

RS 228/JS 228: Big Ideas of the Bible

Syllabus: Fall, 2021

Instructor: Derek Suderman, dsuderman@uwaterloo.ca

Class: Wed. 1-2:20

Room: CGR 1300

Office hours: By Appointment; after class is generally free, and ZOOM is also possible.

**** For email: allow 2 days for a response, and *please put RS 228 and a topic in the Subject line of all e-mail correspondence.***

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.

I. Introduction

A. Course Description

This course explores various “big ideas” of the Bible in light of its original social, historical, linguistic, literary, and religious contexts. In doing so, we will also explore some ways the Bible has influenced and is reflected (and even been misunderstood) in Western culture. The course will also explore the Bible’s role as history and literature, as well as its ongoing function as scripture within two distinct religious traditions (Judaism and Christianity).

**Note: No knowledge of or religious conviction regarding the material is required or assumed.*

B. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- outline the basic story-arc of the Bible in its historical context, identify major characters and events, and describe key biblical concepts and vocabulary;
- identify and contrast perspectives presented in course and secondary material (including articles, online videos and interviews, etc.);
- recognize diversity found in the Bible, including different:
 - genres of material,
 - social and historical contexts,
 - ways of understanding God, the world, and humanity,
 - conclusions regarding the ethical demands of how to live in the world;

- use various key tools employed in biblical study (concordances, Bible dictionaries, Bible commentaries);
- interpret specific biblical passages in light of secondary resources and write brief academic papers; and
- identify basic differences between Jewish and Christian Bibles, and recognize how they function within distinct religious traditions (Judaism, Christianity).

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. LEARN

Power Point presentations as well as secondary resources (articles, videos, etc.) will be made available through the LEARN site. Readings should be done in preparation for the week's simultaneous class session.

3. Optional (but Strongly Encouraged!) Resources

Michael Harvey, *The Nuts & Bolts of College Writing* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub. Co., 2003). --- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

This book, *also available as an e-book*, provides an excellent, light-hearted guide to the style, writing and formatting of academic papers. (*If you are early in your academic career, this accessible guide is worth buying and referring to throughout your studies.*)

Questionnaire re: Learning Preferences (Option) <https://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>
I encourage students to take this short quiz to recognize your own learning preference(s), *especially at the beginning of your university career*. This tool also provides very concrete suggestions for setting up notes, studying for tests, doing research, etc.

B. Student Evaluation

The exact dates for online quizzes will be posted on the LEARN calendar. Two longer written assignments submitted for this course will comply with **the *Chicago Manual of Style*** (see the Guide here: <https://guides.osu.edu/c.php?g=605168&p=4194386>).

- All papers with multiple citations will use **bottom-of-the-page** footnotes. Also, see the "Cite Biblical Sources" document on LEARN for more detailed information.
- Written assignments (other than Workshops) **MUST** provide **both a word count and signed copy of the 'Academic Integrity Statement'** (found on the LEARN web-site) **on the title page**.

****Late assignments will be docked 3% / academic day, to a maximum of 15%.**

Workshops (various, lowest mark dropped)	20%
Secondary Reading Assignments (Quiz/Questions) (various, lowest mark dropped)	15%
Bible Reading Quizzes x3 (Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 1)	10%
Word Study	
On-Line Quiz (DUE: Sept. 30)	5%
Outline + Bibliography (Oct. 21)	5%
Assignment (DUE: Oct. 28)	20%
NT Letter Simulation Prep. (DUE: Nov. 25)	25%
*BONUS assignments (2% each, up to 6%)	

Marking Rubric

Short written assignments for this course will be evaluated using a simple four-point rubric: Excellent (4), Good (3), Satisfactory (2), Needs Improvement (1).

1. Workshop Participation

I will guide you through a series of workshops with worksheets that explore certain topics with a series of readings and related questions. These assignments can be completed and submitted electronically; alternatively, they can be printed, filled out by hand, and then scanned. In either case, this document will then be uploaded to a 'dropbox' on the LEARN site for the course.

Students will be invited to participate in '**Study Groups**' for these workshops, which you are encouraged to do together, whether synchronously or in other contact with one another. At the same time, *each student must complete each assignment* and submit their own sheet (ie: rotating the assignment among different students or submitting the same assignment is not allowed --- and would be counterproductive). **These assignments will be marked according to the rubric described above**, with the lowest mark being dropped.

2. Secondary Reading Assignments

Students will complete a series of assignments based on secondary readings (SR on the Class Schedule). The majority of these will consist of online Quizzes (T/F, Multiple Choice, etc.). When consisting of short written responses, these will be marked according to the Rubric above. SRs will be available from *Mon. 1 PM – Tues 10 PM*.

3. Bible Reading Quizzes

At three points in the term students will complete a *brief quiz IN CLASS* based on Bible readings completed to that point (end of Deuteronomy, end of Tanakh/Old Testament, end of New Testament/term). More information regarding the nature of these quizzes will be provided. If you are not able to attend this class, an *alternate online quiz will be given*.

4. Word Study

Students will take an *on-line quiz* that uses Strong's on-line concordance to explore the "semantic range" of a specific Hebrew term. Students will then create *an outline of their paper that includes a preliminary bibliography of secondary sources* they plan to employ. Finally, students will write a *brief paper (600-*

900 words) that explores their understanding of this term and its significance in a specific passage or passages, informed by this research.

5. New Testament Simulation

The New Testament reflects many lively debates over how to understand and live as followers of Jesus. This assignment will explore one of these debates. 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 points' summary* (included as an appendix). This assignment provides a window into the dynamics of biblical interpretation and introduces students to Bible commentaries as study resources.

6. BONUS

There are many opportunities to hear various speakers or attend events on campus. If there is something that relates to the Bible (even peripherally) you can attend, write a one page summary and critique linking it to the class, and you will receive a 2% boost on your final mark per report (up to a maximum of 6%).

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 subject code 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 subject code.

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

Due to COVID-19 and campus closures, services are available only online or by phone.

- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Counselling Services

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.

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. Check the [Office of Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

Discipline

A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Check [the Office of 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](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities

The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 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

This course will employ a *‘flipped classroom’* approach. This means that students will complete both Bible and short secondary readings, and listen to recorded presentations online, in preparation for class. This will free up our time together to focus on specific topics, as well as to clarify or respond to questions that arise from presentations and readings.

A **Weekly Module on the LEARN site** for the course will provide a structured sequence for completing course work, as well as links to required readings, reminders of due assignments, etc. **Class sessions will be held in person, Wed. 1-2:20.**

**If we need to suspend in-person meetings during the term, the weekly class session will be moved to an on-line ZOOM class at the same time (Wed. 1-2:20).

****Remember: Workshops are DUE between Friday 1 PM – Sun. 10 PM; CRs Mon. 1 PM – Tues. 10 PM; and papers Thurs. 10 PM on the week listed.** The corresponding dates will be placed on the LEARN calendar and indicated in the Weekly Modules also on LEARN.

Date and Topic	Biblical Topics	Secondary Reading	Assignments
<p>WEEK 1: Sept. 8 A. Introduction What is the Bible(s)? Which One...? Reading as a “Cross-Cultural Experience”</p> <p>B. Tanakh / Old Testament 1. Torah/Pentateuch Humans in Creation: Who are We, Why Are We Here?</p>	<p>Gen. 1-2</p> <p>Genesis 1-5, 11: Creation; in the Garden</p>	<p>“Created as Male and Female,” Suderman¹</p>	<p>Workshop (warm-up)</p>
<p>WEEK 2: Sept. 15 Family & Covenant: God’s Underlying Strategy for Blessing</p> <p><i>Workshop #1: ‘Authorship’ Before Books: Moving Behind the Printing Press to Scroll Production (based on Gen. 6-9)</i></p>	<p>Genesis 11-35: Household dynamics - Abraham, Sarah, + Hagar</p>	<p>“Everyday Life,” Meyers²</p> <p>“A Few Basics,” Kaminsky, et. al.³;</p>	<p>SR Quiz</p> <p>Workshop #1</p>
<p>WEEK 3: Sept. 22 A ‘People’ & Salvation: What is True Freedom? How is it Achieved?</p> <p><i>Workshop #2: Exploring Law, Holiness, Sin --- and Jubilee!</i></p>	<p>Exodus (narratives)</p> <p>Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy – Legal material</p>	<p>“Numinous Nomos,” Berlin⁴</p> <p>Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible”⁵</p>	<p>SR Quiz</p> <p>Workshop #2</p>

¹W. Derek Suderman, “Created as Male and Female: ‘adam, Gender, and the Legacy of Disobedience,” in *On Being Human: Essays from the Fifth Shi’i Muslim Mennonite Christian Dialogue*, ed. Harry Huebner and Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2013), 211–30.

²Carol L. Meyers, “Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 244–51.

³ Joel S. Kaminsky, Joel N. Lohr, and Mark Reasoner, “A Few Basics,” in *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible: Understanding Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 5–18.

⁴ Adele Berlin, “Numinous Nomos: On the Relationship Between Narrative and Law,” in *“A Wise and Discerning Mind”’: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, Ed. Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley, Brown Judaic Studies.325 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000) 25–31.

⁵ Jonathan Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, ed. Marc Zvi Brettler and Adele Berlin, Michael Fishbane, consulting editor (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2041–47.

Date and Topic	Biblical Topics	Secondary Reading	Assignments
<p>WEEK 4: Sept. 29</p> <p>Torah & Scripture: What Makes this “Book” Different than Others?</p> <p><i>Workshop #3: History & Story, Land & Conquest: Should We Take the Bible “Literally” (and How Would We, if We Want to...)?</i></p>	<p>Deuteronomy</p> <p>Joshua</p>	<p>“The Bible as ‘Story’ and ‘History,’” Kaminsky⁶;</p> <p>Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians”⁷</p>	<p>SR</p> <p>Word Study Quiz (Sept. 30)</p> <p>Workshop #3</p>
<p>WEEK 5: Oct. 6</p> <p>2. (Former) Prophets/ Historical Books</p> <p>In the Midst of the Nations...</p> <p>Kingship & Government: the Purpose and Limits of Being a King...</p>	<p>Judges</p> <p>I-II Samuel, and various</p>	<p>“Introduction: The Importance of Everyday Life,” King and Stager⁸</p> <p>“The Era of the Judges,” Fant et. al.⁹</p>	<p>SR</p> <p>Bible Quiz #1 (Oct. 6)</p> <p>(Intro to Word Study paper)</p>
<p>**BREAK** (Oct. 11-15)</p>			
<p>WEEK 6: Oct. 20</p> <p>Empire & Exile: What is the “End” of History?</p> <p>(Latter) Prophets</p> <p><i>Workshop #4: Prophets and Justice: Forth-tellers or Fortune-tellers?</i></p>	<p>I-II Kings</p> <p>Prophetic books (Amos, Micah, various)</p>	<p>“The Prophetic Books,” Malchow¹⁰</p>	<p>SR Quiz</p> <p>Workshop #4</p> <p>Word Study Outline and Bibliography DUE</p>
<p>WEEK 7: Oct. 27</p> <p>Words Matter...!</p>	<p>Ruth – briefly...</p>		<p>Word Study</p>

⁶ Joel S. Kaminsky, Joel N. Lohr, and Mark Reasoner, *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible: Understanding Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2014), 45–49.

⁷ Robert Allan Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today,” in *Native and Christian*, ed. James Treat (New York: Routledge, 1996), 93-104.

⁸ Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, “Introduction: The Importance of Everyday Life,” in *Life in Biblical Israel*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁹ Clyde E. Fant, Donald W. Musser, and Mitchell G. Reddish, *An Introduction to the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 121–34.

¹⁰ Bruce V. Malchow, *Social Justice in the Hebrew Bible: What is New and What is Old* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 31–49.

Date and Topic	Biblical Topics	Secondary Reading	Assignments
3. Writings Psalms & Prayer	Psalms		<i>Assignment DUE</i>
WEEK 8: Nov. 3 Wisdom & Knowledge <i>Workshop #5: Synagogue, Temple, and Judaism(s): Exploring the First Century Context(s) of the New Testament</i>	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Song of Songs Ezra, Nehemiah, Luke	Suderman, “‘Weep with Those who Weep’: Suffering, Empathy, and the Function of Lament” <VIMEO>, available on LEARN	Bible Quiz #2 (Nov. 3) Workshop #5
WEEK 9: Nov. 10 C. Second Temple Period and New Testament Gospel & “Kingdom of God:” Who (+ What!) is the ‘Saviour’? <i>Workshop #6: “Son of God,” A Case study contrasting the Four Gospels</i>	Matthew, Mark, Luke	“Kingdom of God,” Yoder Neufeld ¹¹ “The Stories of Jesus,” Enns ¹²	SR Quiz Workshop #6
WEEK 10: Nov. 17 Cross & Resurrection: What Makes “Good Friday” Good?!? <i>Workshop #7: Apocalypse and “End Times”: What does the Lamb have to do with it?</i>	“Synoptic Gospels” and John Revelation	“The Pharisees: Jesus’ Competition,” Neusner ¹³	SR Quiz Workshop #7
WEEK 11: Nov. 24 Church & Pharisees: <i>Ekklesia</i> as Jews and Gentiles together...	Acts, Paul, James, and the complexity of the 1 st Cent. Church		<i>NT Simulation Assignment</i>
WEEK 12: Dec. 1 D. Conclusion		“The Bible as a Religious Book,” Kaminsky ¹⁴	Bible Quiz #3 (Dec. 1)

¹¹Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, “Kingdom of God: What? Where? When?” in *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2007), 125–38.

¹²Peter Enns, “The Stories of Jesus,” *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It* (Harper One, 2014), 78-81.

¹³Jacob Neusner, “The Pharisees: Jesus’ Competition,” in *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984).

¹⁴Joel S. Kaminsky, Joel N. Lohr, and Mark Reasoner, *The Abingdon Introduction to the Bible: Understanding Jewish and Christian Scriptures* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 19–29.

Date and Topic	Biblical Topics	Secondary Reading	Assignments
The Bible in Jewish and Christian Tradition		"Biblical Authority," Brueggemann ¹⁵	

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, "Biblical Authority: A Personal Reflection," in *Christian Century* 118:1 (2001): 14-20.