

# SYLLABUS

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

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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

Anderson, Bernhard W. *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*. Fortress Press, 2006.

Barclay, William. *Introducing the Bible*. Abingdon Press, 1997.

Hayes, John H. and Holladay, Carl R. *Biblical Exegesis*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

(**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

Any Dictionary of the Bible is an invaluable resource for your professional library. (cf. Holman’s *Dictionary of the Bible*). But any quality reference book will serve you faithfully.

## **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 18<sup>th</sup> through February 25<sup>th</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup>:**

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

#### **Written Assignment #1 due by email, Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup>:**

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 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>**

### 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 25<sup>th</sup>:**

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

### **Written Assignment #2 due by email, Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>:**

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 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>**

### A FLAG IS BORN

From Tribes to Nationhood  
Joshua and Judges  
Kings and Monarchies  
People of the Torah  
A Spiritual Blackout  
8<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>:**

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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup>:**

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 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>**

#### 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 15<sup>th</sup>:**

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

**Written Assignment #5 due by email, Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>:**

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 22<sup>nd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>**

#### 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 22<sup>nd</sup>:**

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)