

BLHS-103 Biblical Literature and the Ancient World

Professor Jerome Copulsky

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Summer 2012: Tues 5:45-10:00 PM

Office Hours: by appointment

Credits: 4

General Course Description

This course studies Biblical literature in the social, political, and religious context of the ancient Mediterranean world. It traces the history (including prehistory) of ancient Hebrews, the emergence of Christianity, the early relationship between Judaism and Christianity, and the struggle for Christianity to define itself in the Roman Empire before it became for all practical purposes the official religion of the Roman Empire

The course will be conducted mostly through discussion and in-depth analysis of the assigned readings, with some background lectures as appropriate. Students should be prepared to participate actively, based on a thoughtful reading of the texts.

Learning Objectives

- To explore and understand the major historical, literary and theological themes of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament.
- To be familiar with the place of biblical literature in the Ancient Near East.
- To be able to evaluate different uses of the Bible in contemporary ethical and theological discussions.

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Understand and interpret these works in the texts in their historical, cultural, political, economic, social, or aesthetic contexts.
- Understand some of the methods of the historical-critical approach to the Bible.
- Use terminology, concepts, materials, techniques, and methods of intellectual inquiry within the humanities to demonstrate critical reading and interpretive skills.
- Write short interpretative essays.
- Understand the differences in how religious traditions approach the Bible.

Expectations

- You should strive to achieve the ideals of a liberal arts education: free and candid exchange of ideas, rigorous critique of claims, and toleration for considering variant positions.
- Thorough and thoughtful reading of the texts in preparation for the class is expected and essential.

Course Requirements

- Attendance and Class Participation (20%)
 - Students should be prepared to participate actively in each week's seminar discussions. Students are expected to be 'ready' to participate at each moment, including 'being called upon' and to discuss and analyze particular texts.
 - **Attendance policy**
 - If you have a legitimate excuse, I need to know (by email). Legitimate excuses include illness, family situation, or other events or responsibilities that may occasionally draw you away from a regular class meeting. To be legitimate, I need to know about it beforehand, or it may be deemed legitimate if I receive a notice from your dean, in the case of more serious issues.
 - *Policy Accommodating Student's Religious Observances:* Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.
 - **Excused absences** *do not* yield a grade penalty, although I reserve the right to impose reasonable "make-up" meetings or assignments to ensure that the covered material is satisfactorily understood.
 - You will be penalized for **unexcused absences**. Penalties for unexcused absences are as follows:
 - 1 = grade down (e.g. a B reduced to a C)
 - 2 or more unexcused absences will constitute a failure to complete the requirements of the course satisfactorily. Any student who misses more than two class sessions, including

online sessions and assignments, for any reason may be involuntarily dropped from the course.

- Periodic In-Class Quizzes (10%)

- Written Assignments
 - One 3-5 page exegesis paper (10%)
 - One 7-8 page research paper (20%)
 - More details about the topic of the individual assignments will be discussed in class.
 - Papers, insofar as they need citations, will conform to the citation style outlined by Turabian and/or the Chicago Manual of Style.
 - **Late submissions** will be penalized at 1 grade down (e.g. a B reduced to a B-) for every 6 hours the assignment is late.

- Exams
 - Midterm (15%)
 - Final Exam (25%)

Grading

The final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- 93-100% = A
- 90- 92% = A-
- 87-89% = B+
- 83-86% = B
- 80-82% = B-
- 77-79% = C+
- 73-76% = C
- 70-72% = C-
- 67-69% = D+
- 63-66% = D
- 62 and below = F

No Incompletes will be granted except in exceptional circumstances warranted by a family or medical emergency. Arrangements will be made with the appropriate dean.

Request for Accommodation based on a physical, emotional or cognitive disability will be referred to the Academic Resource Center. The center's staff will assess the extent of any disability and recommend appropriate accommodations. If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 (arc@georgetown.edu) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

Readings

The seminar will involve close textual readings and discussion. Students are expected to attend class with the readings. Some readings will be distributed via email in .pdf format (and may be distributed as well in hard copy format). The following books are available for purchase at the Leavey Center Bookstore:

1. Harper Collins NRSV Study Bible (any edition)
2. John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007) **ISBN-13:** 978-0800662073
3. Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th edition (Oxford University Press, 2011) **ISBN-13:** 978-0199757534

Honor Code

- Students must adhere to the principles of conduct set forth in the Georgetown University Honor System unconditionally. I assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”
 - Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:
 - *In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*
 - Any sign of violations, including plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating will be referred to the Honor Council and your Dean(s).
 - Any incident of plagiarism will constitute a failure in the assignment and zero credit for that portion of the grade. More severe sanctions may be administered by the Honor Council.

Class Schedule

Note: This schedule is open to modification

SEGMENT 1: HEBREW SCRIPTURE: TEXT AND CONTEXT

This segment introduces the student to the literature of ancient Judaism, which eventually was collected in the Hebrew Bible. The segment's chronological framework extends from the formation of ancient Israel in the land of Canaan down to the emergence of Hellenistic Judaism in the post-Exilic age. Within that framework, the segment will cover the pre-history of ancient Israel as a people developing among its neighbors in the ancient Near East. Likewise will it consider the pre-literary and literary history of biblical texts. Attention to genre, literary form, and the redaction of biblical texts will comprise the main part of the segment. Consideration of relevant archeological discoveries will show the relationship between material and literary culture in ancient Israel. Towards this end, various literary and historical methods of biblical study will help the student to apprehend the biblical texts themselves, set against the religious, social, and political history of ancient Israel.

Week 1
May 22

Introduction to the Course

What is the Bible?

What we know (and don't know) about the Bible
The Ancient Near East context
The Documentary Hypothesis
Collins, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2

Week 2
May 29

Pentateuch: Narrative and Law

The Primeval History

Genesis 1-3; *Enuma Elish*
The Flood: Genesis 4-11
Collins, Chapter 3

The Patriarchal History

Genesis 12-22, 24-35, 37-45
Collins, Chapter 4

Week 3
June 5

The Exodus and Covenant

Exodus 1-24
Collins, Chapters 5-6

The Priestly Theology

Exodus 25, 28, 29, 32-35, 40
Leviticus 1-8, 10-12, skim 13-15, 16, 19-20, 25, 26
Collins, Chapter 7

Week 4
June 12

The Deuteronomistic History (Joshua – 2 Kings)

Conquest

Joshua 1:1-11; chapters 2 and 3; 5:1-8; chapters 6-8; 11:16-23;
chapters 23-24
Collins, Chapter 9

Emergence and Consolidation of the Monarchy: Saul and David

1 Samuel 1-10, 15-19, 27-28, 31
2 Samuel 1-19
1 Kings 1: 1-5
Collins, Chapters 11-12

Week 5
June 19

The Monarchies: Division, Reform, Destruction

1 Kings 6:1; 8:1-13, 27-30; 9:1-9, 15-22; 11:1-13, 26-43; 12:1-
13:10; 16:29-19:21; 21
2 Kings 1-2; 17-25
Collins, Chapters 13-14

Classic Prophecy in Israel

Amos
Hosea
Isaiah 1-12
Collins, Chapters 15-16

First Paper due

Week 6
June 26

Midterm

Exilic Prophecy

Jeremiah 1-3, 7-8, 24, 26-30, 36-44
Ezekiel 1-3, 16, 37
Isaiah 40-45, 56-66
Collins, Chapters 17-20

Week 7
July 3

The Writings: Wisdom, Love, and Politics

The Song of Songs
Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes)
Proverbs 1-2, 5, 7-9, 31
Book of Esther

SEGMENT TWO: NEW TESTAMENT: TEXT AND CONTEXT

This segment introduces the student to the literature of early Christianity, which eventually was collected in the New Testament. Restricting itself to the time between 50-110 CE, the chronological framework of the course is co-terminus with the time of the production of New Testament texts. These writings will be examined according to their genre, literary forms, and historical context. To that end, the history of the earliest Christian communities will be recovered from these texts to the extent that that can be reasonably done. For example, the establishment, growth and maintenance of communities of Pauline Christians will be apprehended from a careful chronological examination of Paul's Letters. The Gospels will yield valuable information for understanding the earliest Jesus movement and the handing on of its tradition to the later communities for which those Gospels were composed. The relevant historical context of the Greco-Roman period, as that has affected the formation of earliest Christianity and its literature, will also be considered.

Week 8
July 10

The Late Second Temple Period and Jesus in Context

Daniel 1-3, 7-12
1 Maccabees 1-2
2 Maccabees 2:19-10:38

Collins, Chapter 24, 27

Introduction to the New Testament

Background and Early Christian Traditions
Ehrman, Chapters 1-4

Week 9
July 17

The Gospels

The Markan Jesus
The Gospel According to Mark
Ehrman, Chapters 5-6

The Synoptic Problem
Ehrman, Chapter 7

Week 10
July 24

Matthew and the Jewish Context
The Gospel According to Matthew
Ehrman, Chapters 8

The Lukan Jesus and Acts
The Gospel According to Luke
Acts of the Apostles 1-15
Ehrman, Chapters 9-10

Week 11
July 31

The Gospel According to John
Chapters 1-3, 8, 18-21

Paul and his Mission

Paul's Jesus, the Law, the Church, Justification

Galatians

1 Corinthians

Romans 1-8

Ehrman, Chapters 18-23

SEGMENT THREE: RELIGIONS IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

This segment studies the struggle of early Christians to define themselves and their religion in relation to the Roman Empire, Judaism, and pagan religions.

Week 12
August 7

Beginnings of Rabbinic Judaism

Examples of Rabbinic Midrash (handout)

Lee I. A. Levine, "Judaism from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Second Revolt: 70-135 C.E."

The Formation of Christianity and Development of the Church

Ehrman, Chapters 26-28

Review and Conclusions

Second Paper due

Date TBA

Final Exam