

SITUATING THE BIBLE: CONTEXTS AND HISTORIES (OTNT 1708)

Fall 2009

Pacific School of Religion

Mondays 9:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

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Goals:

This course, the first of a year-long sequence, gives a critical overview of the Bible, particularly the history, archaeology, societies, religions, and various cultural and political forces that shaped and influenced the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. It will also introduce students to the historical critical methods, important for understanding historical matters related to the Bible. The geographic focus of the course will be on the regions of the Near East, the temporal range will be 1500 BCE–400 CE. The course will begin addressing issues of canon, text, and content before turning attention to the archaeology and history of the times of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. Having set the historical context, the course will move to introduce students to the historical methods of interpretation, with an emphasis on the Gospels and the Pentateuch, and end with the history of biblical interpretation. Students should note that the instructors are different in terms of not only expertise (different testaments and different methodological emphases) but also teaching style.

Note: After completing this course, M.Div. students will still need to take “Interpreting Sacred Texts: The Readerly Turn and Beyond” and another course on the Bible (2000 level or above) to fulfill the requirement for the biblical studies component of their program.

Learning Outcomes:

Through reading, listening, discussing, reflecting, and writing, students—after successfully completing this course with a final course grade of B or above—will be able to:

1. Recognize the major literary corpora that make up the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament;
2. Identify the various geographical regions and time periods from which the Bible came;
3. Know something about the diverse histories and contexts surrounding the initial writing and collecting of various biblical texts;
4. Acknowledge the fluidity among various religious traditions beyond the so-called Judeo-Christian ones;
5. Begin to articulate both the continuities and discontinuities between the historical contexts of the Near East (between 1500 BCE and 400 CE) and their own historical contexts today; and

6. Understand to a degree the need to both honor the contextual differences and utilize the contextual similarities in their reading of the Bible.
7. Use the historical critical methods in the analysis of biblical texts.

Requirements:

1. Read the required readings that parallel the weekly lectures as listed on the syllabus. With the exception of the first week, these readings should be completed before you come to class. To help facilitate your preparation for the tests (see below), you are also required to keep a reading journal on your weekly readings. For weekly readings from Collins and/or Duling, you need to summarize what you have read in a single page (double-spaced with a font size of twelve [12]); for readings from the Reader, you need to write out a single-sentence thesis statement for each essay or chapter. Please bring your reading journals to class every week, as these will be collected without advance notice for grading purposes; we will do so two (2) or three (3) times during the semester [10%];
2. Map assignment [5%];
3. Two tests [20% + 20% = 40%];
4. One 8 to 10 page exegesis paper, either from an Old Testament or a New Testament text, using the source or form critical methods studied in class lecture and discussion sections. The paper is due by 4:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time) on Friday, December 18, 2009 [40%];
5. Class attendance and participation [5%]. Anyone who misses the class for four (4) times or more, including excused absences, will automatically receive a failure (F) for the course.

Textbooks:

- Collins, John J. *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.
- Duling, Dennis C. *The New Testament: History, Literature, and Social Context*, 4th ed.; London: Wadsworth, 2003.
- McKenzie, Steven and Haynes, Stephen. *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Revised and Expanded. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.
- Bible, *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.
- *Reader* (to be purchased at Copy Central on Hearst Avenue)

Grading and Plagiarism Policy: We will hold students and ourselves to the official policies set out by PSR.

PSR Grades

Grades are pedagogical tools to help students understand two things: (1) where they stand on any one assignment in relation to others in the class (since grading is mainly a comparative matter); and (2) whether they have fully mastered a particular assignment or need to do further work on it before moving on to the other issues. Thus, assigned grades should communicate the following:

- A+ Publishable work; superb work, far beyond the level of excellence generally found in student work.
- A Excellent work; work that shows a level of mastery *consistently* beyond the expected scope of the assignment.
- A- Excellent work: work that shows a level of mastery *usually* beyond the expected scope of the assignment, but also indicates a few instances of *only* adequate levels of mastery.
- B+ Very good work; work that indicates a *consistently* adequate mastery of the assignment at the expected level.
- B Good work; work that indicates a basically adequate level of understanding but where improvements are clearly possible.
- B- Work that shows a beginning grasp of the assignment but that needs improvement and additional study to reach a level of adequate mastery.
- C+ Work that indicates significant lacunae in understanding, execution, or critical engagement; much additional study is needed.
- C Poor work: work that shows a lack of overall understanding.
- C- through D- *Levels of* extremely poor work; work that indicates varying degrees of severe weakness in understanding, execution, and critical engagement.
- F Failure: Consistent inability to understand, execute and critically engage the material; student receives no credit for assignment or class.

Plagiarism Policy

In the United States and many other countries, one of the important markers of high academic standards is proper attribution (giving credit) for someone else's ideas, thoughts, words, or methods of scholarship. Proper credit should be given in both oral and written contexts. Proper credit is:

* When you use an actual sentence from a published article or unpublished essay, you must put the sentence in quotation marks and give a footnote or citation to indicate who said it. The citation should include full bibliographic information. (For further information about correct citation form, see Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*.)

* When you paraphrase or summarize another person's ideas, you must give a footnote or citation to indicate whose ideas they are and where you got them. (Or, in lecturing, make clear from whose ideas you are drawing.)

* When you adopt a significant idea from someone else's work, you must give a footnote or citation to indicate where you got the idea.

* When you use a method developed by someone else, you must give a footnote or citation to indicate the source of the method.

When you fail to do this, it is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism can apply both to students and to faculty. Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas, thoughts, words, or methods of scholarship as if they were your own and without giving proper credit to that person. Plagiarism is considered wrong because (1) it is "stealing" another person's ideas, methods, etc.; and (2) it is "lying"—representing something as your own when it is not yours. At PSR, as at many comparable graduate-level institutions, plagiarism is considered a serious offense.

* Plagiarism includes failing to give citations in the examples above.

* Plagiarism also includes copying another student's exam or part of an exam or essay.

It is not plagiarism when you indicate clearly that you are summarizing someone else's views in order to provide the context for an assessment or critique of those views, or to incorporate them into a larger project. In this case, you must indicate clearly that you are giving the views of someone else—e.g. by starting with "so-and-so argues that...." It is also not plagiarism to use a well-established idea that has been developed in multiple sources—e.g. to claim that God can be called "woman" as well as "man" is now sufficiently well established that it needs no attribution. Some phrases—e.g. "the personal is political"—are in such wide usage that sometimes we do not know where they originated; in such cases, it is acceptable to use them without attribution. However, the best scholarship will make every effort to give attribution where possible (e.g. to note that this phrase came from Robin Morgan).

Instances of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Academic Dean (or, in the case where the Dean is suspected of plagiarism, to the President). Suspected plagiarism may be reported by either students or faculty. The Dean or President will assess the evidence and investigate in order to determine whether plagiarism has occurred.

In the case of students,

When plagiarism has been substantiated, the faculty person shall inform the Dean's office (every instance of substantiated plagiarism must be reported to the Dean's office so that plagiarism can be monitored). The faculty member will discuss the plagiarism policy with the student and the student shall fail the assignment.

Additionally, the student will sign a letter stating that he/she has committed plagiarism, has received a warning, and is aware of the consequences. This letter will be re-signed each time the student has committed plagiarism. The letter will be kept in the student's file.

If, when reporting student plagiarism to the Dean's office, it is discovered that it is the student's second attempt at plagiarism, the faculty member, Dean, and student shall meet together. The student will fail the course.

If a student plagiarizes a third time, the student shall be immediately expelled from the school.

Lecture Syllabus and Reading Assignments

Sept. 7 – NO CLASS: Labor Day holiday

Sept. 14 – Introduction; Canons of Confusion: History and Politics of Canonization

Readings: • Textbooks: Collins, pp. 1-7, 599-605; Duling, pp. 555-70, 60-62

Sept. 21 – What's in a Text? Textual Criticisms and Translation Theories

Readings: • Textbooks: Collins, pp. 7-9; Duling, pp. 58-64
• Reader: Lee; McCarter, pp. 11-25; Aland and Aland, pp. 48-71
• Bible: Genesis 38, Mark 16

Sept. 28 – What is in the Hebrew Bible?

Readings: • Textbook: Collins, pp. 47-65, 183-85; 283-306
• Bible: Genesis, Amos, Hosea, Ecclesiastes

Oct. 5 – What is in the New Testament?

Readings: • Textbook: Duling, 53-58, 95-104, 179-86, 277-80, 293-98, 403-422
• Reader: Farmer, pp. 129-51
• Bible: Acts, Galatians

Assignment: Test #1, take-home test, passed out at end of class, due at beginning of next class, October 12th

Oct. 12 – Archaeology and the Study of the Bible

Readings: • Reader: J. R. Bartlett, "What Has Archaeology To Do with the Bible — Or Vice Versa," *Studies, Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J. R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 1997) 1-19; C. Meyers, "Where the Girls Are: Archaeology and Women's Lives in Ancient Israel," *Between Text and Artifact: Integrating Archaeology in Biblical Studies Teaching*, ed. M. C. Moreland (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 31-51; W. G. Dever, "Archaeology and the Emergence of Early Israel," *Archaeology and Biblical*

Interpretation, ed. J. R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 1997) 20-50; J. M. Miller, "What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It? What Archaeology Can Tell Us about the Reality of Ancient Israel," *BASOR* 329 (2003) 84-88; S. V. Freyne, "Aracheology and the Historical Jesus," *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J. R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 1997) 117-44; J. F. Strange, "New Developments in Greco-Roman Archaeology in Palestine," *BA* 45 (1982) 85-88.

Assignment: Map assignment distributed; completed map assignments due at beginning of next class, October 19th

Oct. 19 – Origins of Israel to the United Monarchy: Social Structures, Religions, and Politics

Readings:

- Textbook: Collins, chapters 9-12
- Reader: Killebrew, pp. 6-10, 149-96; Sadler, pp. 23-30; Meyers, pp. 221-71
- Bible: Exodus 1-15; Joshua; Judges; 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Kings 2

Oct. 26 – NO CLASS: Fall Reading Week

Nov. 2 – The Divided Monarchy to the Post-Exilic Period: Under the Shadows of the Empires

Readings:

- Textbook: Collins, chapters 13-14, 17-19, 21
- Reader: Barfield, pp. 28-41; Nakhai, pp. 512-28; Kuan, pp. 161-73; Zorn, pp. 413-47
- Bible: 1 Kings 3–2 Kings; Isaiah 6-12; Amos; Jeremiah 26–29, 34–39, 52; Isaiah 40–55; Ezekiel 1–7, 33, 40; Ezra; Nehemiah

Nov. 9 – Alexander and Hellenization: “It’s All Greek to Me.”

Readings:

- Textbook: Duling, chapter 1
- Bible: 4 Maccabees

Nov. 16 – The Maccabean Period, Pompey, and the First Jewish-Roman War: Apocalyptic Now

Readings:

- Textbook: Duling, pp. 298-304, 443-58
- Reader: Levine, pp. 352-87
- Bible: 1 Maccabees; Daniel; Mark; Revelation

Assignment: Test #2, take-home test, passed out at end of class, due at beginning of next class, November 30th

Nov. 23 – NO CLASS: SBL Annual Meeting (New Orleans)

Readings:

- Reader: Grant, pp. 101-144

Nov. 30 – Reconstructing the History of Israel: Source and Form Criticism

- Readings:**
- Textbooks: Collins, pp. 47-82; Collins, pp. 83-105; McKenzie and Haynes, pp. 35-57; 58-89
 - Bible: Genesis 1–25:18; 2 Samuel 7–1 Kings 2

Dec. 7 – Reconstructing the Early Church and Historical Jesus: Source and Form Criticism

- Readings:**
- Textbooks: Duling, pp. 65-74, 293-327; 75-77, 104-137;
 - Reader: Goodacre, pp. 13-32; 162-68; Meier, pp. 167-95
 - Bible: Matthew 3-13; Mark 1-7; Luke 3-8

Dec. 14 – Interpretation of the Bible within the Jewish and Early Christian Traditions

- Readings:**
- Reader: Signer, pp. 65-82; Grant and Tracy, pp. 39-99

Exegesis Paper due by 4:00 p.m. (PST) on December 18th.