

INTRODUCTION

The Level I religion course introduces students to the dialogue between the biblical tradition and the cultures and communities related to it. Study of the biblical storyline, major biblical texts and their interaction with (e.g.) theology, religious practice, ethics, and social values. Consideration of methods and fields in the study of religion in a liberal arts setting.

The course is taught in multiple sections. Every section will cover a core list of biblical texts, but in each case distinctive approaches and themes will be emphasized. For details see below.

121 A: RIPLEY, 800-855 MWF

THE BIBLE AND SALVATION. Like the Philippian jailer, who cries out for salvation while his life crumbles around him, people for millennia have turned to the God of scripture for hope in the midst of brokenness. From images of personal healing to cosmic renewal, the Bible employs a surprising variety of metaphors to speak of God's care and faithfulness toward God's creation and covenant people. Employing both literary and historical approaches to reading, we will explore the rich diversity of biblical images of salvation. We will also delve into ways select theologians, artists, and filmmakers have utilized these biblical motifs to address specific cultures and contexts, with an eye toward exploring metaphors of salvation appropriate to our contemporary situations.

121 B: BECKMAN, 905-1000, MWF

WOMEN AND/IN THE BIBLE. Biblical women are mothers, judges, ministers, harlots, manipulators, victims, proclaimers and much more. By the end of this semester you will know the classic "proof texts" regarding all these women AND know your way around the Bible as a whole. You will analyze how these selections shape attitudes toward treatment of and roles for women in religions that use these books. In short, you will have your own take on women and/in the Bible.

121 C: STANSELL, 905-1000, MWF

THE BIBLE AND ANTHROPOLOGY. This introduction to the Bible, with the help of cultural anthropology, reads Scripture in terms of its pivotal values, social relations, and theological motifs, with special reference to its Middle Eastern and Mediterranean setting. Topics include how the biblical world conceives of time, honor, material goods, family, sickness and health, suffering, and salvation, etc.

121 D: BECKMAN, 1045-1140, MWF

For a description of this section, see the description for Section B.

121 E: SCHILLINGER, 1045-1140, MWF

ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN. Daily news reports regarding violence between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, make remembering these religions share common roots difficult. Yet, all three trace their lineage back to Abraham. This section explores the common roots of these religions by introducing students to the Bible and the Qur'an, and examining the parallel characters and narratives found in each. At the same time, the individual beliefs and practices of each religion will be investigated in order to better understand what makes these religions distinct despite their similarities. In our multicultural world, a basic understanding of the relationship between these three monotheistic religions is perhaps more valuable now than ever before.

121 F: STANSELL, 1150-1245, MWF

For a description of this section, see the description for Section C.

121 G: ALEXANDER, 800-925 T, 800-920 TH

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE BIBLE. From the Africans first encounter with the absurdity that was chattel slavery in the New World, they and their descendants had to struggle with issues of identity and their sense of self. One of the most important sources for African Americans in their efforts to understand themselves as a people as well as their place in the world has been the Bible. This section will examine 1) the manner in which African Americans first encountered the Bible 2) how African Americans came to use the Bible 3) the dominant Biblical themes that developed - and in many respects persist - in African American culture; e.g. Exodus, the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrew people, and justice for the downtrodden and the dispossessed.

121 H: LAGERQUIST, 1255-150, MWF

BABEL OR PENTECOST? READING THE BIBLE AROUND THE WORLD. The Bible is one thing all Christians have in common. Protestant Reformers insisted that the Bible be made available in the vernacular, common language of believers. Missionaries made translating the Bible among their first tasks. Despite agreement that the Bible is central to faith differing readings of the Bible often lead to disputes and divisions among Christians. In this section we will pay attention to what the Bible says and to how it is heard/read by various audiences. We will ask what constitutes a “good” reading and what factors contribute to one. We will read with particular readers from across time and around the world, particularly Asian, African, and Latin American readers in the past few decades.

121 I: BENJAMIN, 120-245 T, 215-335 TH

JUDAISM’S BIBLE. Both Judaism and Christianity Bible have claimed the Bible as the foundational text of their traditions. But throughout the centuries, each religion has developed unique reading strategies for making sense of this diverse and complicated text. This course focuses on 1) those elements of the Bible that have had special importance for the development of Jewish literary and legal traditions, and 2) Jewish approaches to the Bible, with special attention to the practice of *midrash* (lit. interpretation) as a devotional and intellectual activity that has had a significant role in the development of Judaism.

121 J: LAGERQUIST, 200-255, MWF

For a description of this section, see the description for Section H.

121 K: ALEXANDER, 935-1100 T, 930-1050 TH

For a description of this section, see the description for Section G.

121 L: ODELL, 800-925 T, 800-920 TH

THE BIBLE AND CONTEMPORARY MORAL REFLECTION. This course addresses two sets of questions--about the Bible and moral perspectives contained within its writings, and about the moral issues raised by the world that we live in. In order to gain an understanding of biblical moral perspectives, our study of the Bible will explore the historical contexts in which its writings were produced, and it will also trace the development of such themes as covenant, justice, and love for neighbors throughout the Old and New Testaments. Our study of contemporary moral issues will introduce us to a range of ethical and moral approaches to contemporary problems, and will ask whether or not biblical perspectives are compatible with them. Students will integrate these two sets of questions in final projects that explore such contemporary social problems as genetic engineering, the death penalty, affordable housing, and globalization.

121 M: POEHLMANN, 935-1100 T, 930-1050 TH

AMERICAN RELIGION, AMERICAN EXPERIENCES. You and I are in America, one of the most "religious" countries in the world, and we have a "secular state," right? So, to understand this better we will be studying some of the religions here you know and some you likely do not: for example, the varieties within Christianity, the influence of Protestants in American culture, Judaism in the USA, and maybe another religion you choose to look at. We will learn how the Bible gets read and why Judaism and Christianity share a Bible (in parts), and other stuff, too. You will read some novels, other books, articles and parts of the Bible. You'll write personal essays, critical essays, and research reports, do library exploration and strategy, work with other students, and in all of this learn from each other. Midterm and final examinations.

121 N: HANSON, 1145-110 T, 1245-205 TH

THE BIBLE AS SCREEN PLAY. Movies have become our common language, one of the principal means by which we communicate and interpret our experiences and ideas (not to mention our primary form of entertainment). Biblical stories and themes have been a central source for filmmakers from the very beginning of the medium. What happens to those stories and themes in the process? What does the process of filmmaking teach us about how the Biblical authors may have brought their stories to life in their time? How do films illuminate the Biblical text, and how are contemporary perspectives, values, and prejudices reflected in the filmmakers' work? The balcony is open.

121 O: BENJAMIN, 1145-110 T, 1245-205 TH

For a description of this section, see the description for Section I.

121 P: HANSON, 120-245 T, 215-335 TH

For a description of this section, see the description for Section N.

121 Q: JOTHEN, 120-245 T, 215-335 TH

THE GOOD LIFE. This course will examine this question: What is the Good Life? For centuries, people have turned to the Bible to provide a way to understand how to live "the good life." For the Israelites, it was to live per their covenant with God; for Christians, it was to live per the new covenant in Christ. We will examine the various formulations of the good life that are described within the Bible, both by reading the Bible and by looking at how other thinkers have answered this question by turning to the Bible. Supplementary issues will include the tension between God's action and human action, the nature of justice, and the type of self that the various ideas of the good life demand of a believer.

121 R: ANDERSON, 800-855 MWF

CALLING AND COVENANT. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible provides countless stories of God calling individuals and peoples. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God creates covenants with a chosen people, calling them to be set apart for the sake of the whole world. In the New Testament God continues to call, incorporating others into the covenants through Jesus Christ. This class will explore what it means for Jews and Christians to be called by God through conversations with these communal faith traditions and modern resources on calling.