SYLLABUS

CS 121---Introduction to the Bible
Wesley Theological Seminary
Washington, DC
October 6, 2022 through November 10, 2022

Instructor: Rev. Dr. John W. Fulton
Phone:          315-445-1939
Email: jfulton@wesleyseminary.edu
              jfulton0002@gmail.com

Course Description

A focus upon the meaning of, and discipline of, “exegesis”. Additional attention to 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

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 proof read! 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

Wesley Theological Seminary permits us to utilize ZOOM. (Such has worked smoothly in my previous sessions.) PROPOSED times are Mondays and Thursdays each week, October 6th through November 7th. Each session 6:30-8:30 P.M. Such contact hours complies with the minimum of twenty (20) hours required by Wesley.
WEEKLY TOPICS, READINGS, AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1: October 6th

SETTING THE STAGE

Introductions
Course Description
Objectives and Expectations
Assignments and Grades

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

What Is the Task?
Defining “Exegesis”
A Variety of “ Criticisms”
“The Elephant’s Child” by Rudyard Kipling
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 Monday, October 6th:

Anderson, pp. 11-17
Hayes and Holladay, pp. 1-206

Written Assignment #1 due by email, Monday, October 6th:

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: October 10th and 13th

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD…

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

EXIT TO ENTRANCE

The Story of Moses
Book Review: Adam Hamilton’s “Moses”
The Books of Exodus through Deuteronomy
The Covenant People

Reading Assignment prior to class on October 10th:

Anderson, pp. 19-36
Barclay, pp. 26-35

Written Assignment #2 due by email, Monday, October 10th:

Why was Moses of such critical importance as he led the Hebrew people from captivity in Egypt toward freedom in the “promised land”? (TWO PAGES)

AND, Define the word “covenant”. How was this term employed in the relationship between the Hebrew people and their God, Yahweh? What were the challenges facing Moses in the keeping of this covenant? (TWO PAGES)

Week 3: October 17th and 20th

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 Monday, October 17th:**

Anderson, pp. 39-51
Barclay, 36-45

**Written Assignment #3 due by email, Monday, October 17th:**

What are your impressions as to the prophets of the Old Testament? What were their qualifications? What important role did they play in Hebrew 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: October 24th and 27th**

**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 Monday, October 24th:**

Anderson, pp. 563-59
Written Assignment #4 due by email, Monday, October 24th:

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: October 31st and November 3rd**

**FROM OLD TO NEW**

Good News from Prejudiced Reporters
Quest for the Historical Jesus
The Synoptic Gospels
Book Review: Michael Card’s “A Fragile Stone---Simon Peter”
The Gospel of John

Reading Assignment prior to class on Monday, October 31st:

Anderson, pp. 61-72
Barclay, pp. 52-63

Written Assignment #5 due by email, Monday, October 31st:

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? (Background? Audience? Style? Content?) (THREE PAGES)

**Week 6: November 7th**

**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 Monday, November 7th:

Anderson, pp. 74-80
Barclay, pp. 63-75

Written Assignment due by email, Monday, November 7th:

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)