

Religion 101 J and L Introduction to the Bible Spring 2007 3 semester hours

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Jane Webster

Class hours: Tuesday and Thursday REL101J- 8:00-9:15 and REL101L- 12:30-1:45 in Hines 207.

Office hours:

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Description and Goals

The purpose of this course is to introduce you through reading, writing, films, and class discussion to one of the most influential books in the Western world, the Bible. As the book itself is quite extensive, we will focus on the main biblical metanarrative, the “big story” that holds the book together. We will see that, throughout their history, the people of Israel are faced with various crisis points that cause them to talk about God in different ways. We will also examine how and why this book is held to be “sacred” by numerous faith traditions. I hope that you will share my fascination for this intriguing and powerful literature, and develop an awareness of the stories that shape our culture. There are no prerequisites for this course.

“Grounded in the belief that learning is not a passive pursuit,” this course will intentionally apply *engaged learning*. (See Barton College’s Vision Statement)

Learning Objectives: Engaged Learning

In this course, you will have the opportunity to become an engaged learner, one who

- Sets personal goals to participate, and evaluates progress;
- Prepares for class in order to teach others and to ask informed questions;
- Engages in respectful and collaborative discussion, taking responsibility for classroom dynamics;
- Expands the ability to learn in different ways, and to transfer knowledge bases;
- Researches a topic of interest, taking *initiative* to extend beyond required assignments.

Learning Objectives: Content

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate Biblical literacy
 - Identify structural features of the Bible (e.g., Old Testament, New Testament, Apocrypha, Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings, Gospels, Letters, etc.);
 - Recount in chronological order the biblical metanarrative to the end of 1st C. C.E., identifying major historical figures, and events;
2. Identify factors that influence Biblical interpretation
 - Identify the impact of historical events on the writing and theology of the different books in the Bible;
 - Identify the various authors of the books of the Bible, their concerns and strategies (including genre), bias, dates, and social position;
 - Describe the various Biblical genres, providing examples;
 - Describe how and why the Bible became an influential book (canonization);
 - Explore presuppositions of our culture;
 - Identify factors that influence reading strategies of the Bible;

- Find resources that will help you to extend your study of the Bible.

Learning Objectives: Transferable Skills

- Write an effective short argument using only primary sources (“learning cell papers”);
- Write an effective short argument integrating research from secondary sources;
- Develop confidence in oral presentation;
- Engage in professional and respectful discussion and behaviour;
- Reflect on your own development as a student.

Assessment:

All grades will be posted on Blackboard. Please check regularly to make sure they are accurate. No corrections will be made once final grades have been submitted.

1. Attendance and Participation (10%). (Engaged Learner)

- Complete the Engaged Learner Reflection according to the form. Please challenge yourself.
- Contribute to the Blackboard Discussion Board.
- According to Barton policy, attendance will be taken before the class begins; you may be failed due to excessive absences. Attendance on Learning Cell days is especially important.
- Attendance at specified Department events (e.g., Sprinkle Lectures) followed by a reflection paper turned in the next day will provide 1% bonus point.

2. Midterm (25%) in class, a Final Exam (25%) during exam week. (content objectives)

- In order to encourage you to develop strategies for long-term learning, you will have two multiple choice and essay exams to evaluate your understanding of the content in the text book (White), the Bible readings, class notes, Blackboard documents, and handouts.
- Practice self-quizzes on Blackboard will help you to prepare for class effectively and to review for exams.
- See Blackboard for study guides, sample questions, and advice on writing essay answers (they will follow the LC form below).

3. Four Learning Cells (8 + 10 + 10 + 12 = 40% total) See class outline for dates.

The purpose of these assignments is two-fold: to develop your ability to write short arguments and give oral presentations, and to identify principles of interpretation. Learning cell papers are written on two different levels. You will write 2 A-levels and 2 B-levels. The ascending grade point scale encourages improvement. Unexcused absence on learning cell days is a double-cut. ***See sample learning cells and rubric on Blackboard.***

A-Level:

A-Level Learning Cells are based only on the biblical text (primary sources). Do NOT consult secondary sources.

1) *Gather evidence:* Read the assigned biblical passages carefully. Keep a list of key words or themes as you read, noting chapter and verse references. Do not assume that you know what the text says; **make sure it is really there!** A concordance may be used to identify word repetition.

2) *Analyze the evidence:* What themes seem to be the most important and well-developed? Pick two and write a paragraph on each. Structure your paragraphs this way: introduce your theme with a topic sentence, give at least three pieces of properly-cited evidence to support the theme, and conclude (restate topic sentence and lead to the next paragraph).

3) *Evaluate the evidence within its context:* Make a clear connection between your two topic

sentences and write a thesis sentence. Write an introduction for your paper that states your thesis and how you will prove it (preview your topic sentences). Write a conclusion that reviews your topic sentences and restates your thesis. Possible questions to consider: How does this text present the relationship between God and humans? Is this relationship direct or mediated? What main image or language is used to describe God? How are the people presented? Are specific people or groups valued over others (e.g., priests, kings, Israelites, Canaanites)? What type of punishment or salvation is described? Use concept maps to clarify relationships. (I will demonstrate this.)

4) *Extend your thesis to a new context:* Briefly compare this text with other texts we have studied so far. Consider any one of the following questions: How does this text fit into or advance the metanarrative? Why does the author tell this story or present this material in this particular way (genre)? What historical situation or event might have provoked this kind of message or understanding of God? What bias do you detect? [Hint: consider the bias of the author rather than the perspective of God or other characters.] Write your question and a possible solution (no more than one sentence) and insert it into your introduction and conclusion, framing the rest of your paper.

5) Write no more than one page. Edit your papers carefully, using the samples to guide your form. *Do not just re-tell the story!* Before class, submit your paper to turnitin.com. Also, complete the LC rubric, attach it to a copy of your paper, and bring it to class the day it is due. The LC will form the basis of class discussion.

B-Level:

Now that you have developed the skill of writing short arguments based on the Biblical text alone (primary sources), you will have the opportunity to develop a more sophisticated writing style and argument by including information from secondary sources.

1) *Begin with an examination of the primary source:* Prepare a paper based on #1-4 above, having a clear question identified. For example, you might ask, “What is going on that the author insists that Jews only marry other Jews?” [Hint: if you do this part well, the rest will be easier!]

2) *Include research:* Research the question that you identified in #4 above. Consult at least five secondary sources dated after 1975, including your textbook (White) and the introductions in the *HarperCollins Study Bible*. Include at least one Bible commentary specific to your text (E.g., *Commentary of 1 Corinthians*). See “Research for B-Level Learning Cells” on Blackboard. Do **not** use internet sources. Use proper bibliography format (see samples). Integrate this research into your paper wherever appropriate.

3) These learning cell papers may be up to two pages in length. Before class, submit your paper to turnitin.com. Also, complete the LC rubric, attach it to a copy of your paper, and bring it to class the day it is due. The LC will form the basis of class discussion.

A Word about assignments:

- **Late learning cells will not be accepted.**
- See Blackboard for sample learning cells and rubric.
- Go to the Writing Center for assistance. Feel free to discuss your concerns with the instructor.
- You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is and what it is not. See Blackboard for an article on “Plagiarism and Paraphrasing.”
- You **MAY** discuss your learning cells with other students. Your written assignments, on the other hand, **must** be your own work. Dependence of one student on another will result in a grade of zero for all parties, and you will be reported. Barton’s Honor Code is strictly enforced.

Grading Scale

	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	Less than 60 = fail
A 93-100	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Required Texts:

- Required: [Fully Revised and Updated] Harper Collins Study Bible New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha. Bring your Bible to every class.
- Required: J. Benton White and Walter T. Wilson, *From Adam to Armageddon: A Survey of the Bible* (5th edition; Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006).
- Highly Recommended: Paul J. Achtemeir, editor, *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).
- Required: Multiple documents on Blackboard. You MUST use your Barton email account for this class.

Course Outline

- 1/23 Introduction to the course, its objectives and each other: A questionnaire
Introduction to the Biblical Text: What is it? How do we study it? Bring “Bible Structure” from Bb under “Documents.”
- 1/25 Historical overview: identifying the moments of crisis: Read White xv-13.
Bring “Biblical Metanarrative” and “Genre Characteristics” from Bb.
Submit Part I of the Engaged Learner Reflection.
- 1/30 Primordial History: Read Genesis 1-11, White 14-18. Bring Sample Learning Cells and “Documentary Hypothesis” from Bb. (Last add day)
- 2/1 Patriarchs: *Great People of the Bible*. Bring study guide on Bb; read a few sections of Genesis 12-50; read White 18-21.
- 2/6 Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. Bring completed study guide.
- 2/8 Exodus: *The Prince of Egypt*. Bring study guide on Bb; read Exodus 1-20, 32-34.
- 2/13 Exodus and Wilderness: Read Numbers 10-14, scan Leviticus 1-7; White 23-34.
- 2/15 Conquest and the Era of the Judges: **A-Level Learning Cell #1:** Joshua 1-8 and Judges 2-4; 6-8. (*See description of assignment above.*)
- 2/20 Monarchy: Read 1 Sam 8-10; 13; 16-17; 2 Sam 6-8; 11-12; 1 Kings 1-4, White 32-39. (Last drop day).
- 2/22 Divided Monarchy: Read 1 Kings 11-14; 16:29-19:21; 2 Kings 1-2; 17; 24-25, White 39-48.
- 2/27 Pre-exilic Prophets: **A-Level Learning Cell #2:** Amos
- 3/1 Exile: Read Ezekiel 1-2, 33-37, 2 Chr 36:14-23; White 49-75.
- 3/6 Reconstruction: Read Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 8-10, White 75-81.
- 3/8 **Mid-term exam.** See study guide and “Exam Essay Example” on Blackboard.

- 3/13 Psalms: Read Psalms 1, 2, 6, 8, 22, 51, 150; White 82-85; **Submit Part II of the Engaged Learner Reflection. *If you have a C- or less on your midterm, make an appointment to see me this week.**
- 3/15 Wisdom Literature: Read Proverbs 1-9, White 85-99.
- 3/17-25 March Break: no classes
- 3/27 The Apocrypha: Daniel 1-6, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, White 100-105.
- 3/29 Introduction to the New Testament: White 106-116; Gospel of Mark.
- 4/3 FILM: *The Gospel according to Matthew*. Bring study guide on Bb.
- 4/5 The Synoptic Gospels: Read White 117-138. Bring “Gospel Tendencies” from Bb. (Last day to withdraw)
- 4/10 The Gospel of John: **B-Level Learning Cell #3**: John 1-12 (Hint: Do not confuse the *Epistles* of John with the *Gospel* of John, nor the author of the Gospel, “John,” with “John the Baptist” (they are not the same). Do NOT compare the Gospel of John to the Synoptic gospels! White 169-174).
- 4/12 Stories of the Early Church: Acts 1-12; White 159-161
- 4/17 Film: *Paul, the Emissary*. Bring study guide on Bb. Read Acts 13-28.
- 4/19 The Life and Letters of Paul: Read Philemon, White 139-153.
- 4/24 Paul advises the churches: **B-Level Learning Cell #4**: 1 Corinthians
- 4/26 The Pastoral Epistles: Read 1 Timothy and Titus, White 153-161.
- 4/30 Last day to request a change in final examination schedule.
- 5/1 The End: Read parts of Revelation, White 177-181.
- 5/3 The Formation of the Canon: Read White 183-191. Bring “Canonization” and “The Nicene Creed” from Bb.
- 5/8 **Submit Part III of the Engaged Learner Reflection.** Conclusion — Our questionnaire: What have we learned? Review the course objectives on the syllabus. Prepare a list of essay questions that you expect to see on the exam. See “Exam Essay Sample” on Bb.
- 5/10 Reading Day

Final Exams: REL 101L Wednesday, May 6, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
REL 101J Tuesday, May 15, 8:00-10:00 a.m.

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