

May Intersession 2014 ♦ ENGL 304-002 (51179)
10:00-4:30 ♦ UNM West 1222

Dr. Obermeier ❖ The Bible as Literature

Office Hours: by Appointment

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Required Texts

The New Jerusalem Bible. Doubleday, 1985/1990. No Exceptions.

Class webpage: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/Eng304/index304Test.html> (CWP).

Some additional materials will be emailed.

Course Requirements

8-10-page term paper worth 35 %

7 1-page Written Responses worth 20 %

In-class final worth 25 %

Class Participation worth 20 %

Grading will be done on a 0-100 scale.

See website for grading rubrics: <http://www.unm.edu/~aobermei/gradingrubric.html>

Tentative Syllabus

(Materials have to be read by the date indicated.)

The Biblical numbers refer to chapters, the parentheses to the pages in the *NJB*.

You are also invited to read the introductions to the books in the *NJB*.)

M 5.19

Introduction to the Course.

Video Presentation on Mesopotamia in the Iron and Bronze Age.

Textual Transmission, Translations, History of the English Bible.

The Old Testament: Genesis 1-37.1 (18-61).

Familiarize yourself with the apparatus in the back of the *NJB*, 2055-78 and the maps.

Response 1 (due on 5.23 via email).

- T 5.20 Genesis 37.2-50 (62-80).
Exodus 1-34 (81-126); Biblical Numerology (CWP).
Deuteronomy 34 (269).
Joshua 1-11 (284-99).
Judges 1-5 (317-26).
Response 2 due.
- W 5.21 Judges 6-21 (326-50).
Ruth (350-55); Folktale Graph (CWP).
1 Samuel (356-95).
2 Samuel (396-430).
Response 3 due.
- Th 5.22 1 Kings (431-68).
2 Kings 1-5, 17, 21-25 (468-74, 490-2, 498-505).
Isaiah 1-12, 40-44, 49-50, 54-55 (1190-1209; 1247-58, 1266-68, 1274-76).
Response 4 due.
- T 5.27 Daniel (1468-96).
2 Maccabees 8-10 (731-34).
Jonah (1541-43).
Judith (641-58).
Esther (659-72).
Job 1-6, 18, 23-31, 38-42 (757-63, 776-7, 783-93, 801-08).
Ecclesiastes (1014-26).
Response 5 due.
- W 5.28 Song of Songs (1030-41).
Introduction to and Video Presentation on the New Testament.
The New Testament: Luke (1686-32).
Matthew 1-2, 5, 19-25 (1609-12, 1515-17, 1640-52).
Response 6 due.
- Th 5.29 John (1744-84).
Acts 1-2, 9 (1798-1802, 1812-14).
James (1996-2000).
Revelation (2030-52).
Final Exam Review.
Response 7 due.
- Final Exam** Administered by email. Date to be determined.
- M 6.9 **Term Paper due via email** at noon.

Course Objectives

The Bible is the text with the most significant influence on western literature. This non-doctrinal examination of the Bible is an invaluable tool for students of literature and will increase their cultural literacy. We will read the Bible like a literary anthology, aiming to familiarize the students with the major parts of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and to become conversant in the most influential stories, myths, and images from the Judeo-Christian tradition. We will study the Biblical texts as we would study other literature, emphasizing authorship, character, plot, setting, theme, literary modes and genres—including allegories, apocalyptic literature, beatitudes, blessings, etiologies, folktales, genealogies, historical narratives, laments, laws, legal commentary, letters, parables, prayers, prophetic poetry, proverbial wisdom, royal decrees, sayings, stories of healing, theophanies, and tribal lists—as well as use literary analysis, methods of inquiry, and terminology, such as allegory, irony, metaphor, parallelism, personification, puns, simile, symbolism, and gender. Our discussions will concentrate not only on the structure and meaning of individual works but also on the ways in which these works reflect the historical people and times that produced them.

While the Biblical Scriptures hold great religious significance for many people, these texts are not discussed in a devotional or moral capacity here.

Learning Outcomes

At end of the course, students should be able:

- to demonstrate a basic knowledge of the major books, stories, characters, and literary styles of the Bible
- to understand the historical times in which these texts had been written
- to apply biblical knowledge to other subjects
- to write knowledgeably about the subject

Course Policies

1. Attendance is mandatory. Since your progress in the course will depend a great deal on what we discuss in class, I expect class attendance and participation (actual contributions to the class discussion). I will pass out attendance sheets, and it is your responsibility to sign the sheets. So if the sheet passed you by, come up to the desk and sign at the end of class. Half of your participation grade is based on attendance. Every missed class will drop your participation grade 10 points. **Note:** While you are welcome to check with me on what you have missed, I cannot “reteach” material you missed during my office hours or over email. Please consult with your peers for notes.

2. Test and Paper: Separate instructions are posted on the class webpage for each test and paper. The test is closed book and emphasizes detail knowledge through ids, analysis and close reading through passage ids, and synthesis abilities through essay questions. Papers must conform to the presentational guidelines set forth in the *Guide to Style* or the *MLA* and be submitted on time. Papers should represent your best effort and will be graded accordingly. Please note that I encourage you to discuss topics, outlines, and rough drafts with me during my office hours or via email.

3. Written Responses: You are expected to write a 2-page response for each session indicated, discussing the readings for that day or since your last response. These responses should be informal, journal-like, **typed** pieces, expressing your thoughts and reactions to the text. They help me see where an entire class might be lost, or what you are particularly interested in. In the past, I have really enjoyed reading about your thoughts; I get the feeling that I am sharing your experience. Don't be afraid to express puzzlement and unfamiliarity, or delight and interest. I am interested in your untutored, uncritical reactions to the text. We will leave more structured and analytical writing for the formal papers.

4. Class Discussion and Participation: Every student is expected to contribute to the class discussion, and I devise exercises to facilitate that.

5. Assignments: Students must attempt **all** assignments to pass the course. You cannot simply skip an assignment because you are happy with your grade at the time.

6. Pertinent Websites: My own website contains a page for this class with links to pertinent sites. All handouts will be available from the website.

7. The English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment.

8. Equal Access: If you have a qualified disability that requires some form of accommodation to ensure your equal access to learning in this class, please see me as soon as possible so that we can work together to address your needs.

9. Laptops: If you are using a laptop during class time, I require that you email me after class the notes you have taken during class.

10. Cell Phones: No cell phone use or texting in this class. Turn your phones off.

11. Plagiarism. Don't do it! For clarification, see **#102-107** in the *Guide to Style* online.