SYLLABUS

CS 121---Introduction to the Bible
Wesley Theological Seminary
Upper New York Conference
January 18 through February 25, 2021

Instructor: Rev. Dr. John W. Fulton
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Course Description

A focus upon the meaning of, and discipline of, “exegesis”. Additional focus upon the development of biblical thought and the dramatic exchanges between God and humankind through the centuries. As well, a survey of both Old Testament and New Testament books—especially authorship, historical context, and theological content.

Objectives

Proficiency in: (1) understanding the origin, purpose, and message of both Old Testament and New Testament canons, (2) interpreting these sacred writings to congregations, and (3) applying this knowledge to contemporary preaching and teaching in the local church.

Required Texts


(Note: Reading assignments are “front-end loaded”. That is, the number of pages to be read is heavier at the outset. This enables the student to do extensive reading prior to classes in order to be prepared for group discussion.)

Supplementary Texts

Assignment Reminders

1. All written assignments must be submitted in twelve-point font with a one-inch margin.

2. Grammar counts! Your papers are a reflection of your communication skills. In this course you are learning not simply about the construction and content of the Bible, but to communicate your ideas to others in a clear and coherent manner.

3. It is expected that you will always employ gender-inclusive language.

4. Support any position you take with specific references to the text on which you are writing and to other materials that support your argument.

5. Produce your own original work. Properly acknowledging your sources is important. But if the bulk of your paper consists of quoted material, then it is not your own work. I expect to read about your understanding of the ideas discussed in our textbooks, lectures, and class discussion.

6. Please proofread! Typos and grammatical errors make it appear as though you have put little effort into your work. Such lack of attention potentially impacts one’s grade. Remember, I am not your English teacher!

7. Plagiarism is not acceptable. Period! You cannot use someone else’s ideas without acknowledging that you have done so. You must always reference your sources, whether a direct quote or not.

Grades

There are twenty pages of written assignments, plus class participation, that will constitute your final grade. Unless the student arranges in advance for a written assignment to be delayed, a reduction in grade is possible.

Proposed Class Schedule

All class sessions will be held online due to COVID-19. Proposed times are Mondays and Thursdays each week, January 18th through February 25th. Each session 6:30-8:30 P.M. Such contact hours complies with the minimum of twenty (20) hours required by Wesley Theological Seminary.
WEEKLY TOPICS, READINGS, AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: January 18th and 21st

SETTING THE STAGE

Introductions
Course Description
Objectives and Expectations
Assignments and Grades

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

What Is the Task?
Defining “Exegesis”
A Variety of “Criticisms”
Rudyard Kipling Poem
Resources for Exegesis

WHAT IS THE BIBLE, ANYWAY?

A Birdseye View
God’s Manifesto
“Salvation History”
The Eternal Plot

Reading Assignment prior to class on January 18th:

Hayes and Holladay, pp. 1-206
Anderson, pp. 9-27

Written Assignment #1 due by email, Monday, January 18th:

Why is biblical exegesis important to one’s preaching in the local church? What resources should a preacher employ in the discipline of “exegesis”? (ONE PAGE)

AND, Discuss the difference between the “truth” of the biblical accounts of creation and the “truth” that we usually regard as scientific. (ONE PAGE)
**Week 2: January 25th and 28th**

**IN THE BEGINNING, GOD…**

The Book of Genesis
Creation Stories
Earliest Days
God of Our Fathers: The Patriarchs

**EXIT TO ENTRANCE**

The Story of Moses
Exodus through Deuteronomy
The Covenant People

**Reading Assignment prior to class on January 25th:**

Barclay, pp. 25-51
Anderson, pp. 28-36

**Written Assignment #2 due by email, Monday, January 25th:**

What are your overall observations about the book of Exodus? What questions, if any, does it leave you with? (ONE PAGE)

AND, Where does the book of Deuteronomy get its name? In this book, what challenges are facing Moses? (TWO PAGES)

**Week 3: February 1st and 4th**

**A FLAG IS BORN**

From Tribes to Nationhood
Joshua and Judges
Kings and Monarchies
People of the Torah
A Spiritual Blackout
8th Century B.C.E. Ethical Prophets

**PEOPLE OF THE TORAH**

The Deuteronomic Reformation
A New Beginning
Conflict of World Powers
Jeremiah and Lamentations
THE EXILE

The Prophet Ezekiel
Second Isaiah
King Cyrus of Persia
Ezra, Haggai, and Nehemiah

Reading Assignment prior to class on February 1st and 4th:

Anderson, pp. 39-63

Written Assignment #3 due by email, Monday, February 1st:

What are your impressions as to the prophets of the Old Testament? What important roles did they play in society? (ONE PAGE)

AND, Discuss the view that religion belongs in one sphere, while political and economic issues belong in another. Would Jeremiah have agreed with the policy of keeping social issues out of the pulpit? (TWO PAGES)

Week 4: February 8th and 11th

POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS

The Psalms
The Book of Job
Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

THE APOCRYPHA

The Word “Apocrypha”
Between the Testaments
Storytelling: The Book of Judith

Reading Assignment prior to class on February 8th:

Barclay, pp. 76-101

Written Assignment #4 due by email, Monday, February 8th:

The test of any religion is how it deals with the problem of suffering and evil. How is this problem dealt with in the Book of Job? (TWO PAGES)…
AND, Write a narrative on why the Book of Psalms is such a remarkable collection. What variety of purposes do these poems serve? (ONE PAGE)

**Week 5: February 15th and 18th**

**FROM OLD TO NEW**

Good News from Prejudiced Reporters  
Quest for the Historical Jesus  
The Synoptic Gospels  
The Gospel of John

**Reading Assignment prior to class on February 15th:**

Anderson, pp. 66-72  
Barclay, pp. 52-63

**Written Assignment #5 due by email, Monday, February 15th:**

With reference to the Gospels, explain the phrase: “Good news from prejudiced reporters”.  
(ONE PAGE)

AND, How are the four Gospels similar to one another? How are they different? (THREE PAGES)

**Week 6: February 22nd and 25th**

**THE CHURCH IS BORN**

The Book of Acts  
Early Church Leaders  
Friction WITHIN and WITHOUT  
“The World Is My Parish”

**THE LETTERS**

A Man Named Paul  
Letters to New Believers  
Letters to the Next Generation  
From “Movement” to “Institution”
THE CURTAIN FALLS, BUT…

The Book of Revelation
Paradise Regained
The Decisive Battle Is Won!

Reading Assignment prior to class on February 22nd:

Anderson, pp. 74-89
Barclay, pp. 63-75

Written Assignment due by email, Monday, February 22nd:

What does the Book of Acts tell us about the early church? Does the breaking down of the “wall of separation” between Jew and Gentile have any implications for racial and social justice today? Between Christians and Muslims? Between Jews and Muslims? (TWO PAGES)

What was the purpose of letters written to new believers? What do these letters tell us about the problems within the early church? (TWO PAGES)

Reflect on the idea that the humanness of the biblical authors does not diminish “the divine source”. (ONE PAGE)