Writing and Class Preparation: You should be prepared to answer and discuss the questions on this sheet, and there will be a short answer section on Test 2 dealing with some of the things called attention to on these blue sheets. But you will not have to submit written answers for homework. Instead, please bring two discussion questions of the kind you made up on the David-Solomon readings – questions pointing to themes or other things someone could write a test essay on.

Reading and Questions:

Harris, pp. 211-223

Again, full of valuable stuff. Note what Harris tells us in the introductory paragraph to this section: That “editorial additions of virtually all the prophetic books continued well into the last centuries B.C.E.” I will append a handout on this. Note also pp. 212-213, Box 6.1, on the prophecy in the Ancient Near East, and, on the next page, his review of Hebrew poetry.

All of Amos (nine short chapters)

Although Amos comes after Daniel in our Bible, remember that it was written about 600 years before – in about 760 BCE. This will be a change from the kind of reading we’ve been doing. Amos is one of the “preaching prophets” or “poet-prophets,” known for their poetry more than for their actions. (Others are Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.) Their books are compilations of their sayings and spoken poetry (along with some material that seems to have been written by others). It’s a pity to just read through the chapters consecutively, since the individual parts lose some of their power that way. (These individual parts are known as oracles, by the way.) But a lot still comes through!

(a) Which nation does Amos indict first? (You may need footnotes.)
(b) Which nation does he indict next?
(c) How many nations does he indict before he gets around to Judah and then Israel?
   Amos came from Judah but preached in Israel. How do you imagine his Israeliite audience might have reacted when he got around to denouncing Israel?
(d) What specific sins of Israel does he seem to focus on?
(e) In 3.2, why will God especially punish Israel for “all [its] iniquities”?
(f) What form will the punishment take in 3.11?
(g) In 3.15, why will God tear down “the winter house as well as the summer house”?
   What are they an image of?
(h) Who are the cows of Bashan, and why do they come in for criticism? They’ll come back in Isaiah.
(i) In 4.4-5, what is his attitude towards the Israelites who go to the shrines in Bethel and Gilgal?
(j) In 4.6-13, we have one of the self-contained poems found throughout Amos. Can you see that? In the first line of this poem, isn’t that an interesting way to describe famine?

(k) What sins are mentioned in 5.10-13?

(l) 5.18-20 seem very important. What had the Israelites expected the “day of the Lord” to be? What is it going to be instead? (Footnote helpful.)

(m) 5.21-24 are not only very famous; they’re also a favorite of Michael’s (not to mention Martin Luther King, Jr.). You can ensure that they become among your favorites, too, simply by reading them aloud with gusto. (Anybody willing to perform them for the class?) To appreciate the full force of these lines, one needs to have a sense of just how much of the earlier Hebrew Bible is devoted to how to run “festivals. . . and solemn assemblies” and how to offer grain offerings. Between the previous lines on the day of the Lord and at least one more real shocker still to come in the last chapter, Amos is the prophet of “You have another thing coming”!

(n) 5.25: again, we haven’t read much about the Israelites’ years in the wilderness (in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers). But the general understanding is that yes, they did bring God lots of sacrifices and offerings then. Amos seems to be revising the story here (see footnote). Another you-have-another-thing-coming.

(o) 6.1-7: When the Israelites are forced into exile, who will be the first to go?

(p) 7.1-9 seems to be a little poem with a pattern. How does it end? (Remember the plumb line. We’ve seen the image in Daniel, and we’ll see it again.) What does God mean when he says “I will never pass them by again”?

(q) 7:10-17: very important for several reasons. Just who is Amaziah, and what is his job? At 7.11, he is being scornful: try saying the line with a heavy, sarcastic emphasis on “Amos.” This is more than sarcastic; it is sinful because it suggests that God is not speaking through Amos. Amos is the outsider, the humble herdsman. Does he sound ashamed of this or somewhat proud? Is he cowed by the official guy? Listen to the punishment he curses Amaziah with in 7.17!

(r) In 8.1, what does the “basket of summer fruit” represent? A reminder that this is poetry. Rather than just wasting words or dressing things up, good poetry says things more efficiently than other language. Look at all that is said by “a basket of summer fruit”! (Be prepared to tell us!)

(s) 8.4-6: Again, what are the sins?

(t) 9.1-4: A stunning poem! (Sheol, line 4.2, is the underworld region to which the dead go in ancient Hebrew belief. It’s not a particularly pleasant state, but it’s not a place of punishment like hell. ) What aspect of this God does it capture?

(u) 9.7-8: The final shocker! (The footnote may be helpful.) What? He was working for the Philistines, too? The Philistines?!

(v) What is promised here. Does it seem a little out of keeping with the mood just before? See footnote on one reason scholars believe it was added on by later editors interested in the “remnant” idea.

Hosea 1.1 to 4.19 and 11.1-12

_Sorry, I’m out of time for going through and making specific questions. so I will ask the discussion questions here:_
(x) Remember the general question I posed on the Elijah handout: What is the job of a prophet. What does Hosea add to the picture?
(y) Hosea preaches that the relationship between Yahweh and his people is like the relationship between a man and his wife. How does Hosea conceive of such a relationship?
(z) Perhaps you’ve heard the expression “whoring after strange gods.” Here’s the origin of it. Israel as whore is going to come up again and again in the prophets. So is imagery of vineyards. Israel was full of vineyards.