set of questions about individual readings or, preferably, about the group of readings as a whole. We will refer to those questions during discussion, and we also expect you to use those questions to begin to build toward the primary writing assignment of the semester: a research prospectus.
The prospectus, due at the end of the semester, should lay out a research project, defining the basic problem to be addressed, outlining the existing historiography of the question, and identifying a set of sources to be used in addressing the problem. The prospectus should be approximately 20 pp.

**Disability:**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259

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**Schedule**

| Week 1 | Introduction |
| Aug. 30 |

Week 2

Sept 6

- General Readings
- Pelikan, *Whose Bible is It? A Short History of the Scriptures*;
- Chiara De Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art* (Getty Museum)

Week 3

Sept. 13

- Traditions of Biblical Interpretation
- Giles Constable, “The Interpretation of Mary and Martha,” in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought*, pp. 3-141 (on line)

Week 4

Sept. 20

- The Promise of the New World
- Christopher Columbus (ed.), *Repertorium Columbianum, Vol. 3, The Book of Prophecies*, Roberto Rusconi (Historical and Textual Editor), Blair Sullivan (Trans.) (on line)
- Jaime Lara, *City, Stage, and Temple*

Week 5

Sept. 27

- New World Biblical Polities
- Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*
- John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*, 1630 (on line)
Week 6  
Oct. 4  
Atlantic Biblical Polities I  
Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought.*  
Ellis Sandoz (ed.) *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*, Vols. 1 & 2 (on line)

Week 7  
Oct. 11  
Atlantic Biblical Polities II  
Samuel Sewall, *Phaenomena quadem apocalyptica...Some few lines toward a description of the new heaven as it makes those who stand upon the new earth* (Boston, 1697) (on line)  
Manuel Lacunza, *The Coming of the Messiah in Glory and Majefty*, vols. 1 & 2 (on line)  

Week 8  
Oct. 18  
Lost Tribes: Race and Origins I  
Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The Ten Lost Tribes: A World History*;  
Menasseh Ben-Israel, *The Hope of Israel* (on line)  
Veira, *History of the Future* (on line)

Week 9  
Oct. 25  
Noah’s Curse: Race and Origins II  
Vieira, *sermons on black brotherhood of nosa senhora do Rosario, sermon 12 (1633) and 27 [?]* (on line)

Week 10  
Nov. 1  
Black Bibles  
Joanna Brooks and John Saillant, “Face Zion Forward”: *First Writers of the Black Atlantic, 1785-1798*;  
Phillip Richards, “The ‘Joseph Story’ as a Slave Narrative: On Genesis and Exodus as Prototypes for Early Black Anglophone Writing,” in Wimbush (ed.) *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*. (on line)

Week 11  
Nov. 8  
Female Bibles  
Francis Xavier Dornn. *The illustrated Litany of Loreto [1752]* (on line)

Week 12  
Nov. 15  
Amerindian Bibles  
David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America*  
Week 13  Discussion of prospectus  Nov. 22
Week 14  Discussion of prospectus  Nov. 29