RS 130/JS 131: Big Ideas of the Bible
Syllabus: Winter, 2019

Territorial Acknowledgement
I acknowledge that I live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee (aka Iroquois) peoples. Conrad Grebel and the University of Waterloo are situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations in perpetuity that includes 6 miles on each side of the Grand River.

Instructor: Derek Suderman, dsuderman@uwaterloo.ca
Office: CGUC 2126
Teaching Assistant: Douglas Wilson, d8wilson@uwaterloo.ca
Time/Place: Mon, Wed. 2:30-3:50 / Room 1300, CGUC
Office hours: By Appointment

** For email: allow 2 days for a response, and please put RS 130 and a topic in the Subject line of all e-mail correspondence.

I. Introduction

A. Course Description
This course explores various “big ideas” of the Bible by drawing upon its social, historical, and literary contexts; we will also point to some ways the Bible has influenced and is reflected in Western culture. In doing so the course will also explore its various roles as history, literature, and scripture.
*Note: No knowledge of or religious conviction regarding the material is assumed.

B. Student Objectives
During this course students will:
- read selections from the Bible to understand its basic story-line, identify major characters and events, and become familiar with diverse genres of material;
- explore the Bible’s relationship to various social settings and traditions of the Ancient Near East;
- note the significant impact the Bible has had and continues to have on Western culture (including art, music, literature, film);
- gain experience with various “tools of the trade” used in biblical study (concordances, Bible dictionaries, commentaries);
- practice writing brief academic papers at a university level;
- explore basic similarities and differences between Jewish and Christian Scripture, and consider how the Bible functions within these distinct communities;
• explore the relevance and identify challenges this material contains for 21st century readers and communities.

C. Appropriate Use of Technology

Studies have shown that taking electronic notes is a less effective learning tool than writing longhand. Further, looking at non-course related material is profoundly distracting, not only for you but also for those around you (this lowers your own mark but also that of those around you).

Students are welcome to use laptops, tablets, etc. during class time. However, if your use of technology (laptops, tablets, etc.) distracts those around you, the instructor may ask you to curtail your use of technology at his discretion. Cell phones must be turned off during class (you will need a physical, paper Bible for this class…!).

II. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks

1. The Bible (required)

This is the most important textbook in the course. To minimize distraction, students must each have their own physical Bible, which they are expected to bring to every class. “Reading guides” on the LEARN web-site will identify Bible and secondary readings for each class along with a list of questions to think about as you read.

No one Bible version is required — in fact, having a diversity present enriches class discussion. However, paraphrases and Bibles that use a ‘dynamic equivalence’ approach to translation will NOT be appropriate for this course (the Message, Good News Bible, Today’s English Version, etc.). The course will include New Testament readings, so people who use a Tanakh (Jewish Publication Society Bible) will need access to a New Testament as well. “Reference editions” that provide scriptural cross-references are recommended, and “Study Bibles” of various versions provide helpful additional information (NJPS, NIV, NRSV, NASB, NKJV, etc). You are welcome to choose from among:

• Common English Bible (CEB)
• Tanakh (JPS - Jewish Publication society)
• New American Bible (NAB), New American Standard Bible (NASB) or the older American Standard Version (ASV)
• New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) or the older Jerusalem Bible (JB)
• 21st Century New King James Version, or the New King James Version (NKJV), or the venerable Authorized or King James Version (AV or KJV)
• New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or the older Revised Standard Version (RSV)
• Revised English Bible (REB) or the older New English Bible (NEB)
Today’s New International Version (TNIV) or the older New International Version (NIV).s, but

2. **RS 130 Courseware pack (required)**
   Secondary readings have been gathered in the RS 130 Course pack, available at the campus bookstore (a copy will also be on reserve in the CGUC library). These readings should be done in preparation for the week’s class session. Occasional other material may also be provided through the LEARN site. **You will be responsible for information from secondary readings on the final exam.**

3. Optional (but Strongly Encouraged!) Elements

   This book, *also available as an e-book*, provides an excellent, light-hearted guide to the style, grammar, writing and formatting of academic papers. *(For students early in their University career, this is an accessible guide that is worth purchasing and referencing throughout your studies.)*

   **On-line Questionnaire for Learning Styles** (Optional)
   I encourage students to take a short VARK quiz in order to better understand your own learning style(s), *especially at the beginning of your university career*. This tool provides very concrete suggestions for how to build upon your strengths to set up notes, study for tests, and proceed with research.

**B. Student Evaluation**

Assignments submitted for this course will comply with the *Chicago Manual of Style* (see the “RS Research Guide” through the course website).

- All papers with multiple citations will use **bottom-of-the-page** footnotes. Also, see the “Cite Biblical Sources” document on LEARN for conventions specific to biblical studies.

- All written assignments MUST provide *both a word count and signed copy of the ‘Academic Integrity Statement’* (found on the LEARN web-site) on the title page.

- All assignments are **DUE at the beginning of class on the dates** listed below. Since they provide the basis for class discussion, extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. **Late assignments will be docked 5% /academic day, to a maximum of 20%**.
Workshop Participation/Source Assignment 5%

Test #1 (Jan. 30) 15%

Word Study
On-Line Quiz (DUE: by Feb. 11) 5%
Assignment (DUE: Feb. 25) 25%

NT Simulation Preparation (DUE: Mar. 25) 25%

Test #2 (Apr. 3) 25%

1. Workshop Participation + Source Assignment
   This course will include a series of workshops done during class time that provide an opportunity for students to tackle specific tasks and exercises in groups. Following the session each group will submit a copy of what they worked on/discovered. Make sure that each participant prints and signs their name on the group sheet as a record of their participation. Students will also complete a very short written assignment that evaluates websites and other sources of information related to biblical studies. All of these elements will be marked pass/fail.

2. Word Study
   Students will take an on-line quiz that uses Strong’s concordance on-line to explore the “semantic range” of a specific Hebrew term. Students will then write a brief paper (600-900 words) that discusses how this research informs their understanding of a specific passage.

   The New Testament reflects many lively debates over how to understand and live as followers of Jesus; this assignment will recreate one of these debates in class. Students will be assigned and then research the perspective of one of the sides involved, writing a brief paper (900-1200 words) and creating a 1-page ‘talking point’ sheet for the in-class discussion (included as an appendix). This assignment provides a window into the dynamics of biblical interpretation and introduces students to Bible commentaries as study resources.
   **Students will be marked on their preparation for this experience, not on their ‘performance’ during the debate itself.

4. Tests
   Students will write two in-class tests during this course that cover material from lectures, workshops, and readings (both Bible and secondary). The test structure will be provided in advance.
   **Consistent attendance will be important for success in this class.
III. Faculty of Arts Information

Cross-listed course (requirement for all Arts courses)

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity

**Academic Integrity**: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/services/student-life/academic-integrity) for more information.

**Discipline**: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. Check the [Office of Academic Integrity](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/services/student-life/academic-integrity) for more information. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/services/student-life/academic-integrity).

**Grievance**: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals**: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

**Note for students with disabilities**: The [AccessAbility Services](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/services/student-life/accessability) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.
**Mental Health Support**

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

On Campus

- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- **MATES:** one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek form Student Life Centre

Off campus, 24/7

- **Good2Talk:** Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 ext. 6880
- **Here 24/7:** Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME:** set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts website

Download UWaterloo and regional mental health resources (PDF)

Download the WatSafe app to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

### IV. Class Schedule

The table below identifies the dates and topics for classes, as well as a basic overview of the material to be discussed as well as DUE dates for assignments. “Reading Guides” on the LEARN website specify Bible readings for each class. Secondary readings appear on the dates to which they correspond and will be done in preparation for class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Topic</th>
<th>Biblical Elements</th>
<th>Secondary Reading</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Introduction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 7 - Bible(s):</td>
<td>Gen. 1-2</td>
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<td>Reading as a “Cross-Cultural Experience”; Syllabus Review</td>
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<td><strong>B. Tanakh/ Old Testament</strong></td>
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<td><strong>I. Torah/Pentateuch</strong></td>
<td>Genesis 1-5, 11</td>
<td>“Created as Male and Female,” Suderman¹</td>
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<td>Jan. 9 – Humans in Creation: Who are We, Why Are We Here?</td>
<td>- Creation</td>
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<td>- the Garden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 23 – Law &amp; Holiness</td>
<td>Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy – Legal material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 30 – TEST</td>
<td>History &amp; Story (Intro)</td>
<td>TEST #1</td>
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2. (Former) Prophets/ Historical Books

Feb. 4 – Land & Conquest: Should We Take the Bible “Literally” (and How Could/Should We, if We Want to...)?

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<tr>
<th>Bibliical Elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joshua, Judges</td>
<td>“The Bible as ‘Story’ and ‘History,’” Kaminsky5;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 6 - Kingship (Government): the Purpose and Limits of Being a King…</td>
<td>I-II Samuel, and various</td>
<td>“The Era of the Judges,” Fant et. al.⁶</td>
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<td>Feb. 11 – Empire &amp; Exile: What is the “End” of History?</td>
<td>I-II Kings</td>
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<td><strong>Feb. 18-22:</strong> READING WEEK</td>
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<td>Feb. 25 – W: Words Matter…!</td>
<td>Jonah</td>
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<td>Word Study Assignment DUE</td>
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<td><strong>3. Writings</strong></td>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>“Introduction,” Bono⁸</td>
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<td>Feb. 27 – Psalms &amp; Prayer</td>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>“Introduction,” Bono⁸</td>
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<td>Mar. 4 – Knowledge &amp; Wisdom</td>
<td>Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Song of Songs</td>
<td>Suderman, “‘Weep with Those who Weep’: Suffering, Empathy, and the Function of ament” &lt;VIMEO&gt;, available on LEARN</td>
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<td>Mar. 6 – Restoration &amp; Jews: Exploring Earliest Judaism(s) and the Context(s) of the N.T.</td>
<td>Ezra/Nehemiah, Luke</td>
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<td>Source Assignment DUE</td>
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<td>Mar. 20 - Cross &amp; Resurrection: What Makes “Good Friday” Good?!?</td>
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<td>Mar. 27 - Apocalypse and “End Times”: Behold the Lamb…?</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
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**D. Conclusion**

Apr. 1 - The Bible in Jewish and Christian Tradition; Review

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<td></td>
<td>“The Bible as a Religious Book,” Kaminsky¹²; “Biblical Authority,” Brueggemann¹³</td>
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<td>Apr. 3 –</td>
<td>TEST #2</td>
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