RS 130/JS 131: Big Ideas of the Bible
Syllabus: Fall, 2017

Territorial Acknowledgement
As a Faculty of Arts, we acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

Instructor: Derek Suderman, dsuderman@uwaterloo.ca
Time/Place: Wed. 7-10 PM / Room 1208, CGUC
Office hours: Wed. 3-4 or by appointment (Room 4207, CGUC)

** For email: allow 2-3 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 long-hand. 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).

In light of this, students need to receive permission to use laptops, tablets, etc. during class time. If your use of technology (laptops, tablets, etc.) distracts those around you, the instructor can withdraw this permission 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).
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. Occa-
sional 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**

2003). --- RECOMMENDED

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 pro-
vides 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 submitted written material MUST provide both a word count and signed copy of the ‘Ac-
ademic Integrity Statement’ (found on the LEARN web-site for this course) on the title page.**

**All assignments are DUE at the beginning of class on the due-dates listed below. Since these
will also provide the basis for class discussion, extensions will be granted only in exceptional cir-
cumstances. Late assignments will be docked 5% per academic day, to a maximum of 25%.**

**Workshop Participation**

10%

**Word Study**

On-Line Quiz (DUE: by Oct. 4) 5%
Assignment (DUE: Oct. 18) 25%

**NT Simulation Preparation (DUE: Nov. 22)**

Paper 25%
Talking Points

Final Exam

1. Workshop Participation
   This course will include a series of workshops that take place 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.

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. Final Exam
   Students will write a final exam to be scheduled during the exam period. This test will cover material from lectures and workshops, as well as Bible and secondary readings. The exam structure will be provided in advance.
   **Consistent attendance will be crucial for success in this class.**

III. Faculty of Arts Information

Cross-listed course

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/humanities/academic-integrity/) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](https://www.arts.ucalgary.ca/education/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. 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](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/policies/71). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/policies/71).

*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](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/policies/70), 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](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/policies/72).

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

*Note for students with disabilities:* The [AccessAbility Services](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/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.

**IV. Class Schedule**

[Square brackets] identify secondary reading for each session found in your Courseware packet. (Parentheses) indicate the biblical range to be discussed in each class. “Reading Guides” on the LEARN website specify Bible readings for each class. Both appear on the dates to which they correspond and will be done in preparation for class.
A. Introduction: Bible; Creation

Week 1: Sept. 13 [FYI - see: “Created as Male and Female,” Suderman]
(A) Bible(s): Reading as a “Cross-Cultural Experience”; Syllabus Review
(B) Humanity in Creation: Who are We, Why Are We Here? (Genesis 1-5)

B. Tanakh / Old Testament

1. Torah (Pentateuch)

(A) Family and Covenant: God’s Underlying Strategy for Blessing (Genesis 11-35)
(B) Workshop #1: Rethinking ‘Authorship:’ Moving Behind the Printing Press to Scroll Production

Week 3: Sept. 27 [“Numinous Nomos,” Berlin]
(A) Salvation and Law: What is True Freedom? How is it Achieved? (Exodus narratives; 10 “Words”)
(B) Workshop # 2: Exploring Law, Holiness, Sin --- and Jubilee! (Legal Material in Exodus - Deuteronomy)

2. Prophets / “Historical Books” and Prophets

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Week 4: Oct. 4 [“The Bible as ‘Story’ and ‘History,’” Kaminsky⁵; “The Era of the Judges,” Fant et. al.⁶]

**Completed On-Line Quiz**
(A) Scripture (Torah): What Makes this “Book” Different than Others? (Deuteronomy)
(B) Workshop #3: History, Story, and Conquest: Should We Take the Bible “Literally” (and How Could/Should We, if We Want to...)? (Joshua, Judges)

Oct. 11: STUDY DAY

Week 5: Oct. 13 (Friday) --- **NO CLASS**
– Writing Workshop (Optional); Complete Word study assignment

Week 6: Oct. 18

**Word Study Assignment DUE**
(A) Workshop #2: Kingship (Government): the Purpose and Limits of Being a King… (I-II Samuel, and various)
(B) Workshop #4: Words Matter...!

Week 7: Oct. 25 [“The Prophetic Books,” Malchow⁷]
(A) Empire, Exile, and Partial Restoration: What is the “End” of History? (I-II Kings)
(B) Workshop #5: Prophets and Justice: Forth-tellers or Fortune-tellers?

3. Writings

Week 8: Nov. 1 [“Introduction,” Bono⁸; Suderman, “‘Weep with Those who Weep’: Suffering, Empathy, and the Function of Lament” <VIMEO>, available on LEARN]
(A) Prayer and Wisdom (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs)
(B) Workshop #6: Synagogue, Temple, and Judaism(s): Exploring the First Century Context(s) of the New Testament

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C. **New Testament**

**Week 9: Nov. 8** [“The Stories of Jesus,” Enns⁹; “Kingdom of God,” Yoder Neufeld¹⁰]
(A) Gospel and the “Kingdom of God:” Who (and What!) is the ‘Saviour’?
(B) Workshop #7: “Son of God,” A Case study contrasting the Four Gospels

**Week 10: Nov. 15**
(A) Cross, Resurrection, and Atonement: What Makes “Good Friday” Good?!?
(B) **GROUP preparation – for Simulation Assignment**

**Week 11: Nov. 22** [“The Pharisees: Jesus’ Competition,” Neusner¹¹]
**NT Simulation Preparation Assignment DUE**
(A) **NT Simulation**; and Church (ekklesia): A Strange Association of Jew and Gentile... (Acts, Galatians, James)
(B) Workshop #8: Apocalypse and “End Times”: What does the Lamb have to do with it?
Test Review

D. **Overview and Review**

**Week 12: Nov. 29**
The Bible in Jewish and Christian Tradition: Exam Review
[“The Bible as a Religious Book,” Kaminsky¹²; “Biblical Authority,” Brueggemann¹³]

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