

## **BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND THE ANCIENT WORLD**

BALS 103-01, Jan. 16—April 23, **6:00—9:20 P.M.** (No class Mar. 5)  
**Class at Clarendon campus**, 3101 Wilson Blvd., Suite 200, Arlington, VA.

**Prof. Joseph E. Jensen**, [jej3@georgetown.edu](mailto:jej3@georgetown.edu), office hours: 4:30-6:00 Wednesdays before class at Clarendon and by appointment at Catholic University office.

**Prof. Anthony Tambasco**, [tambasca@georgetown.edu](mailto:tambasca@georgetown.edu), office hours: 11:00-11:30 and 2:45-3:15 Tuesdays and Thursdays at GU main campus (117 New North, 202-687-6234) and by appointment before class at Clarendon.

**Prof. John Burnett**, [jtb27@georgetown.edu](mailto:jtb27@georgetown.edu), office hours: 6:15-7:00 Mondays and Tuesdays at GU main campus (outside 120 New North, theology secretary phone #202-687-5846) and by appointment.

**Textbook:** *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (NISB) with *The New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, Abingdon Press, 2003 (available at the GU Bookstore).

In addition to readings from the textbook, *other material will also be posted on Blackboard* as reading assignments for individual classes, indicated below.

**Class Requirements (details given under specific classes below):** two 3-to-5 page papers (each 15% of grade), one 5-to-7 page paper (20% of grade), a journal to be kept throughout the course (40% of grade), and class attendance and participation (10% of grade). Attendance is essential; one absence with permission will be tolerated, a second absence will lower the grade, a third absence will necessitate withdrawal from the course.

Papers will be accepted late (but by no more than a week) only for exceptional reasons and with prior permission of the faculty member. Incomplete grades must be requested before the last class and only for exceptional reasons, with a date for completion of work to be arranged according to circumstances. Late papers and incompletes may bring a lower grade at the discretion of the faculty member.

Papers must use an acknowledged system of bibliographic references for all sources of ideas and quotations. Formats accepted in this course are those found in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, Turabian, or the MLA style.

**Disabilities Notice:** If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu). All such accommodations must be arranged through the Center, not directly with the professor.

**Georgetown Honor System:** All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at

[www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: *Honor Council Pamphlet*, “What Is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines,” and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.” Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge as given in the Honor Council documents.

#### January 16: WEEK ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- a) Purpose of humanities education and overview of core – Dr Tambasco
- b) Role of theology in humanities education – Dr. Burnett
- c) Overview of biblical history and books of the OT – Dr. Jensen

**Journal Assignment:** As part of the preparation for subsequent classes in this course each student will keep a personal journal. There is to be one entry for each class to be completed prior to the class. The entries are to be one to two pages. In their notes students will reflect upon and react to the material in the assigned readings. Students will bring their journals to each class.

Appropriate topics to include in journal entries are:

- How do the readings fit in with the course overall? How do they relate to material already covered?
- Did something confirm what you already knew, believed, or suspected? What was the source of the information you brought to the material? How do the readings relate to your own life experience and background?
- Was anything surprising to you? Why?
- Was anything new completely new to you? Does this build on what you already knew, or does it challenge strongly held beliefs? Does it make a difference? Why?
- What questions did the readings raise for you that you would like to see discussed in class? Can you propose some possible answers to your questions based on what you know.

Student journals will be discussed and turned in at the last class.

#### FIRST MODULE: WEEKS TWO – FIVE: THE HEBREW BIBLE WITHIN THE CULTURE OF THE FERTILE CRESCENT

#### January 23: WEEK II - ORIGINS OF ISRAEL AND SOURCES OF PENTATEUCH

**Student Preparation** (N.B. Read all assigned Biblical Readings from the NISB along with the accompanying notes. You are encouraged to compare other translations of your choice.)

- 1.) The emergence of Israel:
  - Read “Excursus: The Israelite Conquest of Canaan” (NISB pp 307-308.)
  - Read Genesis 15:12-17; Exodus 23:20-33; Deuteronomy 9:1-5; 31:1-8.
  - Read “Joshua Introduction” (NISB pp 303-305)
  - Read Joshua 1; 5 – 8; 10 – 13; 24; Judges 1; 2 Samuel 5
  - Read “Excursus: “Social Structures in Ancient Israel” (NISB pp 362)

Read “Excursus: Shechem and Covenant” (NISB 338-339)

2.) Israel’s ancient ancestors:

Read “Genesis Introduction” (NISB pp 1-3)

Read “Excursus: The Promises to the Patriarchs” (NISB pp 26-27)

Read “Excursus: The Ancestors in their Environment” (NISB pp 28)

Read Genesis 12 – 13; 15; 17; 20 – 21; 26; 28 – 35; 37; and 41 – 47

**Class:**

1.) Geographic and Historical background. Role of archaeology.  
2.) Use of archaeological information (and its lack) to construct theories about the origins of Israel:

- conquest
- immigration
- internal Canaanite social revolution
- indigenous populations join with immigrants

3.) The theory of oral tradition and sources and the gradual composition of the Pentateuch. Examples illustrating each of the theoretical sources with their religious perspectives and foci.

4.) Selected texts from the narratives of the ancestors in Genesis 12-50:

- purposes
- claims about God, family, identity as a community
- a distinctive people’s relation to the wider culture and their difference

from the wider culture

**Assignment:** Students will select from a list of suggested texts from the writing prophets, and will prepare **a three to five page paper due February 6**. Students will research the historical context of the prophet, the prophet’s general teaching, and the message of the assigned text in light of the history and general message.

January 30: WEEK III - EXODUS: FOUNDATIONAL NARRATIVE

**Student Preparation:**

1.) Hebrew life in Egypt

Read “The Exodus Event” pp 155-164 from Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament* [Blackboard]

2.) Israel’s Exodus from Egypt

Read “Exodus Introduction” (NISB pp 85-86)

Read Exodus 1 – 4; 7 – 15

Read “Excursus: Salvation and the Sea” (NISB pp 106-107)

3.) Israel becomes a people

Read “Excursus: Covenant” (NISB pp 113-114)

Read Exodus 19 – 23, 32 – 34

Read “Excursus: The Character of Israel’s God” (NISB pp 134-135)

Read Leviticus 19, 25 – 26; Deuteronomy 5 – 7; 10 – 11; 15 – 17; 29 – 30.

Read Deuteronomy 26:5-15.

**Class:**

- 1.) Egyptian background:
  - The Hyksos and the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Egyptian dynasties.
  - Theories about Hebrew life in the Egyptian delta region.
- 2.) Liberation:
  - Pharaoh, a god of oppression and death
  - YHWH, the God of life and freedom.
  - The transition from Pharaoh's slaves to YHWH's people.
- 3.) Covenant:
  - The Way of Life for YHWH's people.
    - The Commandments
    - The law codes
  - Living as YHWH's people in YHWH's land

February 6: WEEK IV - PROPHETS: INTERPRETERS OF THE LAW

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Prophecy  
Read "The Prophetic Literature" and "The Prophetic Word" by Bruce Vawter.  
(*NJBC* 11:22-25) [Blackboard]  
Read Genesis 20:1-7; Exodus 4:10-17; 7:1-7; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:15-22;  
34:10-12; 1 Samuel 3:1 – 4:1; 8; 9:5-10:27;  
10:9-13; 2 Samuel 12:1-15; 1 Kings 1; 1 Kings 18 – 19; 21 – 22.  
Read "Excursus: Biblical Ambivalence to Government" (NISB pp 407-408).  
Read "Excursus: True and False Prophets" (NISB pp 522-523)
- 2.) Prophets of Judgement  
Read Hosea 1 – 3; 10 – 14; Amos 1 – 4; 6 – 7; Isaiah 1 – 6; 9:8 – 10:34; Micah 1  
– 3; Jeremiah 1 – 3; 23; 34; Ezekiel 7 – 10; 24.  
Read "Excursus: God's Broken Family" (NISB pp 1059)  
Read "Excursus: Covenant as Marriage" (NISB p 1313)  
Read "Excursus: The Divine Character in Jeremiah" (NISB pp 1093-1094)
- 3.) Prophets of Hope  
Read Jeremiah 30 – 31; Isaiah 40:1 – 44:8; 58 – 62; 65 – 66; Ezekiel 36 – 37; 43.  
Micah 5; Habakkuk 2.

**Class:**

- 1.) What is biblical prophecy?
  - Origins and history
  - Prophets and politics
  - Authentic and false prophets
  - From narratives about prophets to prophetic texts
    - Oral tradition
    - Genres of prophetic speech
    - Prophetic books

- 2.) Prophets of judgment
  - Authentic worship of the one God of freedom and life
  - Covenant fidelity: living as God's people in God's land
- 3.) Prophets of hope
  - Communal salvation and restoration
  - The individual within the community

**Assignment:** Students will read Genesis 1:1 – 2:5 and selected texts from the Enuma Elish myth of creation [Blackboard] and prepare **a three to five page paper due February 20** comparing the texts, showing differences and similarities in the stories and drawing meanings from each story in light of these comparisons.

February 13: WEEK V - EXILE, BEGININGS OF JUDAISM, WISDOM LITERATURE

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Events surrounding the Babylonian Exile and the Return
  - Read IV. "(J) The Last Years of Judah (699-587) and "(K)The Exile (587-539)" by Roland E. Murphy. (*NJBC* 75:112-116) [Blackboard]
  - Read V. "The Early Postexilic Period (539-333 BC) by Roland E. Murphy. (*NJBC* 75:117-125) [Blackboard]
  - Read Psalm 137; Jeremiah 29; Ezekiel 18; Ezra 1; 3 – 7; 9 – 10; Nehemiah 8 – 9; 13; Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 23:1-7; Ruth 1 – 4; Isaiah 45; 48 – 56
  - Read "Excursus: Vicarious Suffering" (NISB p 1031)
- 2.) Themes in Israelite Wisdom
  - Read Exodus 35:30-33; 1 Kings 5:10-13; Daniel 1
  - Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 10: 12:1 – 11:31; 28; 30:11-20.
  - Read "Excursus: Fear of the LORD" (NISB pp 897 and 1455).
  - Read "Excursus: Wisdom and Life" (NISB p 905)
  - Read "Excursus: Retribution" (NISB pp 1460)
  - Read "Excursus: Consequences and Prosperity" (NISB p 912)
  - Read Proverbs 1 – 5; 9 – 12; 31; Job 1 – 4; 7 – 8; 19; 21 –22; 38; 40; 42
  - Read "Excursus: The Portrayal of God in Job" (NISB p 748)
  - Read Ecclesiastes 1-4; 9; 11-12; Sirach 1 – 4; 14:11 – 16:23; 34:1 - 36:22; 38:24 – 39:11; Wisdom 1 – 3; 6; 7:22 – 8:1.
  - Read Job 28; Proverbs 8; Sirach 24

**Class:**

- 1.) Historical overview
  - Babylonian Exile and Return
  - Theological shifts
    - Self-identity
    - Separatism vs. Universality
    - Worship and Sacred Books

- Suffering
  - Eschatology – From present reality to believed future
- 2.) Crisis in Wisdom
    - Wisdom in the Old Testament and the ancient Near East
    - Deuteronomic Optimism and Proverbs
    - Challenges: Job and Ecclesiastes
    - Sirach's conservatism
    - A liberal response from Egypt – The Book of Wisdom
  - 3.) Wisdom personified

February 20: WEEK VI - PRIESTLY TRADITIONS, LAW, AND THE BIRTH OF APOCALYPTIC

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) The Priestly Writer's Revision of History
  - Read "Excursus: The Priestly View of History" (NISB pp 34)
  - Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:4; 6:9-22; 8:1-5; 9:1-17; Psalms 96; 104; 136
  - Read "Excursus: Creation: Ordering Chaos" (NISB p 5)
  - Read "Excursus: In God's Image" (NISB p 7-9)
  - Read "Excursus: Domination or Dependence?" (NISB 8)
  - Read "Excursus: Gender in Genesis" (NISB 10-11)
- 2.) Jesus' relation to Torah as further revision
  - Compare Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Leviticus 19:17-18; Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-37; Galatians 5:13-15; James 2:8
  - Read Matthew 5:17-20; Mark 10:17-22
- 3.) Reinterpretation of prophecy into messianic expectations in Judaism and Christianity
  - Read Hosea 11:1-2; Isaiah 7:10-25; 9:1-7; 11:1-9
  - Read Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-15; 4:12-17
  - Read "Excursus: Christian Interpretations of Isaiah's Hymns of the Ideal King" (NISB p 974-5)
  - Read "Hope for a Messiah" from Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, pp 531-35 [Blackboard]
- 4.) Apocalyptic Literature
  - Read IV. "Apocalypticism. John J. Collins (*NJBC* 19:19-24) [Blackboard]
  - Read "Excursus: Suffering and Apocalyptic in 4 Ezra" (NISB p 1686)
  - Read "Excursus: The Influence of the Maccabean Martyrs" (NISB p 1611-1612)
  - Read 1 Maccabees 1 – 4; 2 Maccabees 2:19 – 10:38
  - Read Daniel 7; 10 – 12

**Class:**

- 1.) Embracing the Exile
  - The Goodness of Creation
  - Human dignity
  - Human freedom and responsibility

- Restoration and Redemption
- 2.) The formation and centrality of Torah
- 3.) Jesus' relationship to the Torah
  - Fulfillment, not abolition
  - Law as response to the kingdom of God
  - Law summed up in love
- 4.) Reinterpretation of prophetic texts and the development of messianic expectations
  - Development of royal covenant theology
  - Hopes of restoration of monarchy after Exile
  - Other currents: YHWH as king; foreign kings; collective kingship
  - Development of messianic hope
  - Christian re-reading of texts
- 5.) Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Literature

February 27: WEEK VII – JEWISH LIFE AND LITERATURE BEYOND THE BIBLICAL ERA

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Overview of Judaism after the biblical era into the world of the Mishnah  
Read “Judaism to the Mishnah” by Shaye Cohen in Shanks, *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp 195-223 [Blackboard]

**Class:**

- 1.) The Jewish uprisings against the Romans
- 2.) From Rabbinic Judaism to the Talmud
- 3.) A nomadic religion

March 12: WEEK VIII – FROM JESUS OF HISTORY TO CHRIST OF FAITH

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) The distinction between the Jesus of History and Christ of Faith  
Read “The Quest for the Historical Jesus” by Anthony Tambasco [Blackboard]
- 2.) The Greco-Roman context of the New Testament  
Read “The Roman Period” from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: College Edition*, pp 519-525 [Blackboard]
- 3.) The Jewish world of the New Testament  
Read “The Closing of the Old Testament” from Lawrence Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*, pp 517-529 [Blackboard]

**Class:**

- 1.) The threefold stages of gospel development
  - Importance of oral tradition
  - Importance of the resurrection of Christ

- Gradual development of written traditions
- Distinction between the Jesus of History and Christ of Faith
- Principle purposes of each gospel
- Synoptic problem
- 2.) The Greco-Roman World
  - Politics
  - Social World
  - Religion
  - Philosophy
- 3.) The Jewish World
  - Religious groups at the time of Jesus
  - Observations about the Historical Jesus

**Assignment:** Students will begin a **five to seven page paper** comparing Matthew's teaching about the Torah with Paul's, showing differences and similarities. Central texts to read for this are Matthew 5 – 7, Galatians 2 – 5, and Romans 7. Subsequent classes will discuss these texts and may be incorporated in the paper, but biblical commentaries should also be consulted. **Paper is due April 9.**

March 19: WEEK IX – EPISTLES OF PAUL (CHRIST OF FAITH)

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Paul's call and commission  
Read Galatians 1 – 2; Acts 9; 15; 17; Philippians 3
- 2.) Paul's theology  
Read Philippians 2 (Lordship of Christ); 1 Corinthians 12; 15 (Body of Christ; Resurrection); Romans 1; 5 – 8 (sin; justification; sanctification; law; the Holy Spirit)  
Read "Excursus: The Righteousness of God" (NISB p 2011)  
Read "Excursus: Sanctification" (NISB p 2018)  
Read "Excursus: Paul and the Law" (NISB p 2020)
- 3.) Paul's ethics  
Read Galatians 3 – 6 (law and freedom; virtue/vice lists); Romans 12 (politics); 1 Corinthians 11 (women; the poor); Ephesians 5 – 6 (household codes)  
Read "Excursus: Christians and Government" (NISB p 2029)  
Read "Excursus: Household Codes" (NISB p 2096)

**Class:**

- 1.) Paul's initial experience of the risen Christ (Christ of Faith)
  - Differences and similarities between Acts and Epistles
  - Resurrection as presence of Christ and transformation
  - Overview of Paul's epistles within chronology of his journeys
- 2.) Paul's theology of the Christ of Faith and of redemption
  - The human situation and need for Christ
  - Christ as Lord, New Adam, and giver of the Spirit

- Paul's positive and negative view toward the law
- Nature of community in Christ
- 3.) Paul's ethics
  - Imperatives founded on indicatives
  - True freedom
  - Attitudes toward women
  - Politics and social justice issues

March 26: WEEK X – POST-BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CHRISTOLOGY

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Developing concerns in Christology  
Read "The Christian Movement 70-312 C.E." by Harold Attridge in Shanks, *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp 171-194 [Blackboard]
- 2.) Theology of the Early Councils regarding Christ  
Read "The Religion of the Empire" by Dennis Groh in Shanks, *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism*, pp 267-279; 289-303 [Blackboard]

**Class:**

- 1.) Early concerns about orthodox teaching about Christ
  - Marcion and the Jewishness of Jesus
  - Gnosticism
  - Schools in Antioch and Alexandria
  - Early Apologists
- 2.) Christological debates and the Early Councils
  - Relationship of Jesus to God
  - Relationship of the Holy Spirit to God and Christ
  - Relationship of humanity and divinity in Christ

April 2: WEEK XI – GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) The Jewish world of Matthew and problems of supersessionism  
Read "A Revised Story for the Church: Supersessionism Replaced" from Mary Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?* pp 75-85 [Blackboard]
- 2.) Major purposes of Matthew  
Read Matthew 1 – 2 (compare with Luke 1 – 2); Matthew 16:13-20 (compare with Luke 9:18-20); Matthew 14:22-33 (compare with Mark 6:45-52); Matthew 18; 22:15-22; 23; 26 – 28  
Read Introduction to the Gospel According to Matthew (NISB pp 1745-47)
- 3.) Matthew's view toward the law  
Compare Matthew 5 – 7 with Luke 6:20-49

**Class:**

- 1.) The relationship of early Christians to Judaism
  - Conventional view
  - More recent and alternative view
- 2.) Major purposes of Matthew
  - Manual of Church teaching and discipline
  - Fulfillment of Jewish prophecy
  - Polemic against rabbinic Judaism
  - Openness to Gentiles
  - Alternative community in the Roman Empire
- 3.) Matthew presents Jesus as authentic interpreter of Torah
  - Sermon on the Mount as charter document of the kingdom
  - Jesus as New Moses
  - Beatitudes
  - Jesus teaches “higher righteousness”
  - Antitheses
  - Examples from Jewish works of piety
  - Comparisons with Luke’s version

April 9: WEEK XII – PARABLES AND MIRACLES IN MATTHEW

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Jesus’ message about the Kingdom of God  
 Read “Reign of God” by Donald Senior in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, pp 851-61 [Blackboard]  
 Read Matthew 4:12-17; 6:9-13; 11:1-19; 12:22-32
- 2.) Parables about the Kingdom of God  
 Read “Parable” by Wilfrid Harrington in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, pp 739-42 [Blackboard]  
 Read Matthew 13; 20:1-16; 21:28-44; 22:1-14 (compare with Luke 14:15-24); 25; Luke 16  
 Read “Excursus : The Function of Jesus’ Parables in Mark” (NISB p 1813-14)
- 3.) Miracles and the Kingdom of God  
 Read “Miracles” by Anthony Tambasco [Blackboard]  
 Read Matthew 8 – 9; 14:13-21; 15:32-39 (compare with John 6); Matthew 15:21-28; 20:29-34

**Class:**

- 1.) The Kingdom of God
  - Already but not yet
  - Political as well as spiritual
  - Demands response
  - Achieved through the Resurrection
- 2.) Parables
  - Definitions and distinctions
  - Settings within three stages of gospel development

- Parables calling for decision
  - Parables calling for response
  - Parables calling the marginalized
- 3.) Miracles
- Possibility of miracles
  - Historicity of miracles
  - Meaning of miracles within three stages of gospel development

**Assignment:** Students will prepare the usual journal entry for next class. As a final and longer entry into the journal for the last class (**at least 3 pages**), students are to reflect on the entire course and its pertinence to the **major themes** of the core curriculum, (1) The Human and the Divine; (2) The Individual and Society; (3) Identity and Difference, and the **sub-themes**, (1) Women and Men and gender roles; (2) Authority: how it is construed, exercised, and challenged; (3) Ethics, with an emphasis on justice. Student insights into these topics will be the discussion material for the last class. **The entire journal will be handed in April 23.**

April 16: WEEK XIII – CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORSHIP AFTER THE NEW TESTAMENT

**Student Preparation:**

- 1.) Worship in early Christianity
- Read “The Early Liturgy: To the Time of Gregory the Great” from Josef Jungman, pp 1-49 [Blackboard]

**Class:**

- 1.) Jewish influence in Christian worship
- 2.) Liturgy of the Hours
- 3.) Role of women in early Christianity
- 4.) Christianity in the Hellenistic world

April 23: WEEK XIV – CLOSING SESSION: DISCUSSION OF JOURNALS AND CONCLUSION OF COURSE

**Student Preparation:**

Students will come with completed journals, including final entries that reflect on the relevance of the course for major themes and sub-themes of the core curriculum, as indicated under the assignment for Week XII.

**Class:**

Class will be devoted principally to discussion of the journals, especially the final entries. Faculty will share concluding thoughts on the course.

Journals will be handed in after class with a self-addressed envelope and adequate postage for mailing back to the student.