

TS 612: Teaching the Bible

Syllabus: Fall, 2021

Instructor: Derek Suderman
Class: Tues., 5:30-8 PM, Room 2202
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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. 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.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course draws on selected biblical genres, themes, and passages in order to explore the purpose, function, and strategies for teaching the Bible in a variety of ministry settings. To do so it builds on the skills and knowledge developed in “Studying the OT” and “Studying the NT” in order to effectively link insights and biblical scholarship with communal practice and reflection. We will concentrate particularly on the role of the facilitator and “specialist” and provide hands-on practice with diverse pedagogical and facilitation methods.

B. COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course students will:

- explore various approaches to teaching the Bible, with particular attention to: the role of the leader, a diversity of groups (age, cultural groups, etc), and diverse settings (congregation, camp, small group, cultural awareness, etc.);
- develop pedagogical strategies that take group dynamics and various learning styles into account;
- enhance their self-awareness of their own assumptions, convictions, and tendencies associated with both the Bible and teaching;
- explore different strategies for engaging diverse genres of biblical material in a group setting;
- recognize the wide theological range within congregations/groups (hopefully!) and some of its background, as well as to consider how to recognize this diversity as a potential strength to draw on constructively;
- hopefully experience and grow in the conviction that the Bible has something unique and valuable to offer to contemporary Christian communities and their lived faith; and
- gain first-hand experience facilitating group Bible study.

II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. READING MATERIALS

The following materials are required.

1. The Bible

This is the most important textbook in the course. *Students with limited background in Old Testament material may require more reading to provide context and ‘connect the dots’ between passages identified in the Reading Guides and discussed in class.*

No one Bible version is required—in fact, having a diversity present will enrich class discussion. However, *paraphrases and Bibles which use a ‘dynamic equivalence’ approach to translation will not be appropriate for this course* (the Message, Good News Bible, Today’s English Version, etc.). If you have a question about this, please ask.

Note: Consider using a different version than that with which you are most familiar, since this often helps to hear material in a new way. Students are also expected to have more than one version available for consultation. Though we will not explore “apocryphal”/“deuterocanonical” books here, consider having at least one Bible that contains this material; “**reference**” versions and “**Study Bibles**” are also particularly helpful.

In no particular order, students are welcome to choose from among:

- *Tanakh* (JPS - Jewish Publication society)
- *New American Bible* (NAB), *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) or the older *American Standard Version* (ASV)
- *Common Bible* (CB)
- *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), *Revised Standard Version* (RSV)
- *Revised English Bible* (REB) or the older *New English Bible* (NEB)
- the older *New International Version* (NIV)
- *Net Bible* (free on-line at <http://www.bible.org>). While useful for comparison, students will be expected to bring physical Bibles to class so this will suffice on its own.

2. Textbooks

We will be using several books as texts for this class:

- *Seized by Truth*, Joel Green
- *Teaching the Bible in the Church*, John Bracke and Karen Tye
- *To Know as We are Known*, Parker Palmer
- *Rehearsing Scripture: Discovering God’s Word in Community*, Anna Carter Florence

Courseware Reader — There will also be some additional readings in this reader, that will be available in the University bookstore. There will also be occasional elements that will be circulated by email.

3. **Additional Readings and Materials**

As in other courses, I will generally provide a 'Reading Guide' that identifies biblical and secondary readings for the week, as well as some guiding questions. Since this is the first offering of the course, this will be a bit of a "growing syllabus" --- additional readings/materials relevant to specific topics will be made available on reserve and/or on e-reserves or the LEARN site for the course. Links to online lectures or studies will also be provided periodically as "secondary" material.

4. **Additional Recommended Books and Resources**

Both Introductions to the Bible and pedagogy books are well worth consulting. The following represent a sampling of potential resources for the book review (others are possible in consultation with the instructor):

- Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
- Brent Strawn, *The Old Testament is Dying: a Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*
- E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *MisReading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*
- Peter Enns, *Telling God's Story: A Parents' Guide to Teaching the Bible*, Peter Enns
- Peter Enns, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture has Made Us Unable to Read It*
- James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*
- Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*
- Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*
- Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*
- Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah*
- Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*
- Jerome Berryman, *Godly Play: an Imaginative Approach to Religious Education*
- Michael Novelli, *Shaped by the Story: Helping Students Encounter God in a New Way*
- Walter Wink, *Transforming Bible Study*

Michael Harvey's *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing* provides a helpful guide to writing, both re: general style and the specifics of academic writing (footnotes, bibliography). I strongly encourage you to purchase this or a similar resource early in your program; refer to it consistently.

Bible Atlases can be very helpful and **concordances** are key resources (in my view, every church community should have access to a concordance and teachers taught how to use them). Strong's on-line concordance is the most simple and effective for entry level use. **Bible software programs** can be very helpful, particularly for those entering church ministry or further study. Three excellent resources: BibleWorks, Logos (originally PC) and Accordance (originally Mac).

Note: While these programs are helpful, *be(a)ware (beware?) of the material that comes 'bundled' with them.* Not all of this is either current or helpful.

B. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Written assignments are due *at the beginning of class*, since they often provide the basis for class discussion on that day. Assignments will conform to the **Chicago Manual of Style** with **bottom-of-the-page footnotes**, unless otherwise indicated.

Comparative Analysis (DUE: Oct. 19)	20%
Synopsis and Response (DUE: Nov. 16)	10%
Book Review (DUE: Nov. 30)	20%
Bible Study Project	
Preparation (DUE: Nov. 2)	25%
Summary Evaluation (DUE: by Dec. 10)	25%

1. **Comparative Analysis**

Using the 'Questioning Technique' document provided, students will compare Bible studies reflected in two of: Wink's *Transforming Bible Study*, the "Contextual Bible Study method" of the Ujamaa Centre in South Africa, Anna Carter Florence's *Rehearsing Scripture*, and Ernesto Cardenal's *The Gospel in Solentiname*. They will then write a short paper that contrasts these approaches and analyzes their findings (6-8 pp., 1800-2400 words).

2. **Synopsis and Response**

Students will choose one of the textbooks for the course as the basis for their 'Synopsis' assignment. This will consist of making a one page, point-form summary of each chapter of the book. Students will then reflect on this material, and write a 4-5 page (1200-1500 word) response in light of their own reflections, course material, etc. The 'Synopsis' part can be done and discussed in a group if you wish; the response needs to be completed individually.

3. **Book Review**

In addition to reading specific chapters from the course textbooks for class preparation, students will choose one book on a related topic as the subject of a more detailed book review. This review (6-8 pp., 1800-2400 words) will describe the argument and structure of the book, as well as provide a constructive and critical review of its contents. While some examples are provided above, others are possible in consultation with the professor.

4. **Bible Study Project**

The main assignment for this course will consist of facilitating a multi-session, group Bible study. Each student will prepare and lead 4-5 sessions in a group setting of their choice --- this could be with a Sunday School class, youth group, gathering of friends, etc. The key is to be able to have a consistent group with whom students can try their hand with different strategies and ways of facilitating. Students will submit both an initial document that outlines various elements (group, their approach/goals, passages to study, sample questions and

sequence, etc.) and then a critical and reflective summary evaluation of their experience after the sessions are over.

III. CLASS SCHEDULE

Following the main topic for the week, (parentheses) indicate required secondary readings. ***Note: since your uwaterloo email address will be our primary means of communication between classes, make sure to update/forward this immediately.*

Date and Topic	Special Topics	Readings	Assignments
A. INTRO Sept. 14 - Introduction Syllabus	Prior Experience with Bible study Typical Bible study styles Teaching/Pedagogy in the Bible		
B. ELEMENTS of Bible Study Sept. 21 - From Biblical Literacy to Biblical Engagement: TEACHING the Bible...	Goal(s) / Assumptions of Studying the Bible Exploring Possible Leadership Role(s) / Role of a Facilitator	Bracke and Tye, ch. 2 Palmer, ch. 1-2	
Sept. 28 - What is this Thing? How Should it Be Read? Teaching the BIBLE...	Assumptions/Perspectives on the Bible Genres and Biblical Overview Overview of Types and Sequences of Questions	Green, ch. 1 Carter Florence, Preface + ch. 1 Suderman, "Questioning Technique" (in process)	
Oct. 5 - Setting and Audience	Setting Audience and Group Dynamics Learning Styles	Wink, "Leading a Group" ¹ Davis, "Teaching the Bible Confessionally in the Church" Hauerwas, "Taking the Bible	

¹ Walter Wink, "Leading a Group," in *Transforming Bible Study* (London: Mowbray, 1990), 61–75.

		Away from North American Christians” ²	
**Oct. 11-15 --- BREAK			
Oct. 19 - Questions, Questions, Questions	Approaches to Bible Study Questions and their implications Invisible Curriculum <i>Lectio Divina...</i>		Comparative Analysis DUE
C. Studying BIBLICAL GENRES Oct. 26 - Strategies - Biblical Genres	Narrative Poetry (Psalms)	Alter, “Conclusion” ³	
Nov. 2 – Teaching the Bible in Diverse Cultural Contexts	Guest Speakers: - Tobia and George Veith - ??	Palmer, ch. 5-6 Bracke and Tye, ch. 3	Bible Study Preparation DUE
Nov. 9 – Strategies - Biblical Genres (con.)	Prophetic material Law Wisdom	Brueggemann, “Steps in Interpretation: Jeremiah 5:14-17 as Example” Bible for Normal People, Ep. 178: Pete Ruins Isaiah (Peter Enns)	

² Stanley Hauerwas, “Taking the Bible Away from North American Christians,” *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 15-18.

³ Robert Alter, “Conclusion,” in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1981).

Nov. 16 – Strategies – Biblical Genres (con.)	OT / NT dynamics	Neusner, “The Pharisees” ⁴ Levine, “Bearing False Witness” ⁵ Suderman, “Is it Lawful?” ⁶	Book Synopsis and Response DUE
Nov. 23 – Strategies – Biblical Genres (con.)	Letters Apocalyptic		
Nov. 30 - Theological Diversity in Bible Study: Threat or Resource?	Tradition(s) and Interpretation Suggestions (and Stumbling Blocks) for tackling divides - ‘Conservative’/’Liberal’ - Urban/rural - Male / female - Etc. Innovative studies / connections	Brueggemann, “Where is the Scribe?” --- online VIDEO McGrath, “Return to the Bible” ⁷ Suderman, “Wrestling with Violent Depictions of God” ⁸	
C. CONCLUSION Dec. 7 - Conclusion		Strawn, “On Language Growth and Change, Contact and Death” ⁹	Book Review DUE

⁴ Jacob Neusner, “The Pharisees: Jesus’ Competition,” in *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 45–61.

⁵ Amy-Jill Levine, “Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made About Early Judaism,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 501–04.

⁶ Derek Suderman, “Is it Lawful? Interpretation and Discernment in Light of Sabbath Controversies,” in *Vision* 16:1, pp. 79-88.

⁷ Alister E. McGrath, “The Return to the Bible,” in *Reformation Thought: An Introduction (Fourth Edition)* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), pp. 91-114.

⁸ Derek Suderman, “Wrestling with Violent Depictions of God: A Response to Eric Seibert’s *Disturbing Divine Behaviour*,” *Direction* 40.2, pp. 151-62.

⁹ Brent A. Strawn, “On Language Growth and Change, Contact and Death,” in *The Old Testament is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*, Theological Explorations for the Church Catholic (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 59–80.

