

English 3910, The Bible as Literature

T/Th, 3:30–4:50 pm, Language Building 204

Dr. Upchurch, Professor of English

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, LANG 409F, 2:00–3:00 pm

Course Description

This course will familiarize students with the most influential literary text in Western culture. Taught from a literary perspective, the course will focus primarily on the Bible as a story, one with literary unity told from a variety of perspectives by different writers across a span of centuries employing an array of genres, styles, themes, archetypes, and narrative techniques. The Bible is long, the semester short, so we will focus on four major themes in the biblical storyline--Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation--themes which incidentally correspond to the basic elements of plot structure: (1) exposition/setting, (2) rising action/complication, (3) climax, and (4) dénouement (pronounced in English *day'-noo-maan*)/resolution. Since the Bible is an anthology of works (the Greek word *biblia* means 'little books'), we will attend to treatments of the four major themes in six important genres--history, poetry, prophecy, gospel, epistle, and visionary/apocalyptic literature--the first three of which are prominent in the Jewish Bible/the Christian Old Testament and the second three of which are found in the New Testament. No acquaintance with the Bible is presumed.

Course Requirements and Grading

- 15% -- Essay 1
- 25% -- Essay 2
- 35% -- Essay 3
- 5% -- Essay 4
- 20% -- Attendance (10%) & Participation (10%)

Attendance & Participation

You are expected to attend class and actively participate. This course is by nature participatory, collaborative, and discussion-based, and you will learn more, perform at a higher level, and have more fun if you come to class and participate actively. Since in-person class attendance and class participation are essential and inextricably linked, I reserve the right to reduce a student's attendance and participation grades. Attendance is taken daily, and all absences lower the attendance grade. Please note that upon a student's fourth unexcused absence, I will reduce the student's participation grade by 25 points, 30 points upon a fifth unexcused absence. Students who accumulate a sixth unexcused absence will receive the final grade of "F" unless they withdraw from the class within the period authorized by UNT's academic calendar. Please consult Canvas for additional policies.

Required Text

English Standard Version (ESV) Economy Bible (2017) -- to be distributed in class on the first day or

ESV Reader's Bible (2016). ISBN: 9781433559051 (paperback)

- *Bring your book to every class or receive a reduction of your participation grade.*

Course Calendar

Due dates for drafts, peer review responses, and final drafts will not change. The schedule of assigned readings may change, however, depending on the pace at which we're able to work productively as a community. If so, I will provide ample notice. I may also assign or suggest additional readings from time to time (in which case I'll provide you with copies or online links).

- 8/30 Introduction
- 9/1 Our Stories

- 9/6 Story of the Bible as Literary Artifact
- 9/8 Story of the Old Testament (an overview)

- 9/13 Story of the New Testament (an overview)
- 9/15 On Reading the Bible as a Story (Introduction to the *ESV Literary Study Bible*)
- 9/18 Draft of Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

CREATION [SETTING]

- 9/20 History: Genesis 1:1–2:3
- 9/22 Poetry: Psalm 104
- 9/25 Peer Review Responses to Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

- 9/27 Prophecy: Isaiah 40: 2–26
- 9/29 Gospel: Luke 13:10–17
- 10/2 Final Draft of Essay 1 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

- 10/4 Epistle: Colossians 1:15–20
- 10/6 Visionary Literature: Revelation 21:1–22:5, esp. 22:1–5 with reference to Genesis 2:8–14

FALL [COMPLICATION]

- 10/11 History: Genesis 2–11, esp. 2:4–4:26; Exodus 20:1–17
- 10/13 Poetry: Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143, with special attention to Ps. 51

- 10/18 Prophecy: Isaiah 1–5
- 10/20 Gospel: Matthew 5:1–7:29, esp. 5:19–48, and Mt. 13, esp. the parables of the sower and weeds
- 10/23 Draft of Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

- 10/25 Epistle: Galatians, esp. 5:13–6:1, and Ephesians, esp. 2:1–5 and 4:17–5:24
- 10/27 Visionary Literature: Revelation 17:1–18:24
- 10/30 Peer Review Responses to Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

REDEMPTION [CLIMAX]

- 11/1 History: Exodus 1–20, Numbers 10–14, 16–17, and 20–24, Deuteronomy 32–34
- 11/3 Poetry: Psalms 22, 78, and 114
- 11/6 Final Draft of Essay 2 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

11/8 Prophecy: Isaiah 42:1–9, 49:1–13; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12
11/10 Gospel: Matthew 20:17–28:20; Mark 11:1–16:20; Luke 18:31–24:53

11/15 Gospel: John 11–21

11/17 Epistle: Romans 3:21–8:39 and Ephesians 2:4–22

11/22 Visionary Literature: Revelation 5 and 12

11/24 THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/27 Draft of Essay 3 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

NEW CREATION [RESOLUTION]

11/29 History: Acts 1–4 (new church) and 9:1–31 (new birth)

12/1 Poetry/Prophecy: Psalm 102:25–26 (new heavens and new earth), Isaiah 56:5 (new name) and 65:1–66:24 (new heavens and new earth), and Jeremiah 31 (new covenant)

12/4 Peer Review Responses to Essay 3 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

12/6 Gospel/Epistle: John 3:3–8 (new humanity), 14:2 (new home), and 5:28–29 (new body), Romans 12:1–2 (new mind), 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 (new birth), Ephesians 4:1–16 (new unity), and 4:17–32 (new self), and 2 Peter 3:8–13 (new heavens and new earth)

12/8 Visionary Literature: Revelation 5:9–10 (new song) and 21:1–22:5 (new heavens and new earth)

12/11 Final Draft of Essay 3 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas

12/15 Essay 4 due by 11:59 pm in Canvas