

Introduction to Biblical Studies

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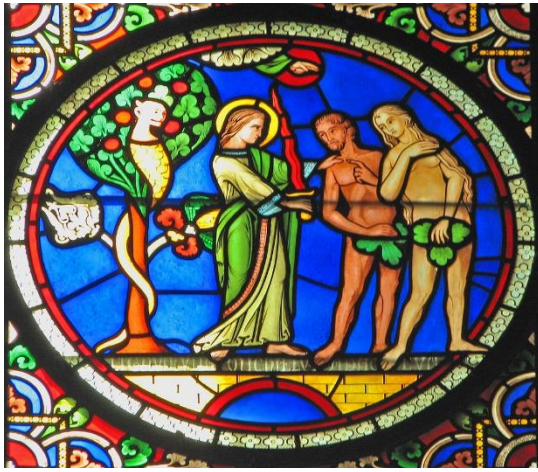
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Overview



The Bible is something which is core to our faith and our culture. While many of us have read several of the texts, many do not know where the text comes from, how the books of the Bible became a single volume, or how the translations of the Bible are made. Often, we believe the Bible has always existed as the book we have it. In this course, we will explore what we know (and what we don't know) about the Bible: how the canon might have been formed, how the texts were likely written, how the translations were made. Not all of these questions have answers, at least not clear ones. This differs from the Bible study we

often do in churches. Those Bible studies often look for what a text means to us, personally. In this class, we are interested in what the Bible meant to its original audiences. How they read the Bible is often very different than how we do, but not always. Learning how the early Christians and Jews read the texts of the Bible can help us understand how our faith has grown to where it is, and sometimes provide us with new (to us) readings.

In addition to these questions about the Bible, this course also serves as an orientation and a (re-)introduction to academic study. Through this course, we will grow accustomed to reading academic texts, work on writing in an academic style, and gain skills in online learning. We will grow familiar with Moodle, Bethany's online course management software. By the end of the class, we will be equipped to continue in our next courses.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

- Read academic articles and write in an academic style, including citations
- Demonstrate proficiency with online course tools
- Explain how the Bible formed
- Interpret a biblical text using academic sources

In this course, we will use biblical scholarship to gain proficiency in writing and reading academic texts. As this course is online in the Moodle, we will also work on gaining the skills to engage in academic work online.

Assessments

Weekly Reading Conversations

Each week (other than the Midterm or Final weeks), post at least 6 substantive posts on the week's topic. You should address the content of one of the readings or other subject matter of the week. Substantive posts can be questions about a reading, comments on a reading, reactions to readings, exploring how multiple readings intersect, and replying to other students' posts. Posts which are simply "I agree" or "I don't understand this article" without any specific comment or question do not count (but you are free to post them). Each week there will be a prompt to aid in making some of the posts.

- 6 points per week, a total of 36 possible points.

Weekly Reading Quizzes

Each week (other than the Midterm or Final weeks), there will be a short quiz over the readings.

- 4 points per week, a total of 24 possible points.

Midterm Group Project

Analyze 2 biblical passages, one from the Hebrew Bible the other from the New Testament, in a small group. You should be sure to cover:

- Translation and textual issues of the texts
- Literary Analysis of the text (genre, structure, etc.)
- The texts' settings in the wider ancient world (interactions with other biblical texts, non-biblical texts, archaeological connects, etc.)

Length: ~500-750 words per passage.

Due Date: End of week 5 (Sept. 4, 2016)

- 10 points based on the project, 10 points on individual effort toward the project; 20 points total.

Final Project

Analyze 1 biblical passage of your choice, much in the same way as the Midterm.

- Translation and textual issues of the texts
- Literary Analysis of the text (genre, structure, etc.)
- The texts' settings in the wider ancient world (interactions with other biblical texts, non-biblical texts, archaeological connects, etc.)

In addition to the topics covered there, you should also cover:

- An analysis of how at least one early commentator (Christian or Jewish) interpreted the text.

Length: ~1000-1500 words.

- Due Date: End of the final week (Sept. 25, 2016)

EARNING CREDIT

Like all Brethren Academy Courses, this course is taken pass/fail. In order to earn credit for the course, you will need to earn at least 80 of 100 possible points from the above assignments.

Final assessments will be given as narrative evaluations as per the Brethren Academy's

Policies

Late Work

Generally, late work will not be accepted. This said, I understand that there are often occasions which occur that will make finishing assignments on time difficult. If such a circumstance comes up, *please* contact me as *soon as you can*, and I will work with you.

Electronic Resources

This is an entirely online course. If you are having technical difficulties, please contact me or Fran Massie at massifr@earlham.edu or 765-983-1824

Academic Integrity

This class, like much learning, will involve a lot of writing about what other people have said. When using the ideas of other people, it is imperative that you make it know that you are doing so. In your final project, you will be required to use the Turabian style, either footnotes or parenthetical citations. I have made examples of this style available on the course website. In your discussion board activities, if you use another person's idea, you still must cite where it came from, but I have no specific style requirements.

REQUIRED RESOURCES

The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version

ISBN: 9780195289565

This is the Bible we will be working from during this course. While there are several other Bibles out there, you will need a copy of this one. First, it uses the NRSV translation, which provides a number of resources we will use in class which are not in other translations (e.g., footnotes about the choices made by the translators). We will also be reading a number of the articles provided by Oxford in their Bible. Thus you will need a copy of this study Bible.

The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary

ISBN: 9780061469060

This dictionary has a number of articles which explore different aspects of the biblical worlds. We will be reading a number of entries in this over the course of the class to explain the world around the Bible. This book will also help you research the Bible once the class is over.

Brown, Michael Joseph. What they Don't Tell You: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies

ISBN: 9780664222208

This book was written to help new students in biblical studies engage the biblical text. Brown wrestles with a number of problems that students often come up against when they engage some biblical scholarship. We will see that some of the questions which academics ask feel uncomfortable. Brown helps to keep this in perspective.