RS 100 EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Dr. Yehuda Shabatay

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is one of the courses that you will take to fulfill the requirements for General Education Foundations of Learning. Upon completing this area of Foundations, you will be able to 1) explore and recognize basic terms, concepts, and spheres of Bible studies; 2) comprehend diverse theories and methods in that field; 3) interpret texts critically and analyze the social contexts from which those texts emerged; and 4) enhance your understanding of the Bible’s influence on our civilization.

Some of the basic terms you will get acquainted with will be in several languages: Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and occasionally Aramaic. Diverse theories will refer to both ancient and modern commentaries. As far as the social context is concerned, you will deal with historical and geographical data, as well as with the structure of the society that developed the biblical literature. And as you discuss the Bible’s influence on our civilization, you will relate it to all monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), as well as to specific concerns in our society.

While it is impossible to read and discuss the entire Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), the New Testament, and some of the writings that were composed in the so-called Inter-Testamental period in one semester, we can gain a basic understanding of the themes, central ideas, and the structure of various sections and of specific books. Please note that our aim will be to approach the material from an academic, rather than from a theological point of view.

REQUIRED READINGS

1. Bible, Preferred translation: The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NOAB) with the Apocrypha, College edition. You are expected to bring your Bible to every class. Please note: (a) if you use this edition, you don’t need the Atlas of the Bible Lands (listed below) because it includes fourteen maps; (b) if you use another edition, make sure that it contains the Apocrypha.

2. Stephen L. Harris, Understanding the Bible, 7th edition, Referred to as “H” in the syllabus. Please note: you may rent this textbook for $28.99 in the bookstore.


All the above books are available in the University bookstore.
Tu 2/ 8  Genesis 2: Covenant, Myths & Facts  Gen. chs. 37, 45, 48-50.  
H ch. 5 pp. 103-117.

Th 2/10 Exodus: Moses, Miracles & Monotheism  Ex. chs 1-5.  
H ch 5 pp. 117-130.

Tu 2/15 The Laws of the Torah  Ex. chs. 19-20; Lev. chs. 19-21; Deut. ch. 5.  
H ch 5 pp. 130-143.

Th 2/17 The Bible and Archaeology  Josh. chs. 1-2; Jud. chs. 13-15;  

Tu 2/22 The World That Produced the Hebrew Bible  I Kings chs. 3-5; II K chs. 22-23  
H ch 6 pp. 146-149, 164-179.

Th 2/24 Understanding the Prophets 1: Before the Babylonian Exile  
Isaiah ch. 1; Jeremiah chs. 1, 20, 31; Amos chs. 1, 7  
H ch 7 pp. 190-214.

Tu 3/ 1 Understanding the Prophets 2: During and After the Exile  
Isaiah chs. 40, 45; Ezekiel chs. 1, 37, 40; Malachi ch. 4  
H ch 7 pp. 214-231.

Th 3/ 3 Understanding the Writings 1: Poetry and Short Stories  
Psalms 23, 137; Songs chs. 1, 8; Esther chs. 3-4  
H ch 8 pp. 232-244; 263-267.

Tu 3/ 8 Understanding the Writings 2: Wisdom Literature  
Proverbs chs. 1-2; Ecclesiastes chs. 1, 3; Job chs. 1, 38.  
H ch 8 pp. 244-260.

Th 3/10 MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Tu 3/15 The Making of the Hebrew Bible  Ezra chs. 1, 3, 7; Nehemiah chs. 8-10  
H ch 8 pp. 267-271.

Th 3/17 Apocalypticism and the Apocrypha  
Daniel chs. 1-2, 12; Bel and the Dragon; II Esdras chs. 3-4.  
H chapter 8 pp. 271-278; ch. 9.

Tu 3/22 Between the Two Testaments  
Judith chs. 8-10; I Maccabees chs. 3-4; II Macc. ch. 10  
H review ch. 9; Xeroxed material from the Dead Sea Scrolls

Th 3/24 The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith 1.  
Matthew chs. 1-2; Mark chs. 1-3, 16.  H ch. 10.