

COS 121 BIBLE I: INTRODUCTION

Spring semester, 2020

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"I Can Do All Things Through Christ Who Strengthens Me"

Philippians 4:13

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the academic study of the Bible and hermeneutics (biblical interpretation). Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized, as will interpreting biblical texts within the context of indigenous faith communities, both historically and today.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the various categories of scripture contained within the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, and understand historical and scriptural developments during the intertestamental period.
2. Understand the role of oral traditions to the biblical corpus, and develop methods for evaluating and engaging various oral traditions.
3. Be able to identify different hermeneutical methods, and gain facility in using various methodological approaches to interpreting scripture.
4. Be able to interpret scripture alongside traditional Native American beliefs, practices, and oral traditions, and create a wholistic approach to biblical engagement that reflects not only the unique history and culture of indigenous faith interpretive communities, but also is responsive to the ministerial needs of Native American congregations today.

Required Course Materials

- Arterbury, Andrew E., Bellinger Jr, W.H., and Dodson, Derek S. Engaging the Christian Scriptures: An Introduction to the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2014.
- Hayes, John and Carl Holladay. Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0664227753. (To be read throughout the class session.)
- Reading packet available online

Reference materials:

- Must use New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) for the Bible. For Hebrew Bible, Jewish Publication Society (JPS) is acceptable.
- Turabian, Kate. A Manual for Writers, 9th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Pre-class Assignment

DUE Friday, February 21. While this assignment is due Feb. 21, for those students who do not have reliable internet access, and so as not to cause undue stress, this (and only this) assignment will NOT incur a late penalty if turned in by **THE START OF CLASS, MARCH 7. NO CREDIT FOR ANYTHING TURNED IN AFTER MARCH 7.**

1. Read Engaging Christian Scriptures pp 1-93;
2. A summary of each book in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. For each book in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, you are to write down the book and summarize in no more than one paragraph what is covered in that portion of scripture. You should be able to identify what genre of scripture it is (eg. poetic, wisdom, apocalyptic, law/legal codes, historical, prophetic, etc), and the major content/themes of each book. This can be done in outline form if that is easier. The goal is for students to be familiar with the breadth of scripture prior to the start of class, and have a rudimentary knowledge of the contents of each book. **There will be a quiz on the books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament at the start of class on March 7. Students will need to know all the books in order. Summary of all the books in the Bible worth 10% of total grade. Quiz worth 5% of total grade.**
3. Additionally, there will be a reading and writing assignment on Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) oral traditions (contained in the electronic reading packet). Students are to read the stories which comprise some of the oral traditions from the region of Ancient Near

East (Enuma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, Contendings of Horus and Seth), and answer the following:

- Do these stories remind you of any of the accounts found in Genesis? If so, which ones and why? How are these stories different from the creation narratives found in Genesis? How do the characters in the ANE stories compare to their biblical counterparts? How does God found in scripture differ from the gods depicted in the ANE stories?

The above should be 1-3 pages, double spaced. It is a reflection paper, so there is no requirement to do outside research for this paper. **Worth 10% of total grade.**

4. Bring with you at least one version of a creation story from your tribal community. Be prepared to recount the story to the class, and if you can, whether there are other versions of your tribal creation story. We will be discussing oral traditions around tribal creation stories in conversation with Genesis. **Discussion worth 5% of total grade.**
5. Read Engaging Christian Scriptures, pp 1-93 (this will help you with your summaries of the books in the Hebrew Bible).
6. Read selections from reading packet: Enuma Elish, Epic of Gilgamesh, Contendings of Horus and Seth, excerpt from Code of Hammurabi, Chapter 4 “Who Wrote the Pentateuch,” Robert Warrior’s article, “On Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” Emergence of Ancient Israel pp, 38-45, and Iroquois Creation Story and Origin of Man.
 - i. Optional reading in electronic reading packet – Cherokee creation stories from different sources

Course Outline (Please bring your Bible and textbook/articles with you to class each time!)

Pre-class Writing and Reading Assignments (see above) – due February 21 (but may be turned in without penalty at the start of class on March 7)

March 7 – After a quiz on all the books in the Hebrew Bible, we will examine oral traditions as the basis of all scripture. We will specifically learn some of the oral traditions in the ANE as context for Genesis. From there we will identify different versions of various oral traditions found in scripture (eg. Creation, Sodom and Gomorrah, migration stories, etc), and discuss how

to analyze and compare them. We will examine Exodus in its relation to Genesis oral traditions. We will also discuss Warrior's article and explore hermeneutical challenges of reading the Bible as indigenous peoples. If time permits, we will briefly look at development of legal codes (Exodus versus Deuteronomy) and what they tell us about the evolution of tribal communities. Finally, we will explore prophetic literature prior to the Babylonian Exile.

Reading Assignment

Engaging Scriptures, pp 93-142

Selections from reading packet: Chapter 16: Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and the Apocrypha, Chapter 17: The World of Jesus and His Followers, Studying the Bible in Ancient Context(s): The Geography and Major Characters of the Biblical Drama (pp. 21-31), Persian Empire and Temple-Centered Community (pp. 184-193), and Hellenistic Empires and Hebrew Bible (pp. 207-219)

Writing Assignment – due April 4

Summarize Warrior's argument in the assigned article. Explaining the historical evidence surrounding the Israelites entry into Canaan according to the Exodus narrative, and describe how the Bible's depiction of the conquest of the Canaanites. Do you find the biblical narrative problematic for Native peoples? Why or why not? How might you speak to a Native parishioner who finds the biblical story oppressive? How would you engage the conquest of Canaan in your ministry and explain it to your congregation? How do different hermeneutical approaches help or hinder you in dealing with these biblical texts? Which hermeneutical approach would you adopt and why? Use Biblical Exegesis book as reference for different hermeneutical methods. Paper should be approximately 5pp long, double spaced. **Worth 10% of total grade.**

April 4 – This session will focus on the exilic and post-exilic period, and how ancient Jewish communities dealt with issues around forced relocation, loss of traditions, and tensions between tribal communities. We will look at prophetic literature in the post-exilic period, with special attention to portions of Jeremiah, Ezra, and Daniel. In addition, we will cover the period between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and examine historical and literary developments that shaped the time of Jesus and afterward. Finally, we will focus on hermeneutical methods and their application to various scriptures.

Reading Assignment

Engaging Scriptures, pp 143-259

Native gospel traditions and infancy narratives from reading packet (Story of Polante, Big Tree: Kiowa Warrior and Chief, and the Birth of the Peacemaker)

Selections from electronic reading packet: Studying the New Testament in Ancient Context (pp. 223-226), Judaism in the Time of Jesus (pp. 247-256),

Writing Assignments – due May 2

1. Identify three texts written during the intertestamental period. Do a one paragraph summary of each text. Then discuss the following terms:

Gehenna – where does it come from in the Hebrew Bible, what does it mean, and what was it originally describing (one paragraph)

Messiah – name two figures in the exilic or post-exilic period who were viewed as messianic figures. Why were they considered messiahs, and what is a messiah? (two paragraphs). **Worth 10% of final grade.**

2. A summary of each book in the New Testament (NT) For each book in the NT, from Matthew to Revelation, you are to write down the book and summarize in no more than one paragraph what is covered in that portion of scripture. You should be able to identify what genre of scripture it is (eg. gospel, epistle, apocalyptic, historical), and the major content/themes of each book. This can also be done in outline form. **There will be a quiz on the books of the NT at the start of class on May2. Students will need to know all the books in order. Summary of all the books in the Bible worth 10% of total grade. Quiz worth 5% of total grade.**

May 2 – We will begin with a quiz on the books of the NT. Then we will examine the New Testament corpus, and identify the various groupings of scripture. We will begin with authentic Pauline epistles, and compare them to later pastoral epistles and deutero-Pauline texts. Specifically, we will trace how early themes of race, class, and gender evolve throughout the first century as witnessed in early and later New Testament writings. We will then examine gospel traditions, comparing Mark with Matthew. We will place those in conversation with accounts of 30% Christianity within the larger narrative of gospelizing traditions. Finally, we will look at how early Christian communities used scripture in the midst of overwhelming opposition, and how that informs our engagement/understanding of the Bible for Native communities today.

Final Assignment Due June 14

Students will write a final paper on their topic of choice. It must center on a verse, pericope, or biblical theme with specific references, and explicitly identify one's hermeneutical method(s). The minimum number of scholarly sources required for this paper is 3—below that the paper will not pass. But it is recommended that at least 6 different scholarly sources be used in order to properly support your position. Scholarly sources do NOT include Bible dictionaries or study Bible references. Dictionaries and study Bibles may be used in addition to scholarly citations, but not in place of them. All biblical references must be in NRSV and with specific citations (eg. Jer. 2:2). Papers can be either in formal academic format, composed as a scholarly sermon, or in another format that is agreed to in advance with the instructor. While your voice is critical, this should not be understood as a reflection paper where your opinion is sufficient evidence for your argument. You must provide scholarly backing for your argument and claims. Papers should be no less than 6-8 double-spaced pages in length, but is recommended to be 8-12 pages in length. You may go longer, but do not go shorter than six pages.

Papers should have clearly identified biblical passages being engaged, an understanding of the historical context of the passage(s), what question(s) you are posing/addressing, and a detailed treatment of the text with regards to either 1) other portions of scripture, 2) theological challenges for early or contemporary Christian communities, and/or 3) how your passage speaks to or reflects concerns of Native communities. Native oral traditions, indigenous ceremonial beliefs and practices, and tribal hymns may also be included in one's paper. Please consult Kate Turabian's, "A Manual for Writers" for style and citation guidance.

Final papers are **DUE NO LATER THAN JUNE 14. Worth 35% of total grade**

Grading for Final Papers:

Final papers will be evaluated according to the following:

Clearly stated paper thesis – 10%

Well-developed arguments utilizing at least 6 (six) appropriate scholarly sources – 70%

Explicit connections made to Native issues, communities, or traditional practices – 10%

Use of proper grammar, spelling, and overall writing skills – 10%

Grading Breakdown:

Pre-class assignment: 30%

Class assignments: 35%

Post-class assignment: 35%

Grading Practices

All assignments **MUST** be turned in by the due date, or no credit will be given for that assignment. **NO LATE WORK ALLOWED.**

Attendance at **ALL** classes is **MANDATORY**. Failure to attend will result in a non-passing grade.

Students may consult with others and work together, but the final product turned in must be the student's own. All work must be done by the student and not borrowed from another source (utilizing scholarly sources in one's paper(s) with citations is not an issue). Any plagiarism will result in a non-passing grade.

Any written assignment that utilizes a translation of the Bible besides NRSV will not be accepted and returned ungraded.

While all work **MUST** be turned in on time, any written assignment that receives a score lower than the student wishes may be revised for a higher score without penalty.

All assignments will receive points. Those points will be totaled for the final grade. Grading scale is as follows:

A+: 97-100

A: 93-96

A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 70-76

C-: Below 70

Opportunities for extra credit will be made available on the quizzes. I always try to make grace available for students who work hard and give their best effort, so don't be discouraged!

Any accommodation needs a student may have due to disability should be discussed privately with me so as to ensure equitable evaluation. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or are facing challenges with the course.