

# SYLLABUS

## CS 121---Introduction to the Bible

Wesley Theological Seminary

Washington, DC

October 6, 2022 through November 10, 2022

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### 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

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 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 6<sup>th</sup> through November 7<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.**

## **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 6<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: October 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>**

### 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 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<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 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 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>**

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<sup>h</sup>:**

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 31<sup>st</sup> and November 3<sup>rd</sup>**

FROM OLD TO NEW

Good News from Prejudiced Reporters  
Quest for the Historical Jesus  
Book Review: Amy-Jill Levine's "*The Misunderstood Jew*"  
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 7<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 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)