“He has inspired fear, awe, and wonder in readers because he attempts not merely to name, but also to embody, God’s sovereignty, holiness, and mystery in words that come close to the limits of expression” (italics added). This is what the introduction in our Bible says about Ezekiel. You could add that he has also inspired lots and lots of mind-bending apocalyptic interpretation. Just google “Ezekiel” to see what I mean. So he is very relevant to our course, and also to understanding the contribution of Hebrew prophets to biblical apocalyptic.

Find the Ezekiel section in whatever edition you have of Harris. The introduction in our Bible is full of good information. Remember that Jeremiah preached surrender to the Babylonians around 610-600 B.C.E. Ezekiel comes soon after him! Now the Babylonian conquest of Israel and Judah is complete, and the Babylonian Exile has begun. Note that there are two main times at which Ezekiel wrote – at the beginning of the exile, in 597, which was the “nicer” stage of exile, and then in the second stage of the exile, after 586, when the Judeans tried another revolt against Babylonian rule and the Babylonians got nasty: they destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple! So now, in this second stage of Ezekiel’s prophesying (after chapter 31 in the reading assigned below), the Jews aren’t the wicked sinners who brought well-deserved punishment on themselves; they are the victims of cruel tyrants – the audience for real apocalyptic.

Read the fifth paragraph of the Bible introduction – a reminder that some prophets, including Ezekiel, were also priests. What is “Zion theology”?

Harris has a good picture of a Mesopotamian stone cherub of the kind that Ezekiel would have seen many of in Babylonia – a probable source for his own amazing cherubim guarding God’s throne. It’s on pg. 239 of the sixth edition; sorry, I don’t have the seventh with me.

Sorry. An electronic version of all the questions is not available for posting. The reading assignment in Ezekiel is as follows, with the most important readings starting at 18.1-32 and then on into chapters 31, 33, etc.:

Ezekiel 1.1 to 5.17; 8.1 to 10.22; 17.1 to 18.32; 31.1 to 39.39 (about eighteen chapters; again, if you can’t read them all, read 18 and then 31 to 39 – mind-blowing stuff!)

Questions on most important passages – answer in writing:

33.1-33: (a) What is the message of hope in this chapter? (b) What line in this chapter contains the simple lesson people have to learn? (c) Do 33.30-33 suggest they’re really learning it? The footnote says the reference to “love songs” indicates that Ezekiel’s words were just “erotic entertainment” to those who came to listen to him. Could there possibly be any erotic pleasure in listening to these predictions of death and bloody destruction?
34.1-31: (a) Israel’s kings – its shepherds – have failed it. Who will be their shepherds now? Name two. (b) And then what will the Israelites know? (Can you feel the hopefulness getting ratcheted here?)

37.1-14 Very important passage! According to the footnotes, is literal resurrection being promised here? (Remember, we are still 400 years away from the Book of Daniel and its resurrection in Daniel 12.1!

38.1 to 39.29: Gog and Magog! The introductory footnote to this section is worth reading. Please create two discussion questions to help a reader think about these two chapters.
17.1-24: If you have time, it is interesting to read the allegory about the eagles and then the interpretation that follows together with our Bible’s footnotes about the interpretation. King Zedekiah did indeed suffer for breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. He had to watch his children be killed, I believe.