



REL/JSP 114

The Bible in History, Culture and Religion

Syracuse University -- Fall 2017 -- TTh 3:30

Classroom: Hall of Languages 211

Instructor: [Jim Watts](#) (PhD), E-mail: jwwatts@syr.edu, Phone: 443-5713

Office: Hall of Languages 501; Office Hours: TTh 2-3 pm and by appointment

Course Description: The Bible is among the world's most widely read literature and has influenced art, literature, law and politics as well as religious traditions. This survey of Jewish and Christian scriptures will pay particular attention to the function of the Torah, the Gospels, and the Bible as ancient and modern scripture, as well as their literary contents, their composition, and their role in the development of Western religions and cultures.

Audience: Students interested in the the Bible, Judaism, Christianity, or religion generally and wanting to fill Humanities core requirements, as well as majors and minors in Religion, Jewish Studies, History, and Literature.

Prerequisites/Co-requisites: None.

Credit cannot be earned for both REL/JSP 114 and either REL/JSP 215 or REL 217.

Course Objectives: The goals of this course goals are to have students

1. gain sufficient familiarity with ancient history to understand the cultural contexts out of which biblical literature grew and which in turn were shaped by the Bible;
2. develop an understanding of the Bible as a key instance in the diversity of human religious phenomena, and achieve fluency in describing and interpreting it;
3. recognize and appreciate the difficulties and possibilities inherent in undertaking a coherent, disciplined study of biblical literature, and become aware of the diversity of perspectives within that study.

Course Requirements: The course consists of class discussions, lectures, student projects, and, most of all, readings. This course is a *reading* course, and students' completion of all reading assignments is essential for their success. Assignments, discussions, lectures and tests all presuppose that students have read carefully and on schedule the assigned readings.

Evaluations of students work:

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| Daily reading content quizzes: a short quiz at the beginning of each class will test for completion of all reading assignments. Missed quizzes cannot be made up, but the lowest five quiz grades will be dropped. | 20% |
| Three tests on February 16, March 30, and May 9 | 25% each |
| Attendance & Participation | 5% |

Required Textbook: *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, 4th edition

Other required readings are available through the Blackboard System or online by links imbedded in the syllabus