



**The Bible**  
**in History, Culture**  
**and Religion**  
**Syracuse University**  
**REL/JSP 114**  
**Spring 2017**

**Time:** 3:30-4:50 on Tuesdays & Thursdays  
**Place:** Hall of Languages 211

**Instructor:** [Jim Watts](#) (PhD)  
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**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 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 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, student study and research, 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:**

Daily reading content <b>quizzes:</b> 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 <b>tests</b> on February 16, March 30, and May 9	25% each
Attendance and participation	5%

The grading scale is: A+ = 100, A = 95, A- = 92, B+ = 88, B = 85, B- = 82, etc. Incidents of plagiarism or cheating result in no credit (0) for the test or assignment and may result in further disciplinary action (see academic integrity statement below). Students may check their grades online through the [Blackboard Learning System](#).

**Class-room Behavior:** A successful learning experience depends on students' behavior in class, as much as on the quality of their work and on the teacher's presentations.

- I encourage energetic discussion of relevant topics and expect different opinions among class members, but always express your ideas with respect for those who might disagree

with you.

- Arrive on time. If you must be late, enter quietly. Do not leave during class except for emergencies.
- Turn off cell phones, laptops, and tablets. If you wish to use an electronic device for class work (notes, assignments), you *must sit in the front row* of the class. Texting, e-mailing or web browsing during class are grounds for being dismissed from that day's class.

**Academic Integrity:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. In this course, students found cheating on a test or assignment will receive zero (0) credit for that test or assignment. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

### **Religious Observances Policy**

SU religious observances policy, found at [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm), recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to are religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through *MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances* from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

**Disability-Related Accommodations:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>.

**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.

### **Schedule of Topics and Assignments:**

- Reading assignments must be completed by class on the day listed. Keep the reading questions in mind as your read and make notes.
- **Bb** = files on Blackboard under "Assignments".

- **NOAB** = articles in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*. Readings in the NOAB start and end at major section headings on the pages listed.
- **Online** = online readings hotlinked in the syllabus.
- **Bible** = readings from the Bible by book name, chapter (before any colon) and verses (after the colon).

Dates	Topics	Reading questions	Assignments
Tues Jan 17	1 Introductions		
Thurs Jan 19	2 Scriptures and Rituals	<i>What is a scripture? How are scriptures ritualized? How do Passover and Communion ritualize scripture for Jews and Christians? How are Jewish and Christian bibles the same? How are they different?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Ritualizing Scriptures” <b>NOAB</b> , pp. 2185-91 <b>Bible:</b> Exodus 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34
<b><i>The Torah as a Scripture</i></b>			
Tues Jan 24	3 When Torah Became Scripture: the Time of Ezra	<i>What is the place of the Pentateuch in Jewish, Samaritan and Christian scriptures? When did it become scripture?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Torah as a Scripture” <b>Bible:</b> Deuteronomy 6; Nehemiah 8
Thurs Jan 26	4 Torah Rhetoric Part 1	<i>Who is YHWH? Who is Israel? How do the stories of Genesis and Exodus establish their identities? Where do the settings of biblical stories fit in the history of the ancient Near East?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Rhetoric of Origins in Genesis and Exodus” <b>NOAB:</b> look at timeline on 2254-55 through the Late Bronze Age; <b>Bible:</b> Genesis 2-4; 12; 15-18, 22, 28-32, 37, 45; Exodus 1-4, 19, 24
Tues Jan 31	5 Scribes & Printers	<i>How did scribes write manuscripts? How did the invention of printing change the look of biblical texts?</i>	<b>Meet in Bird Library 6th floor, in the Hillyer Room</b> <b>NOAB</b> , pp. 2192-97.
Thurs Feb 2	6 Torah Rhetoric Part 2	<i>Whose voices dominate the Pentateuch? How do the laws characterize God? What is Moses’ role? Who is Israel? What do Israel’s rituals accomplish?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Authority, Sanctions, Readers” <b>Bible:</b> Exodus 7, 11, 32-34, 40; Leviticus 16, 26; Numbers 13-14
Tues Feb 7	7 Torah Rhetoric in Israel’s History	<i>What is the Deuteronomistic History? How does the Bible explain Israel’s history from the settlement to the Exile?</i>	<b>NOAB</b> , pp. 313-17, and look at timeline on pp. 2254-57 of the Iron Age. <b>Bible:</b> Judges 1, 4-5; 1 Samuel 16-18; 2 Samuel 1-2; 1 Kings 11:41-12:33; 2 Kings 17:1-14; 24:1-25:30.

Thurs Feb 9	8 Torah's Iconic Dimension After Ezra	<i>How did Ezra ritualize the Torah's iconic dimension? What are tefillin and mezuzahs? How are Torah scrolls made? What is the holiest object in Judaism? What is a codex? When does evidence begin for belief in a Torah in heaven?</i>	<b>Bible:</b> Ecclesiasticus <a href="#">24</a> ; <a href="#">Baruch</a> 3:9-4:4; <b>Bb:</b> "Iconic Scrolls," "Torah Myths"
Tues Feb 14	9 Torah's Iconic Dimension Before Ezra	<i>Who wrote on the stone tablets? Who wrote the Torah scroll? Where was the Ark kept? What is the difference between the Ark of the Covenant and arks in synagogues? What are the Ketef Hinnom amulets? Where did Josiah find an old Torah scroll? What did he do with it?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> "Tablets Arks Amulets," "Josiah's Torah Scroll" <b>Bible:</b> Exodus 24-25; Deuteronomy 31; 2 Kings 22-23
Thursday, Feb 16		<b>Test #1</b>	Study Guide on Blackboard
Tues Feb 21	10 Performing Torah After Ezra	<i>What is the performative dimension of texts? How have Jews and Christians performed the Torah aloud, and in what languages? What effect does it have? In what language was the Torah originally written? Why does oral performance tend to be more inclusive than scriptural interpretation? How did the Exile influence the Bible?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> "Reading Torah After Ezra" <b>Online:</b> " <a href="#">Traumatic Origins of the Bible</a> " <b>NOAB</b> , pp. 2242-44 <b>Bible:</b> Nehemiah 8-9; Ecclesiasticus <a href="#">prologue</a> .
Thurs Feb 23	11 Performing Torah Before Ezra	<i>Why did ancient people read ritual texts aloud? Who read Torah aloud, according to biblical stories? Who heard the readings?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> "Performance Before Ezra" <b>Bible:</b> Joshua 8:30-35; 24:1-30; 2 Kings 22-23.
Tues Feb 28	12 Interpreting Tanak	<i>Why were other books added to Torah to make the Tanak? How did adding them influence the reading of scriptures?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> "Tanak as a Scripture" <b>Bible:</b> Isaiah 7; Esther 9:20-32; Psalms 113-115; Exodus 15:1-21; Proverbs 7-8, 10.
Thurs Mar 2	13 Interpreting Torah after Ezra	<i>How did Ezra ritualize the Torah's semantic dimension? How have later Jews and Christians done it? Why have they identified themselves as Israel? What effects has this identification had on them?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> "Interpreting Scripture," "Identifying with Israel"
Tues Mar 7	14 Interpreting Torah Before Ezra	<i>What was a scribe? What is wisdom literature? Who are the Bible's ideal scribes? What is P? When were the Pentateuch's sources written? What</i>	<b>Bb:</b> "Pentateuch before Ezra" "Promises and Threats" <b>Bible:</b> Proverbs 7-8; Ecclesiastes 1-3, 12; Leviticus

		was a suzerainty treaty? Why does the Pentateuch threaten punishments? What is apocalyptic literature?	10; Deuteronomy 34; 1 Maccabees 1; Daniel 7; Mark 13; Revelation 6:1-8:2. <b>NOAB</b> , pp. 3-6, 721-22, 1233-34, 2153-55.
<b><i>The Gospels as a Scripture</i></b>			
Thurs Mar 9	15 Jesus	What do the New Testament Gospels emphasize most about Jesus? Why do historians have trouble verifying their story? How does Mark begin the story of Jesus? What does Mark want readers to know about Jesus?	<b>Bb</b> : “Jesus in the Gospels” <b>Bible</b> : Mark 1-13 (all)
March 11-19 Spring Break			
Tues Mar 21	16 Interpreting Jesus	According to Paul, who was Jesus? What effect did Jesus’ death have on other people? According to Hebrews, who was Jesus? How and why do Paul and Hebrews quote the Hebrew Bible? How have later interpreters understood Jesus’ death on the Cross?	<b>NOAB</b> , pp. 1973-76, 2103; <b>Bible</b> : 1 Corinthians 1:1-25; 11:17-33; 12:12-13:13; 15:1-19; Romans 3:1-20; 4:13-5:21; 8:1-39; 12:1-21; Hebrews 8-11; John 1, 3. <b>Bb</b> : “Theories of Christ’s Atonement”
Thurs Mar 23	17 Jesus in modern imagination	How have artists usually shown Jesus? What scenes from his story do they most often portray? What does Jesus usually look like in art and movies? Why does Jesus look this way? What effects have Jesus art and movies had on Christians, Jews, and others?	<b>Online</b> : “ <a href="#">Jesus in the Visual Arts</a> ”, “ <a href="#">Prothero, The Personal Jesus</a> ”, “ <a href="#">Met sued over racist Jesus</a> ”
Tues Mar 28	18 Gospels	What do these gospels add to Mark’s account? How are the gospels similar to each other? How do they differ? Who was Irenaeus? Why did he insist on four and only four legitimate gospels?	<b>NOAB</b> , pp. 1746-47, 1827-29, 1879-81; <b>Bible</b> : Matthew 1-2, 5-7; 26-28; Luke 2, 4, 24; John 8-9, 17; 1 John 1, 4; <b>Online</b> : <a href="#">Thomas 1-13</a> ; <a href="#">Mary</a> (all); <b>Bb</b> : “Irenaeus”
Thursday, Mar 30		<b>Test #2</b>	Study Guide on Blackboard
Tues Apr 4	19 Iconic Gospels	What physical form do Gospels and Bibles take? What turns Gospels and Bibles into iconic books? Why did Roman courtrooms display Gospel books? What is the visual relationship between Gospels and pictures of Jesus? How did Christians use Gospels? How are Gospel books and	<b>Bb</b> : “Ritualizing Gospels” “Parmenter, Iconic Book”

		<i>icons similar?</i>	
Thurs Apr 6	20 Performing Gospels, Understanding Parables	<i>What is a lectionary? What language did Jesus speak? In what language were the Gospels written? According to Mark, why did Jesus tell parables?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Reading Scripture in Churches” <b>NOAB</b> , pp. 2197-2201 <b>Bible:</b> Acts 2; Genesis 11:1-9; Mark 4:1-34; 12:1-12
Tues Apr 11	21 Interpreting the Gospels	<i>What does “gospel” mean? What is a gospel? What is the evidence that Matthew and Luke used Mark as their source? How does John relate to them?</i>	<b>NOAB</b> , pp. 1743-45 <b>Bb:</b> “Instructions for 5 Gospels” <b>Online:</b> <a href="#">Five Gospels</a> : compare Matthew 12:1-50 with its parallels <b>Bible:</b> John 20-21
<b><i>The Bible as a Scripture</i></b>			
Thurs Apr 13	22 Interpreting Jewish & Christian scriptures	<i>How was biblical law first applied to daily life? How did Aristeas and the Rabbis interpret law? How did Paul and Jesus interpret law? How does Jewish and Christian interpretation of law differ? What does Moses represent?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Interpreting Biblical Law” <b>Bible:</b> 2 Chronicles 17:7-9; 19:4-11; Leviticus 21:7-15; Nehemiah 13:1-9, 28-30.
Tues Apr 18	23 Bibles in Translation and Performance	<i>When did biblical translations start? Which religion uses them the most? Why have modern people made more and more translations? What is a biblical typology? How do biblical maps and illustrations influence readers? How are bible-films related to older art, theater and tableaux?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Expert Translation,” “Art, Theater, Film” <b>NOAB</b> , pp. 2197-2201, and view maps at back of NOAB.
Thurs Apr 20	24 Iconic Bibles	<i>How did printing change Bible production? Why do printers produce bibles in different formats? How does book burning ritualize the iconic dimension? How do some torahs and bibles become relics? What do Decalogue tablets represent to Jews? ... to Christians? ... to Americans?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Publishing Bibles” “Relic Torahs” “Decalogue Tablets” <b>Bible:</b> Exodus 20:1-21; Deuteronomy 10:1-5.
Tues Apr 25	25 Genesis, Science and Human Nature	<i>How have scientific discoveries impacted views of Genesis? How has Genesis influenced science? How has Genesis shaped views about women and Africans?</i>	<b>Bible:</b> Genesis 1-3, 9; Ps 104 <b>Bb:</b> “Genesis Science & Human Nature”
Thurs Apr 27	26 Pentateuch in History	<i>What is historical criticism? What is literary criticism? Which Pentateuchal stories are reflected in older</i>	<b>Bible:</b> Genesis 1-2 <b>Online:</b> <a href="#">Gilgamesh XI</a> <b>Bb:</b> “Pentateuch Origins in

		<i>literature? What are P, not-P and D? When do historians now date the composition of the Pentateuch? How did debates over science and history affect Jewish and Christian denominations?</i>	History”
Tues May 2	27 The Bible as a Scripture	<i>What does canonization mean? What four people are associated with changes in the Bible’s scripturalization? How is priesthood linked to scripture? How do Jews and Christians ritualize scripture differently?</i>	<b>Bb:</b> “Bible as a Scripture”
Tuesday, May 9		<b>3 p.m. Final Exam</b>	Study Guide on Blackboard