This course provides an introduction to the history and culture of ancient Israel from its origins in the Late Bronze Age (approx. 1550–1200 BCE) through the Persian period (539–332 BCE). By synthesizing material from the Bible, other ancient texts, and archaeology, we will come to appreciate the historical forces that shaped ancient Israel and arrive at a framework for a more intelligent and critical reading of the biblical text. The course will also explore themes that are especially relevant to an understanding of ancient Israelite society, including the role of women, social and political structures, and the practices of ancient Israelite religion.