

## Initial and Signature Page

Initials: Division Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Registrar \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Education Chair \_\_\_\_\_

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**Division:**

Record of vote: \_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_ Abstain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Division Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Teacher Education Committee:**

Record of vote: \_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_ Abstain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ TE vote not required

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Education Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Curriculum Committee:**

Record of vote: \_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_ Abstain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Curriculum Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Faculty Association:**

Record of vote: \_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_ Abstain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Association President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**VPAA:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
VPAA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

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**University President:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
University President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**USAO Board of Regents:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Approve \_\_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, USAO Board of Regents

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Reason(s) for disapproval: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Procedure

1. The originating faculty member (OFM) works with department faculty and division chair to develop curriculum change (CC).<sup>1</sup>
2. OFM sends CC to division chair, *then* to registrar, and *then* to chair of teacher education. Each person electronically initials and returns CC to OFM. This step is only to communicate that a change is being proposed.
3. OFM forwards CC to curriculum committee chair and to faculty association president.
4. Curriculum committee holds digital forum for faculty and staff for questions and discussion of CC. Faculty/staff are notified by e-mail about the forum. The forum lasts five business days.<sup>2</sup>
5. Division faculty vote on CC. Division chair records result of the vote, electronically signs CC, and forwards to chair of teacher education.
6. Chair of teacher education determines if vote by teacher education committee is required. If so, teacher education committee votes on CC. Chair of teacher education records result of vote or indicates that vote was not required, electronically signs CC, and forwards to chair of the curriculum committee.
7. Curriculum committee votes on CC. President of curriculum committee records result of vote and electronically signs CC.
8. Chair of curriculum committee presents CC to faculty association. Faculty association votes on CC. Faculty association president records result of vote, electronically signs CC, and forwards to vice president of academic affairs (VPAA).
9. VPAA determines approval of CC, electronically signs it, and forwards to university president.
10. The university president determines approval of CC, electronically signs it, and forwards to USAO board of regents. University president sends letter of intent (LOI) to chancellor of the state regents.
11. USAO board of regents votes on CC. Chair of the board of regents signs CC and returns to university president. University president forwards CC to state regents no earlier than one month after the LOI was submitted. If the change is substantive a vote is required by the state regents. If it is non-substantive, only notification to the state regents is necessary.<sup>3</sup>
12. Once approved by state regents, the University president contacts Academic Affairs. Academic Affairs contacts OFM, registrar, and division chair about approval.
13. Registrar updates changes in Jenzabar and verifies updated checksheet. Registrar forwards verified checksheet to C&M who updates the checksheet on the website.
14. OFM works with administrative assistant to VPAA to update course catalog. CC record is held in the office of VPAA for 5 years. After 5 years it is relocated to university archives in Nash library.

<sup>1</sup> A curriculum change will take approximately two months to complete the cycle of approvals within the university and another 6 months to be approved by the state regents. However, that time may be longer based on the date when the proposal is initially submitted, the timing of regents' meetings, and the level of completeness of the proposal.

<sup>2</sup> It is the responsibility of the OFM to incorporate text of any agreed upon changes to the original proposal, as they see fit, based on comments from the faculty forum period in step 4. The division chair will review the revised proposal to verify that the text was altered accurately.

<sup>3</sup> A substantive change is a change in what students must complete to graduate (# of hours, deleting/adding a required course, changing admission requirements). A non-substantive change does not change what students must complete to graduate (adding/removing an elective, changing a course prefix or title, changing a course #)

Originating Faculty Member \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Division: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Course #: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your program undergone a program review within the last 5 years?    yes    no

Append the following:

- A. Course description.
- B. Justification for the new course.
- C. Sample course syllabus.
- D. If this is a resubmission of a previous curriculum change, include a description of the changes that have been made to the proposal.

## **Course Description and Justification**

### **PRLG 4XX3: The Bible**

#### **Course Description**

In this course, students will read and critically analyze significant parts of the Bible, using literary, historical, text-critical, and theological methodologies. The course will cover multiple genres of Biblical literature, including, but not limited to, creation narratives, histories, poetry, wisdom literature, gospels, epistles, and prophetic and visionary literature. Additionally, the course will examine the cultural, theological, and historical significance of many of the ideas within the Biblical narratives.

#### **Justification**

This course has been offered on two previous occasions. This course change is to reflect the fact that The Bible will be a consistent element within the Philosophy and Religious Studies curricular rotation. The course also addresses a critical need for critical Biblical literacy within a liberal arts curriculum.

**The Bible, Fall 2017**  
**Zachary Simpson**  
**University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma**

Class Meeting Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 3-4:25 pm

Dr. Zach Simpson

E-mail: [zsimpson@usao.edu](mailto:zsimpson@usao.edu)

Phone: (405) 574-1381

Office hours: MWF, 9-10 am; TTh, 9-11 and 1:30-3 pm (Davis 204c)

Web: <https://usao.academia.edu/ZacharySimpson>

**Course Description**

The Bible is, without exaggeration, the most influential text in the West, and, with the exception of a few other texts, perhaps the most influential collection of ideas, stories, and histories in the world. Yet, despite its pervasive influence and seemingly banal ubiquity, the Bible is subject to a host of misunderstandings, misreadings, and glosses, along with a suite of competing interpretations. The universality of the Bible is matched only in the number of ways that it can be read, interpreted, and appropriated. This class is yet another attempt to read the Bible, attempting to gain a more secure hold on the ways in which it can be seen, and, in turn, the ways in which has been seen historically. This course, in particular, will examine the literary, historical, and theological underpinnings of the text(s).

The “Bible,” literally translated, is a collection of works, a library of the collected stories, poems, fictions, tales, regulations, and visions of a number of lineages whose literature and culture survived for at least three thousand years. Because of its composite nature, the Bible has, at minimum, multiple genres of writing which demand different methods of interpretation. Arguably, the additive nature of the text also means that there are points of disagreement, dissonance, resonance, and overlap between and amongst its various stories and lessons. This course is designed to register and wrestle with the complexities inherent within the Bible and the number of theological, literary, and philosophical challenges it presents.

As such, the course has been designed to read major sections of the Bible, along with appropriate secondary texts, to bring out these differential readings and interpretations. The course will proceed in a roughly sequential manner, starting with the book of Genesis, and ending with the Christian Apocalypse, Revelation. This more sequential (but not necessarily linear) ordering will proceed through the text by first grappling with creation, then the patriarchal period, the deuteronomistic period, the founding of the Israelite kingdom, the writings after the fall of the kingdom, prophecy, the rise of writings about a/the Christ, the post-Christian missionary writings, and the end of time. Intermingled within this traditional ordering will be writings on the status of women, poetry, apocryphal texts, love stories, and other tales often lost or forgotten in religious and cultural history. It is the hope of this course that this variety of texts will evince the richness and complexity of a cultural and literary tradition that is often taken for granted.

As mentioned earlier, our methodological focus in this course is three-fold, representing the historical, literary, and theological implications of these texts. These different dimensions of interpretation will be brought out most ostensibly through the course readings and classroom discussion. In doing so, we will see how the Bible has been represented historically in theology, fiction, and Western iconography. We will also hopefully see the ways in which the Bible continues to be brought forth into the present in new and often startling ways.

Given the variety of readings put forth here, the course will be quite challenging, both in terms of the work it demands and the thought required for its adequate completion. The course has been constructed as a seminar in which student participation is paramount and expected. This means, at minimum, that students have completed the course readings before class and tried to identify the literary and theological problems they present. Doing so will allow for a richer and more variegated classroom experience.

Of course, the Bible will continue to persist as a wellspring of both inspiration and contention. It is not our job to resolve, or settle, the variety of readings that the text authorizes. Rather, the course's success will depend, in large part, on the degree to which we add to the multiplicity of readings and imaginings elicited by the Bible itself.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Students will understand the major genres found within the Bible; the historical setting and dynamics of the Bible and its authorship; and the theological import of positions adopted within the Bible.
2. Students will be able to critically assess the literary form, theological meaning, and potential historical consequences of positions and ideas articulated in the Bible.
3. Students will be able to relate Biblical stories, forms, and genres to contemporary political, cultural, and religious movements.
4. Students will form their own critical evaluations of the Bible through both analytical writing assignments and class discussion.

### **Assessment and Grading**

**20% --** Class participation and attendance. Because the course is modeled as a seminar, your participation is both expected and necessary. At minimum, you are expected to have read the assigned readings for each class at least once and prepared questions of both general and specific interest. Do not be concerned with the *amount* of times you talk: a single incisive comment can often be of greater value for the class than many comments taken together.

**17.5% Each –** Two assignments done two ways: For one assignment, you are to present on either a) a book of the Bible not read in class or b) a contemporary appropriation of a Biblical story, idea, or narrative. For the other assignment, you are to write a report on either a) a book of the Bible not read in class or b) a contemporary appropriation of a Biblical story, idea, or narrative, whichever you did not do previously. (So, if you do a presentation on U2's use of Biblical imagery, then you'll need to do a report on a book of the Bible we do not cover. Or, if you do a riveting presentation on the Book of Habakkuk, then you'll need to do a report on a contemporary use of something in the Bible.)

For the presentation, you will need to give a 10-20 minute presentation, complete with visual media, on a topic of your choosing (feel free to consult with me on this). This can be in the form of either the use of the Bible in the contemporary culture or a book report.

For the "book report," you will need to 1) give a plot/detail summary, 2) discuss the historical context, 3) analyze the book's place within the Biblical "narrative," and 4) evaluate its theological and historical consequences. You can do this in either the form of a presentation or as a written report that is 1400+ words in length.

When discussing the use of the Bible in contemporary culture, you should be thinking of ways in which political, cultural, and theological movements have used, mis-used, or adopted certain Biblical ideas, themes, and motifs. Good examples include the use of Biblical themes in contemporary music, Biblical themes in political movements, or Biblical themes in literature. The uses of the Bible are literally limitless.

**20% --** A paper due during the 8<sup>th</sup> week of class. The paper should be 1600+ words in length.

**25% --** A paper due during the 14<sup>th</sup> week of class. The paper should be 2000+ words in length.

For each paper, topics will be distributed to the class as a guide/intuition pump, but students are also encouraged to write on a topic of their choosing. Students will be graded based on their understanding of the material, their critical engagement with it, and the clarity and coherence of their paper. Outside research is not required for the papers, but students are encouraged to use secondary sources (**not** from the internet!) to facilitate their understanding of the texts. What is of primary interest is your use of the text, understanding of its key concepts and ideas, and critical analysis of those concepts and ideas.

So, in summary, you'll be graded based on class discussion, two papers, a book report (either presented or written), and an analysis of the use of the Bible in contemporary culture (either presented or written). Lots of reading, three papers, and a presentation.

### **Honor Code**

This course requires original work from each student. No work is to be plagiarized or copied in any way, and potential violations will be referred to the academic integrity committee. Students found guilty of academic misconduct will automatically fail the course.

In order to eliminate any possibility of plagiarism, please do not use the internet for research unless you are accessing peer-reviewed journals. Do not cut-and-paste, use Wikipedia or blogs, or cite from anything other than journals for your papers. The only internet site which is permissible as a source is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. All other sites, unless accessed through our library, are unacceptable. As always, we are here to help if you have any questions.

This class uses Turnitin.com, which allows us to insure proper citation of sources. In order to submit a paper for this class, you will need the following information (papers not submitted to Turnitin.com will not be accepted):

**Class ID:** 15932786

**Password:** covenants

### **Class Sessions**

This class is an upper level seminar. What that means, in brief: 1. You will have a lot of reading to do. 2. You will be expected to contribute to class discussions.

Do not expect to show up and sit quietly while I tell you what you need to know. Come to class fully prepared for that day's material, having read relevant texts and prepared questions in advance. This is compelling stuff; I should be fighting to get a word in as opposed to begging you to speak. Talk to us; talk to each other; talk to the texts.

*A note on electronics:* I do not allow use of electronic devices during class. This includes laptops, even for note taking, unless you have documentation from the office of disability services requiring the use of a computer. If you use a Kindle or other tablet for your books, please let me know. (This should not present a problem for the most part, but it may affect your ability to cite materials in papers or have the same translation as the rest of the class.)

### **Required Course Texts**

*The Harper-Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocryphal Texts* (Paperback), ed., Wayne Meeks (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1997). ISBN: 0060655275.

*Introduction to the Bible*, Christine Hayes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). ISBN: 978-0300181791.

**\*\*There will also be a coursepack required for purchase from the bookstore.\*\***

### **Miscellany**

- 1) This may sound rotten, but Dr. Simpson does not befriend students on Facebook while they are still students. This allows a measure of privacy for us both.
- 2) I am always happy to help you with your writing or ability to understand an assignment. Please come see me at my office hours or arrange a way to meet up if you are having any trouble. Copies of essay assignments will also be submitted to the USAO Writing Center in Nash Library, so please use that resource as well.
- 3) Though the course schedule does not show it, I am always willing to work at your pace if you are significantly engaged with material. The syllabus can always be changed to meet your goals.
- 4) Dr. Simpson is trying to swear less this term. Any assistance in this endeavor is welcome.

### **A Final Note on Discussing the Bible**

Discussing the Bible can be hard. People have literally died over these issues. Wars fought, holiday dinners ruined, families broken apart. These are ideas that are deeply important. And that's *precisely* why we must discuss them.

We are here to engage in the academic and critical evaluation of the Bible. Our approach here is not necessarily apologetic, though we will always try to empathize with how individuals and groups might find a text appealing for their own particular theology and group needs. Moreover, we cannot authorize a singular reading of the Bible *as a class*. You may do so in your own reading, but my job is to assist all students in cultivating a strong understanding of the text and its meanings. To do so, I will constantly play multiple interpretations against each other.

That being said, there are still right and wrong ways to read the Bible. No Biblical author would assert that God does not exist. We will need to be clear about where good readings end and the realm of interpretation begins.

Most importantly: be polite.



## Course Schedule

### **Week 1: Introduction and Method**

Tuesday, August 22: Introductions and Greetings

Thursday, August 24: How we will approach the course: literary, critical, and theological methods of analysis and interpretation

**Reading:** “Who Wrote the Pentateuch – and Why Should I Care?,” Joel Baden, Plenary Address to the Rocky Mountain Regional Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, 2017 (in coursepack)

### **Week 2: Beginnings**

Tuesday, August 29: Genesis ~ Creation Stories

**Reading:** Genesis 1-3; *The Enuma Elish* (from coursepack); *Introduction to the Bible*, Chs. 2 and 3

Thursday, August 31: Covenant, Flood, and Nephilim

**Reading:** Genesis 4-9; *Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 4

### **Week 3: Patriarchs and Journeys**

Tuesday, September 5: Fathers, Sons, and Tricksters

**Reading:** Genesis 12-36; *Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 6

Thursday, September 7: Exodus

**Reading:** Exodus 4-20; *Introduction to the Bible*, Chs. 7 and 8

### **Week 4: The Promised Land**

Tuesday, September 12: Biblical Law, Purity, and the Deuteronomic Code

**Reading:** Leviticus 11-13, 15, 17-20 and Deuteronomy 4-28; *Introduction to the Bible*, Chs. 10 and 11

Thursday, September 14: Joshua and Judges

**Reading:** Joshua 1-12, and 23-24; Judges 1-5, 9-16, and 19-21; *Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 13

### **Week 5: Monarchs and Women in the Bible**

Tuesday, September 19: Samuel

**Reading:** I Samuel 1-20; 2 Samuel 11-14; I Kings 1-4; Other selections from 2 Kings TBA (readings on Priestly reforms, etc.); *Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 14

Thursday, September 21: Esther, Ruth, and Judith

**Reading:** Esther; Ruth; Judith 8-16; *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, “Ruth” (coursepack)

### **Week 6: Evil and Vanity**

Tuesday, September 26: The Problem of Evil

**Reading:** Lamentations; Job 1-11, 21-31, and 38-42; *Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 20

Thursday, September 28: Wisdom Literature – Ecclesiastes and Proverbs

**Reading:** Proverbs 1-15 (you may want to read more); Ecclesiastes 1-12; “The Cycle of Life in Ecclesiastes” (coursepack)

### **Week 7: Poetry and Prophecy**

Tuesday, October 3: Poetry – Psalms and Song of Solomon

**Reading:** Psalms 1-6, 22-23, 34, 51, 58; Song of Solomon; *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, “Psalms”; “Babylonian Parallels to the Song of Songs” (coursepack)

Thursday, October 5: Pre- and Post-Exilic Prophecy: Jeremiah and Ezekiel

**Reading:** Jeremiah 1-8 and 35-45; Ezekiel 8-11, 16-18, 33, 36-37, 40, 47; *Introduction to the Bible*, Ch. 15 and pgs. 288-307; “The Dangerous Sisters of Jeremiah and Ezekiel” (coursepack)

### **Week 8: Messianic Expectation and Jesus**

Tuesday, October 10: Maccabees, Isaiah, and Daniel: The Hope for a Messiah

**Reading:** Isaiah 49-55; Daniel 7-12; 1 Maccabees 1-4

### **\*\*First Paper Due\*\***

Thursday, October 12: The Synoptic Gospels: Luke

**Reading:** Luke 1-9, 12, 15, 18-19, 22-24; “Love Your Enemies,’ The Golden Rule and Ancient Reciprocity (Luke 6:27-35)” (coursepack)

### **Week 9: Christology**

Tuesday, October 17: The Synoptic Gospels: Birth, Death, and Transfiguration

**Reading:** Different accounts of crucifixion, divine birth, and apocalypse from Matthew, Mark, and Luke – I will assign these a few days before class; “Mark’s Empty Tomb and Other Translation Fables in Classical Antiquity” (coursepack)

Thursday, October 19: **No Class. Fall Break**

### **Week 10: More Variations on Jesus**

Tuesday, October 24: Jesus from the Perspective of the Gospel of John

**Reading:** John 1-2, 5-6, 11-15, 17-21; “In the Spirit of Truth: Worship and Prayer in the Gospel of John and the Early Fathers” (coursepack)

Thursday, October 26: Gnosticism: The Gospel of Thomas

**Reading** *The Gospel of Thomas* (in coursepack)

### **Week 11: After Jesus**

Tuesday, October 31: Acts

**Reading:** Acts 9-10, 21-28; *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, “Acts” (coursepack)

Thursday, November 2: Paul’s Evangelism and Message

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 1-2, 5-8, 11-13, 15; Galatians 1-5; “St. Paul, Founder of the Universal Subject,” Alain Badiou, “Paul Between Judaism and Hellenism,” E.P. Sanders, and “The Promise of Teleology, the Constraints of Epistemology, and Universal Vision in Paul,” Dale Martin – all readings from *St. Paul Among the Philosophers* (coursepack)

### **Week 12: Paul’s Theology and Other Ways of Viewing the Message of Jesus**

Tuesday, November 7: Paul’s Letter to the Romans

**Reading:** Romans 2-8 and 10-13; “A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans” (coursepack)

Thursday, November 9: Other Epistles – James and Hebrews

**Reading:** Hebrews 1-2, 6-10, 13; James 1-2, 4-5; “Hebrews 9 and Hellenistic Concepts of Sacrifice” (coursepack)

### **Week 13: Revelation and Apocalypse**

Tuesday, November 14: Revelation

**Reading:** Revelation 4-9 and 12-22

Thursday, November 16: Apocryphal Apocalypses

**Reading:** Selections from *Revelations*, Elaine Pagels (in coursepack)

**Week 14: Catching Up (Can We?)**

Tuesday, November 21: Catch-Up Day

**\*\*Final Paper Due\*\***

Thursday, November 23: **Thanksgiving. No Class.**

**Week 15: The End is Nigh**

Tuesday, November 28: Wrap-Up and Discussion