

JULIA M. O'BRIEN

Paul H. and Grace L. Stern Professor in Old Testament Studies
Lancaster Theological Seminary

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Lancaster PA 17603

RESEARCH INTERESTS

theological, feminist, and ideological approaches to prophetic books, especially Minor Prophets; gender studies; ethical issues in biblical interpretation; theology of Hebrew Bible; violence; metaphor; constructions of family; the Bible and ecology

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

- Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, PA, *Paul H. and Grace L. Stern Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, 1997-present; *Acting Dean*, spring 2015
- Meredith College, Raleigh, NC, Department of Religion and Philosophy, *Assistant Professor* 1989-96; *Associate Professor and Department Head*, 1996-97
- Duke Divinity School, Durham NC, *Visiting Instructor*, spring 1988
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, *Visiting Lecturer*, 1985-87

EDUCATION

- Duke University, Durham, NC, *M. Div.*, 1984; *Ph. D.*, 1988. Major: Hebrew Bible and Semitic Studies; Minors: Judaism, Literary criticism
- Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, OH, *Special Student*, spring 1983
- Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, *B. A.* in Religion, *summa cum laude*, 1981

WORK WITH SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES**Society of Biblical Literature**

- Committee for the Status of Women in the Profession, *Member* 2014-2019
- Travel Grant Committee, 2016-2017
- Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures unit, *Co-chair*, 2010-2016
- Prophetic Texts and Ancient Contexts, *Steering Committee*, 2003-2010
- Mid-Atlantic Region, *President*, 2003-2004
- Mid-Atlantic Region, *Vice President*, 2002-2003
- Program Committee, *Member*, 1996-2001
- Biblical Criticism and Literary Criticism Section, *Steering Committee*, 1996-2001
- Literature and History of Persian Period Group, *Steering Committee*, 1992-98
- Israelite Prophetic Literature Section, *Chair*, 1993-1997; *Co-chair* 1992-1993; *Steering Committee*, 1990-97
- Strategic Planning Committee, *Member*, 1997
- Southeastern Region Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament Section, *Chair*, 1993-97

Editorial Boards

- Editorial Board, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 2010-2015
- Editorial Board, *Interpretation*, 2012-2015

HONORS AND SEMINARS:

- Roundtable Seminar for Mid-career Faculty, the Association for Theological Schools, March 2014
- Luce Consultation on Theological Scholarship, The Association of Theological Schools, May 2003
- Rhodes Consultation for the Future of the Church-Related College, sponsored in conjunction with the Lilly Foundation, 1996-1997
- Lilly Teaching Fellow for Southern region, 1995-1996
- Regional Scholar of the Society of Biblical Literature, nominated by Southeastern Region, 1994

PUBLICATIONS

Books

- Associate Editor. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, sixth edition. General Editor, Michael D. Coogan. Under contract. Projected for 2025.
- *Prophets beyond Activism: Rethinking the Prophetic Roots of Social Justice*. Westminster John Knox Press. Projected for 2024.
- *Isaiah 40-66*. New Interpretation series. Under contract. Projected for 2025.
- Editor, *Oxford Handbook of the Minor Prophets*. Oxford University Press, 2021.
- *Micah*. Wisdom Commentary Series. Liturgical Press, 2015.
- Editor in Chief, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Bible and Gender Studies*. Print and online. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- *The Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets*. Co-edited with Chris Franke. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies. T & T Clark, 2010.
- *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets*. Westminster John Knox, 2008.
- *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*. Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Abingdon, 2004.
- *Nahum*. Readings series. Sheffield Academic Press, 2002. 2nd edition, Sheffield Phoenix, 2009.
- *The Yahweh/Baal Confrontation and Other Studies in Biblical Literature and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Emmett Willard Hamrick*. Edited by Julia M. O'Brien and Fred L. Horton, Jr. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, 35. Mellen Biblical Press, 1995.
- *Priest and Levite in Malachi*. Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, no. 121. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.

Articles

- "Forthtellers not Foretellers: The Origins of a Liberal Orthodoxy about the Prophets." *Religions* 13.4. March 2022. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040298>
- "The Enduring Day of Wrath: Zephaniah 1, the *Sibylline Oracles*, and the *Dies Irae*." In *Biblical Poetry and the Art of Close Reading*. Edited by J. Blake Couey and Elaine T. James. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- "Talking Back: A Sermon." In *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization*. Edited by Steve Heinrichs. Mennonite Church of Canada, 2018.
- "Edom as (Selfish) Brother. In *Obadiah*. Edited by Bob Becking. Readings Series. Sheffield Phoenix, 2016. Reprinted from *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor* (above)
- "Metaphorization and Other Tropes." *Oxford Handbook of the Prophets*. Edited by Carolyn Sharp. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- "Trauma All Around: Pedagogical Reflections on Victimization and Privilege in Theological Responses to Biblical Violence." In *La Violencia and the Hebrew Bible*. Edited by Susanne Scholz and Pablo Andinach. Semeia Studies. SBL Press, 2016.
- "Imagery, Gendered: Prophetic Literature." In *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Gender Studies*. Edited by Julia M. O'Brien. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- "The Hermeneutical Predicament: Why We Do Not Read the Bible in the Same Way and Why it Matters for Palestinian Advocacy." In *The Biblical Text in the Context of Occupation: Towards a New Hermeneutics of Liberation*. Edited by Mitri Raheb. Diyar, 2012.
- "Psalm 23: Exegesis." *Lectionary Homiletics* XXII (3): Apr-May, 2011: 3-4.
- "The Economics of Family: Changing Biblical Norms." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 36: 2010.
- "Violent Pictures, Violent Cultures? The 'Aesthetics of Violence' in Contemporary Film and in Ancient Prophetic Texts." In *The Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets*. Edited by Julia M. O'Brien and Chris Franke. Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies. T & T Clark, 2009-2010.
- "Nahum-Habakkuk-Zephaniah: Reading the 'Former Prophets' in the Persian Period." *Interpretation* 61 (2007): 168-183.
- "From Exile to Empire: A Response." In *Approaching Yehud: New Responses to the Study of the Persian Period*. Edited by Jon Berquist. Semeia Studies 50. Society of Biblical Literature Press, 2007.
- "The Problem of the Other(ed) Woman in Nahum." In *Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M Meyers*. American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007.
- "Who Needs the Old Testament?" Near East School of Theology. *Theological Review* XXVII.1 (2006): 16-33.
- "Once and Future Gender: Gender and the Future in the Twelve." In *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*. Edited by Ehud Ben Zvi. Finnish Exegetical Society, University of Helsinki, 2006.
- "Nineveh to Judah." In *Yours Faithfully: Virtual Letters from the Bible*. Edited by Philip R. Davies. Equinox, 2004.

- “‘Academic’ vs. ‘Confessional’ Study of the Bible in the Postmodern Classroom: A Response to Philip Davies and David Clines.” Pp. 169-182 in *Professing in the Postmodern Academy: Faculty and the Future of Church-Related Colleges*. Edited by Stephen Haynes. Baylor University Press, 2002.
- “On Saying ‘No’ to a Prophet.” *Semeia* 72 (1997): 111-124. Reprinted in *Prophets and Daniel. A Feminist Companion to the Bible (second series)*. Edited by Athalya Brenner. Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.
- “Judah as Wife and Husband: Deconstructing Gender in Malachi.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 243-252.
- “Malachi in Recent Research.” *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 3 (1995): 81-94.
- “1 Corinthians 15:19-26” [Between Text and Sermon], *Interpretation* 49 (1995): 182-185.
- “Historical Criticism as Liberator and Master: Malachi as a Post-Exilic Document.” In *The Yahweh/Baal Confrontation and Other Studies in Biblical Literature and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Emmett Willard Hamrick*. Edited by Julia M. O'Brien and Fred L. Horton, Jr. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, 35. Mellen Biblical Press, 1995.
- "Because God Heard My Voice: The Individual Thanksgiving Psalm and Vow-Fulfillment." In *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.* Edited by K. Hoglund, E. Huwiler, et al. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series, 58. Sheffield, 1987.

Dictionary articles and annotated Bibles

- “Introduction to the Apocrypha,” “Introduction to the Prophetic Literature,” and Introductions and Notes to “Nahum,” “Zephaniah,” “Habakkuk” and “Obadiah.” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, sixth edition. Oxford University Press, projected for 2025.
- “Exile, Sexuality, and Gender.” *The Oxford Handbook on Biblical Exile*. Edited by Martien Halvorson-Taylor and Mark Hamilton. Oxford University Press. In progress.
- “Introduction to the Prophetic Literature,” and Introductions and Notes to “Nahum,” “Zephaniah,” “Habakkuk” and “Obadiah.” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, fifth edition. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- “Haggai”; “Zechariah.” *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 20th anniversary edition. Edited by Sharon Ringe, Carol Newsom, Jacqueline Lapsley. Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- “Joshua 24. Proper 16, Year B”; “Proverbs 22. Proper 18. Year B”; “Songs 2:18-13. Proper 17. Year B.” *Feasting on the Word: Preaching from the Revised Common Lectionary*. Edited by David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor. Vol. 3. Westminster John Knox, 2011.
- Introduction and Notes, “Nahum”; “Habakkuk”; “Zephaniah,” and “Obadiah.” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, fourth edition. Oxford University Press, 2010.
- “Hosea”; “Joel”; “Amos”; “Obadiah”; “Jonah”; “Nahum”; “Habakkuk”; “Zephaniah”; “Haggai”; “Zechariah”; “Malachi.” In *Theological Bible Commentary*. Edited by Gail O’Day and David Petersen. Westminster John Knox, 2009.

- “Nahum.” *New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. Edited by Katherine Sakenfeld et al. Abingdon, 2009.
- “Nahum.” *New Interpreter’s Study Bible*. Edited by Walter Harrelson. Abingdon, 2003.
- “Malachi.” *Oxford Bible Commentary*. Edited by John Barton and John Muddiman. Oxford University Press, 2001.
- “Hazzelelponi”; “Azubah2”; “Abijah1”; “Achsa”; “Hammokeketh”; “Hodesh”; “Jehudijah/Hodiah”; “Jerioth”; “Miriam2”; “Sheerah”; (2 Chr 15:13) women (and men) who don’t seek the LORD;”; (2 Chr 20:13, 21:14) wives of all Judah”; (Mal 2:11) daughter of a foreign god”; “(Mal 2:14-16) wife of one’s youth.” *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha, and New Testament*. Edited by Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, Ross Kraemer. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- “Amos.” *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*. Revised edition. Edited by James L. Mays. HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.
- “Ruth”; “Esther”; “Song of Songs”; “Ecclesiastes”; “Lamentations.” *NRSV Access Bible*. Edited by Gail O’Day and David Petersen. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- “Malachi.” *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. Edited by John H. Hayes. Abingdon, 1999.
- “Biblical Literature: Hebrew Scriptures.” *Encyclopedia of Near Eastern Archaeology*. Edited by Eric M. Meyers. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- “Malachi, book of.” *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. Revised edition. Edited by Paul J. Achtemeier. HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.
- “Adonai,” “Wadi Murabaat (texts),” “Hod,” “Imrah,” “Jehubbah,” “Pasach,” “Pispa,” “Rizia,” “Rohgah,” “Shamma,” “Shelesh,” “Shilshah,” “Shomer,” “Shua,” “Ulla,” “Zophah.” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. Doubleday, 1992.

Other media

- Session on “exile” for *Disciple Bible Study: Fast Track* for the BeADisciple App. 2023.
- “Rahab,” Nineveh.” *Bible Odyssey*, an interactive website of the Society of Biblical Literature, 2014. <http://www.bibleodyssey.com>.
- Op-ed pieces for online journal *Bible and Interpretation*. 2011. <http://www.bibleinterp.com/>
- “Mind the Gap: Reading Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Stories.” *Teaching the Bible: An e-newsletter for public school teachers by Society of Biblical Literature*. http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/TBMindingtheGaps_JO.pdf
- Three articles on Ezekiel for *Adult Bible Studies Illustrated*. Abingdon, 2009.
- Three videos for “Invitation to Psalms.” Disciple Bible Study. United Methodist Publishing House. 2008.
- Three videos for “Invitation to the Old Testament.” Disciple Bible Study. United Methodist Publishing House, 2005.
- “Lesson 12: God Restores the People.” Video segment for *Disciple Bible study*, United Methodist Publishing House, 2005.

Reviews and Abstracts

- *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures; Catholic Biblical Quarterly; Review of Biblical Literature; Interpretation; Lexington Theological Quarterly; Anglican Theological Review; Biblical Interpretation; Old Testament Abstracts; Hebrew Studies; Religious Studies Review*
- Manuscript reviewer for Oxford University Press; Fortress Press

PAPERS AND INVITED LECTURES (Academic):

- “Preaching Micah for Social Justice.” Homiletics and Biblical Studies Section. Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, November 2023.
- “Micah and Gender.” Panel of commentators of Micah. The Book of the Twelve section. Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, November 2022.
- “Feminist Readings of the Prophets.” St. Andrews (Scotland) Research Seminar. Zoom session, March 2022.
- “Killing the Prophets?” Two keynote lectures for Mid-West Region Society of Biblical Literature Meeting, February 9-10, 2019.
- “Is that Really God Speaking?” Lecture at Elizabethtown College, September 28, 2017.
- “Is that Really God Speaking? Prophecy in the Bible and Today.” Three keynote lectures at St. Andrews College, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. June 2017.
- “Trauma All Around: Victimization and Privilege in Theological Responses to Biblical Violence.” Invited panelist on Research Seminar on “*La Violencia & the People’s Life: Politics, Culture, and the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.*” Perkins School of Theology Center for the Study of Latina/o Christianity and Religions. October 2012.
- “The Hermeneutical Predicament: Why We Do Not Read the Bible in the Same Way and Why it Matters for Palestinian Advocacy.” 2011 Diyar Consortium International Conference on Hermeneutics. Bethlehem, West Bank. August 2011.
- “A ‘Darke’ Theology?” Joint Session of the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures and Hebrew Poetry sections. SBL Annual Meeting, Nov. 2010.
- “To Have Without Holding: The Prophets and Biblical Authority.” Convocation address, Bangor Theological Seminary, January 2009.
- “Images of God in the Prophets.” Three lectures for the Biblical Archaeology Society, June 2008.
- “Violent Pictures, Violent Cultures? The Aesthetics of Violence in Contemporary Film and in Ancient Prophetic Texts.” Prophetic Texts and Ancient Contexts section. SBL Annual Meeting, Nov. 2006.
- “Nahum-Habakkuk-Zephaniah: Reading the ‘Former Prophets’ in the Persian Period,” Book of the Twelve Seminar. SBL Annual Meeting, Nov. 2006.
- “Who Needs the Old Testament?” Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon, January 2006.
- “The Indictment of Edom in Obadiah and in Biblical Scholarship.” New Historicism Section, SBL Annual Meeting, November 2005.
- Panelist on New Historicism Section. SBL Annual Meeting, 2003.
- “‘Piles of dead, Heaps of Corpses’: Reading the Violence of Nahum.” Wake Forest University, October 2003.
- “Ethnic Violence and the Christian Bible: Perspectives from an Age of Genocides.” Macalester College, Oct 2000.

- Panelist on Composition of Book of the Twelve Seminar. SBL Annual Meeting, 1999.
- “On Allusions, Intertexts, and the Making of Connections: Reading Jeremiah and Reading the Twelve.” Composition of the Book of Jeremiah Group, SBL Annual Meeting, 1998.
- “What Happened to the Prophets? Recent Trends in Prophetic Study and the Challenge for the Church.” McCauley lecture, Lancaster Theological Seminary, May 1998.
- “Reading the Prophets in Historical Perspective.” 10 sessions for Biblical Archaeology Society, summer 1998. 3 sessions, May 1996.
- Panelist, “The Bible and Method: A Pedagogical Review.” Biblical Criticism and Literary Criticism, SBL Annual Meeting, 1996.
- “On Saying ‘No’ to a Prophet,” Reading, Rhetoric and the Hebrew Bible section, SBL Annual Meeting, 1995.
- “Biblical Heroines.” UNC Program in the Humanities, UNC-Chapel Hill, Sept. 1995.
- “The Quest for the Historical Israel.” 10 lectures for the Biblical Archaeology Society, 1995.
- Panelist, "What Can We Know About Historical Communities of Readers of Prophetic Books?" Prophets and History section, SBL Annual Meeting, 1994.
- "Judah as Wife and Husband: Deconstructing the Marriage Metaphor." Biblical Criticism and Literary Criticism section, SBL Annual Meeting, 1994.
- "Judah as Wife and Husband: Gender and the Marriage Metaphor." Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament Section, SBL, Southeastern Region, 1993.
- "The Seduction of the Historians: Malachi and the (Re-)Creation of History." Prophets and History Section, SBL Annual Meeting, 1991.
- "Torah and Prophets: Malachi and the Date of the Priestly Code." Israelite Prophetic Literature Section, SBL Annual Meeting, 1988.
- "The Rîb Pattern in the Book of Malachi: A Study in the Adaptation of a Classical Gattung," SBL, Southeastern region, 1988. (Recipient of Kenneth Willis Clark Award for best student paper)
- "Malachi and the Priesthood." Israelite Prophetic Literature Section, SBL Annual Meeting, 1986.

COURSES TAUGHT (SELECTED)

The Bible and the Climate Crisis; Prophets and Justice: Amos and Micah; Gender, Sexuality, and the Bible; Violence and the Bible; Women and the Bible; Christianity and the Arts; Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament; Interpreting the Bible; The Bible and the Family; Isaiah; Christianity and the Arts

CHURCH-RELATED LECTURES (selected)

- “Isaiah.” Three virtual sessions for the Southern Conference, UCC, February 2022.
- “When Prophets Surprise.” Carson Lecture Series, Highland Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, PA, May 2021.
- “Picturing God: Seeing God through the Eyes of the Prophets,” Carson Lecture Series,

- “‘Piles of Dead, Heaps of Corpses’: Reading the Violence of the Old Testament Prophets,” Yinger Lecture, Union Congregational Church in Montclair, New Jersey, January 2003.
- "People Who Walk in Darkness." Invited Lecturer for the Staley Distinguished Christian Scholar Lecture Program, Catawba College, Jan. 1990.
- “The Bible Book Club.” Sessions at churches, book clubs, and synagogues. 2010-2011.
- Retreats: “Girls and God”; “Sacred Stories, Our Stories”; “Women and God”; “Biblical Families, Our Families”
- Lay Ministry training retreats: New York Conference, UCC; Tri-Penn Lay Ministry Program, UCC; Southern Conference Professional Leadership Development, UCC
- Keynote speaker: Penn Southeast UCC Women’s Retreat; Penn West UCC Pastor’s Retreat; South Dakota UCC Conference Annual Meeting; Southern Conference UCC Women’s Conference; Kansas-Oklahoma UCC Conference Annual Meeting
- Workshops in churches, denominational conferences, and colleges: “Reading the Bible for the Sake of the Planet”; “Reading the Bible as an Adult”; “(Homo)sexuality and the Bible”; “Images of God in the Prophets”; “The Anger of God”; “Violence in the Bible”; “Isaiah in the Advent texts of the Revised Common Lectionary”; “The Family in Ancient and Modern Perspectives”; “Women in the Biblical World”; “Reading the Difficult Texts of the Bible”; “Calvin and the Old Testament”; “Who Needs the Old Testament?”
- Bible Study leader: Penn Central UCC Annual Meeting; UCC Council of Conference Ministers; Gettysburg, PA, Ministerium, UCC; Presbytery of Carlisle, PA; Donegal Presbytery, PA; Southern Conference UCC
- Christian Education and preaching at various churches (UCC, Mennonite, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian) in NC, MD, DE, and PA

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

Lancaster Theological Seminary

- Director of the Master of Arts in Ministry and Leadership, 2015-present
- Chair, Diversity and Educational Life Committee, 2020-2023
- Chair, Faculty Review Committee, 1999-2005; 2010-2020
- Acting Dean, January-June 2015
- Steering Committee, reaccreditation team, 2013-2014; 2021-present
- Resource Optimization Committee, 2017
- Strategic Planning Committee, 2016, 2019
- Chair, Search Committee for Position in Pastoral Theology, 2013-2014
- Chair, Dean Search Committee, 2005-2006
- Chair, Worship and Preaching Search Committee, 2001-02
- Chair, NT Search Committee, 1998-99
- Co-leader for crosscultural experiences: Israel, West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon (1999); Turkey and Lebanon (2006); West Bank, Israel (2010)

Meredith College, Raleigh, NC

- Head, Religion Department, 1996-97