Exploring the Bible
REL S 100.3 (Sch #22819), 3 units
P-146, M/W 2:00-3:15 pm

CONTACT: Dr. Pam Fox / pamfox@juno.com
Office: AL #628 / Office Hours: M & W 1-2p; and by appt. M & W 6:30-8pm

Blackboard 9.1 (webpage): https://blackboard.sdsu.edu
(Login using SDSU Red ID and password; find “Exploring the Bible” under “My Courses”)

Catalog: Basic content and themes of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament using methods of contemporary biblical studies. Attention to ancient near-Eastern and Greco-Roman cultural settings as well as the impact of the Bible on contemporary culture.

FOUNDATIONS COURSE: This G.E. Foundations course will cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, information literacy, and use of technology. While “Religious Studies” may not be your intended major (or minor), the basic concepts, theories, and approaches in “Exploring the Bible” will provide intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge from your chosen field.

This course is one of four (4) Foundations courses that you will take in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts that prepares you to: 1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments; 2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures; 3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance; 4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.

Course Objectives?

1. Students will master essential Biblical content covering major figures, events, and themes through short reading quizzes, assignments, responses, and three objective (T/F, M/C) Scantron tests.

2. Students will read and analyze the Bible from literary and historic critical approaches and using a variety of media (film, art, music, literature, maps, lecture, pop culture, etc.). Use the basic approaches (historic and literary) for studying and interpreting the Bible as an academic, non-confessional discipline.

3. Explain canonicity and retrace how the Bible was formed (based on the Documentary Hypothesis, redaction criticism, and other theories) as a historic, cultural, religious, and prophetic work. Understand the many contexts (historical, literary, cultural, and social) in which the Bible has been written, transmitted, and read.

4. Recognize distinct voices, perspectives, and genres within the Bible, and understand the entire work as an anthology that is both diverse and unified.

5. By the end of class, may you appreciate the Bible as a masterwork of world literature, know it as a chronicle of a people’s history, and respect it as a book of divine inspiration for millions.
LASTING Skills for Students?

1. CONVERSATION: A sense of presence in the ongoing great discussion about the Bible; of connection to texts, colleagues, and both local and global culture; and of participation in a diverse and dynamic intellectual community through in-class discussions, weekly reading assessments, and exams. Join the conversation!

2. COMMUNICATION: An increased agility with thoughtful, rational approaches to interpreting the Bible; a greater appreciation of nuance and complexity in any text; proficiency in expressing your views.

3. DEPTH: A heightened awareness and experience of your own—and your neighbor’s—depth and diversity as a human across the boundaries of time, place, culture, race, and gender.

4. CITIZENSHIP: Knowledge of this all-time bestselling masterpiece and cornerstone of the Western canon that was integral to the Deist founders of our nation. Consequently, biblical literacy is necessary for a true understanding of our culture and for informed citizenship.

Note: This class is NOT a religiously-oriented “Bible Study” that requires worship and faith, but an objective, nondenominational, academic study of two of the major world scriptures (the Hebrew Bible/Tanakh and the New Testament) that are deeply important to many people of faith—including fellow students. As you question and explore the texts within our academic environment, please be mindful of others with and without personal religious convictions.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Holy Scrolls, Kuhlken/Freedman, graphic novel.

The Book About the Book. On Blackboard under “Course Docs.”

Bible, any translation of your choice with Old and New Testaments (see recommended text below); to find a translation you like, read sample chapters: Genesis chapter 1, Psalm 23, and John chapter 1 (see your Bible's Table of Contents for page numbers). For a free, online Bible in over 100 translations, visit: www.biblegateway.com (the most popular: NRSV, NIV, NASB, NKJV).

**RECOMMENDED BIBLE TRANSLATION:**


**RECOMMENDED TEXTS (HELPFUL STUDY AIDS!):**


New Testament (Quick Study Academic); ISBN 1-4232-0309-7; $5.95.

Old Testament (Quick Study Academic); ISBN 1-57222-831-8; $5.95.

**GRADING:**

* I post all grades on Blackboard regularly, so your current standing will always be available. It is your responsibility to refer to Blackboard; if you still have questions about a posted or unposted grade, please have your Blackboard gradesheet opened or bring a current printout of your grades and all necessary documentation (the unposted essay, quiz, etc.) to Dr. Fox during office hours listed above. I welcome all informed questions!
* Tests will be objective (T/F and M/C) using a pencil and the narrow, red Parscore form F-289. You need to provide this Parscore form (available for ~50 cents from the cashiers at both the West and East Commons markets as well as at the bookstore). Your first two tests are NOT cumulative, and the third test won’t be cumulative as long as a majority of students don’t bomb the first two (otherwise a cumulative review will be necessary for Test #3). Each 50-minute in-class exam will have ~80 questions covering the reading, videos, and lectures.

* As a courtesy to you, the following breakdown is an estimate of the weight of assignments; actual values may vary based on the difficulty level and time invested in the assignment:
  
  25% = Assignments & Attendance (quizzes; posts; attendance; preparedness; participation)
  25% = Test 1 (canon formation & Torah; Parscore F-289 & pencil)
  25% = Test 2 (Nevi‘im and Ketthuvim; Parscore F-289 & pencil)
  25% = Test 3 (New Testament OR cumulative TBA; Parscore F-289 & pencil)
  100% = Total

ASSIGNMENTS:
~ Please be prepared for lively, respectful in-class discussions and informed questioning, so read the material in advance and be present (mind and body). To help you assess your comprehension, we will have periodic objective quizzes and short responses regarding key points and concepts from the day’s assigned reading; some memorization of key verses; in-class group work on the Bible and Ehrman; short responses posted on Discussion Board; and three non-cumulative Parscore Scantron tests (objective T/F and M/C): Test 1 (on canon formation and the Torah); Test 2 (on the Hebrew Bible, Nevi‘im and Ketthuvim); and Test 3 (on the New Testament, or a cumulative test if I deem it necessary after low scores on the first two tests).

~ This class is for you, so I want you to attend and participate! I am not here to waste your time or assign busy work, so call me on any reading or assignment that you don’t find relevant to our objectives in “Exploring the Bible”!

~ I know and respect that this is a 100-level class and I grade fairly. I adjust (i.e. lower) total points possible (WITHOUT subtracting a single point YOU earn) so more students earn A’s. You have an A+ when you walk in the door! Let me know how I can help you keep it (within reason). Do not expect a deus ex machina.

ATTENDANCE:
~ Quizzes over the day’s reading also count for attendance and participation credit. No make-ups, so attend class because quizzes over the current reading may be at the beginning or end of class.

LATE WORK:
~ No late work will be accepted, and no make-ups, without prior consent of the instructor and a valid cause, or, in the case of illness, a doctor’s note. Documentation of the emergency is required.

ETTIQUETTE:
~ BE HERE: No laptops or cellphones (no Facebook, texting, games, etc.), or any wireless other than your brain. Why? 1) Taking notes by hand and then transferring them to your computer outside of class if you like allows you to review your notes; 2) From my experience in large classes at SDSU, too many students were tempted to Facebook, email, Google, play games, finish homework, etc. on the laptop and it was very distracting, not to mention a waste of RELS 100 class time; 3) multi-tasking lowers your IQ 3-7 points; and 4) I’m asking you to respectfully focus for our brief 50 minute sessions.
~ BE NEAT: Please do not turn in any assignment on ripped-out, frayed notebook paper. All outside papers should be typed following **MLA format**: 12 pt. font, double-space, page numbers in upper right with the following heading: 1) your name, 2) professor’s name, 3) course, 4) date; with a thematic title centered above first paragraph.

~ BE GOOD: **Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation, and dishonesty** of any kind “that is intended to gain unfair academic advantage” will be reported and result in the appropriate sanctions as defined by the SDSU Center for Student Rights & Responsibilities in the “Standard for Student Conduct” (41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations). Do your own work and don’t copy assignments or use a phone or cheat sheet or body writing on tests and closed-note/book quizzes; if you copy or cheat, you will fail the assignment and possibly the class, and be reported to the Judiciary Committee who may place you on probation or suspend you; this goes on your record and affects financial aid as well.

~ BE RESPECTFUL: As noted above (“Caution”), this course is not a religiously-biased “Bible study” from a particular faith tradition, but rather, an academic study of a masterpiece of world literature. Please keep in mind that the Bible is considered sacred to millions, which may include your fellow students, so please be respectful and reserve personal issues for outside of class or a pastor, priest, rabbi, friend, or counselor. I’m open-minded and always available during office hours, too!

~ CARE! Only you can increase your level of interest and actively participate in class by listening, asking questions, commenting, working with a small group, doing your best on the quizzes that will help prepare you for one of the three tests (every two weeks). If our class is overwhelmingly prepared and responsible, I would be willing to waive some of the NT quizzes!

**MLA Format:**

~ Why bother? It looks like you care; your paper will stand out; it looks professional; it shows you can follow directions; shows respect for protocol; finally, it’s the only kind that gets an “A.”

~ Please refer to the OWL website (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/): use 12 pt. font, double-space, include page numbers in upper right (Last Name #); page one should have the following heading on the upper left margin: 1) your name, 2) professor’s name, 3) course, 4) date; finally, always center a thematic title on page one above your first paragraph.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473 as soon as possible. I can only provide accommodations based upon disability once I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

**EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS**

UP TO TWO (2) WORSHIP SERVICES: Visit a service at a church or synagogue or godless church that is NEW to you; write a 1-2 page response describing and evaluating the speaker’s method of interpreting and using the Bible. You might consider one or more of the following questions: 1) did the speaker primarily have a political, spiritual, moral, or ethical purpose in drawing upon the Bible? 2) was the method literary (aesthetic and philosophical) or historical (cultural and scientific)? 3) overall, how liberal (loose) or conservative (literal, fundamentalist) was the interpretation? 4) what sources or authorities were mentioned besides the Bible? 5) what new insights did you gain? 5) would you return? why or why not? can you see why members attend the service? what do they get out of it?
Please staple the bulletin or program from that service onto the back of your paper. Limit of two (2) visits per student: 1) one visit to a Jewish temple for Shabbat, and/or 2) one visit to a Catholic/Christian/Orthodox worship service; 3) one to the monthly Sunday (Atheist) Assembly in Balboa Park. Each visit is worth a quiz, depending on the difficulty and time invested, and written response. **DUE: On any of the three test dates.**

“UNLIMITED” RELIGIOUS STUDIES EVENTS: Lectures, films, concerts, or plays relevant to our study of the Bible may be held on campus this semester. Opportunities will be announced and you may receive extra credit for attending and writing a 1-2 page short response paper in MLA format. Write about whatever interested you as relevant to our “Exploring the Bible” class (show you thoughtfully attended and write a mini-discussion or debriefing, a blog-like conversation or critique of the event’s significance and relevance); staple notes taken at the event to the back of your typed paper; and attach proof of attendance (staple a ticket stub or program to the back of your MLA formatted response paper). One event is worth either one-half or one full quiz, depending on time. No limit. **DUE: On any of the three test dates.**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

*Exploration is a pro-active process, so be prepared every day: 1) read that day’s assignment before class; and 2) bring your Bible and Oxford text every day.*

* Necessary changes to the schedule will be announced in class, emailed, and posted on Blackboard.

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<th>WEEK ONE</th>
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<td><strong>Mon. 1/25</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FYI RECOMMENDED ONLINE VIDEOS</strong> (on Blackboard under “Course Docs”) by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine; Vanderbilt Divinity School</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Lecture 1, “In the Beginning” (25 min.)</td>
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<td>&gt; Lecture 2, “Adam and Eve” (25 min.)</td>
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<td><strong>FYI ALSO RECOMMENDED:</strong> Karen Armstrong’s <em>A History of God</em> (90 min.)</td>
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<td>Week Two</td>
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### Mon. 2/15

**MOSES**

**REQUIRED VIEWING (PLUS TAKE NOTES)** > three lectures (25 min. each) by Amy-Jill Levine and take notes. I will check your notes while you're taking the first test.

Amy-Jill Levine's lectures are under "Course Docs":

Lecture #8: Moses and the Exodus

Lecture #10: Covenant and Law, Part One

Lecture #11: Covenant and Law, Part Two

***

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED:**

Elie Wiesel's midrash videos on Genesis and Moses, drawing upon rabbinical commentaries (find them below under "Course Docs"): 

Adam & Eve (25 min.);

Cain & Abel (25 min.);

Abraham & Isaac (25 min.);

Moses: The Agony of Power (25 min.)

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**READ THE BIBLE** > Exodus chapters 1-24; skim chapters 25-31; skip chapters 35-40 on the tabernacle/Temple

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### Wed. 2/17

**MOSES contd.**

**READING or VIEWING TBA > Deuteronomy**

**READ THE BIBLE** > Deuteronomy chapters 1-11 (covenant promises), 27-29 (curses & blessing), 31 (commissions Joshua), 34 (death of Moses)

**IN-CLASS QUIZ: List 10 Commandments; Memorize the Shema (Deut. 6:4-9)**

**TWO PARTS:**

A) list (paraphrase in a sentence each) **The Ten Commandments** in order with the reference (book, chapter, verse: Ex. 20:1-17; or Deut. 5:6-21); and

B) write **The Shema** (Deut. 6:4-9; and Harris p. 139), with the reference and verses 4-9 in English, and just verse 4 in Hebrew

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**WEEK FIVE**
### Mon. 2/22
IN-CLASS TEST #1 (over THE BOOK INTRO and TORAH: *Holy Scrolls*, Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy); bring a narrow red ParScore Scantron form F-289 and a pencil; M/C and T/F questions. OR bring a blue book and plan on writing everything you can remember in 75 minutes.

### WEEK SIX

#### Wed. 2/24
**JOSHUA & JUDGES**
REQUIRED VIEWING > Three lectures by Amy-Jill Levine on Joshua & Judges
Lecture #12: Conquest
Lecture #13: Judges, Part One
Lecture #14: Judges, Part Two
***
READ BIBLE > Joshua 1-6 (crossing the Jordan, defeat Jericho), 8 (victory at Ai), 10 (5 kings vs. Joshua), 23-24 (Joshua’s farewell speech)

READ BIBLE> Judges 1-2 (Background), 4-5 (Deborah), 7 (Gideon), 14-16 (Samson)

#### Mon. 2/29
**KING DAVID**
REQUIRED VIEWING > Two lectures by Dr. Levine on 1 & 2 SAMUEL
Lecture #15: Samuel & Saul
Lecture #16: King David
***
READ BIBLE> 1 Samuel 16-24; 2 Samuel 5-7, 11-12
***
FYI RECOMMENDED VIEWING> Elie Wiesel’s film, *King David*

#### Wed. 3/2
**ELIJAH & ELISHA**
REQUIRED VIEWING > Three lectures by Dr. Levine on 1 & 2 KINGS
Lecture 17: King Solomon to Preclassical Prophecy
***
READ BIBLE> I Kings 17-19 (Elijah vs. Baal), I Kings 21 (King Ahab steals Naboth’s vineyard); 2 Kings 1-9 (Elijah’s mantle falls to Elisha)

### WEEK SEVEN

#### Mon. 3/7
**ISAIAH (First, Second, and Third Isaiah)**
REQUIRED VIEWING > Isaiah
Lecture 18: Prophets and the Fall of the North
Lecture 19: Southern Kingdom
***
READ BIBLE> Second Isaiah (chs. 40-55); Third Isaiah (chs. 56-66)

#### Wed. 3/9
**ISAIAH contd.**
Lecture #20: Babylonian Exile
Lecture #21: Restoration and Theocracy
***
and/or ESTHER & JUDITH TBA
Lecture #23: Life in the Diaspora
## WEEK EIGHT

| Mon. 3/14 | PSALMS  
READING posted on "Course Docs" |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Wed. 3/16 | SONG OF SONGS; PROVERBS; ECCLESIASTES  
Lecture #22: Wisdom Literature |

## WEEK NINE

| Mon. 3/21 | JOB  
READING TBA  
IN CLASS EXCERPTS> the Cohen Brothers’ film, *A Serious Man* |
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<td>Wed. 3/23</td>
<td>TEST #2 (over Nevi’im and Ketthuvim; everything in the Hebrew Bible since Test #1); <strong>bring a narrow red ParScore Scantron form F-289 and a pencil; M/C and T/F questions. OR bring a blue book and write for 75 minutes.</strong></td>
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## WEEK TEN

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<th>Mon. 3/28</th>
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<td>Wed. 3/30</td>
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## WEEK ELEVEN

| Mon. 4/4 | INTRO TO THE NEW TESTAMENT  
Canon and Formation  
Context of Jesus the Mediterranean Jewish Peasant  
READING or VIEWING TBA |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Wed. 4/6 | SYNOPTIC GOSPELS  
Mark  
Matthew  
READING or VIEWING TBA |
### WEEK TWELVE

**Mon. 4/11**  
**JOHN AND GNOSTICISM**  
John  
Thomas  
READING or VIEWING TBA  
QUIZ OVER SYNOPTICS vs. JOHN (and everyone memorize the Lord’s Prayer; only for extra credit: also memorize The Nicene Creed)

**Wed. 4/13**  
**PAUL AND THE EARLY CHURCH**  
READING or VIEWING TBA

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<th><strong>WEEK THIRTEEN</strong></th>
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| **Mon. 4/18**  
**ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**  
READING or VIEWING TBA  
IN-CLASS SHORT RESPONSE> arguing your choice for the most radical “Major Milestone” in the Book of Acts that transformed the church from its Hebrew roots in Israel and the Tanakh…into a global movement that encompassed Gentiles and the New Testament (based on handout) |

**Wed. 4/20**  
**ACTS contd.**  
SMALL GROUPS: Jerusalem Council debate?  
IN CLASS: *Manga Bible*

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<th><strong>WEEK FOURTEEN</strong></th>
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| **Mon. 4/25**  
**PAUL’S LIFE AND LETTERS**  
Romans  
IN CLASS: Dr. Timothy Luke-Johnson lecture on Paul? |

**Wed. 4/27**  
PRESENTATIONS: Current Topics in Paul’s Letters

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<th><strong>WEEK FIFTEEN</strong></th>
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| **Mon. 5/2**  
**REVELATION**  
READ BIBLE> Revelation 1-22 (or in two sittings: 1-11, 12-22, but be warned: not before bed!)  
ADDITIONAL READING or VIEWING TBA |

**Wed. 5/4**  
**LAST DAY OF CLASS**  
REVELATION contd.
<table>
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<th>WEEK SIXTEEN</th>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL Mon. 5/9, 1-3pm</td>
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<td>In-Class Final Exam, Test #3 &gt; Depending on class performance:</td>
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<td>A) cumulative final exam if first two test scores are “low”;</td>
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<td>OR B) if class performance is “meh”, an “Essential New Testament” listing test in a small BLANK blue book for listing 50 solid, supported, descriptive points from each of the NT books we covered;</td>
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<td>OR, C) if everyone’s still fully charged, business as usual with an objective Parscore test over the NT (T/F and M/C, not cumulative)—bring a narrow red Parscore Scantron and a pencil with eraser. Or bring a blue book and write everything you can remember in 75 minutes.</td>
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<td>EX CR DUE&gt; e.g. Worship Service write-ups</td>
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<td>RECOMMENDED ENTERTAINMENT &gt; Jesus Christ Superstar (100 min.); note: $3 Amazon instant video or $9 to own. [If you’ve already seen it, good films by definition can be re-screened! And it’s a new context, you’re a new person with newfound, hard-earned, in-depth knowledge of the Bible!]</td>
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<td>&gt; Monty Python’s The Life of Brian (dir. Terry Jones, 1979)</td>
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