**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**RS 101 – Spring 2015**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

**(GE-C: 3 or GE-R: S2)**

This course covers the objectives for “RS 101” as stated in the CSUN Catalog (www.csun.edu/catalog/religiousstudies.html). It also fulfills a General Education requirement in the Humanities. Courses in this category help students understand the history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literature, religions and philosophy. Religious Studies courses provide students with the tools to critically examine and reflect upon the search for religious meanings, values, expressions, and experiences.

This introductory course uses the most recent scholarly methods and archeological data to examine the various historical, social, political, economic, and cultural **contexts** that eventually produced the Bible. The religious and theological **content** of the Bible is inextricably connected with its social and cultural context. This critical approach to the Bible is neither designed to diminish nor enhance one’s personal faith or the religious traditions that continue to use the Bible for moral guidance and group identity. The instructor suggests that students suspend faith and philosophical assumptions about the Bible, religion, and God while engaging the material presented in this university course. For example, this approach does not assume that the Holy Spirit played a role in the historical formation of the biblical texts.

We will discuss faith and theology as vital issues addressed in the Bible while not promoting faith or any particular theology. In other words, we approach the Bible as an artifact of ancient human cultures examined through various tools of modern critical research—not personal faith or philosophical assumptions that simply dismiss all religious language and behavior as unworthy of serious study. The instructor enjoys meeting students during office his hours to either help with the content of the course or to discuss implications the course may raise about one’s spiritual quest, personal faith, or world view.

**RS 101 Department Student Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the basic contents and major themes in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Apocrypha.

2. Students will be able to describe the main events, people, and political-religious institutions (priesthood, kingship, prophecy) of the societies that produced biblical literature.

3. Students will demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in the historical, geographical, social, and political context in which biblical books were constructed.

4. Students will be able to recognize and to articulate (orally and in writing) the difference between academic approaches to the Bible and a personal, devotional approach.

5. Students will be able to demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in the dominant theories regarding the compilation of biblical texts and the literary history of the Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha, and New Testament.

**G. E. Student Learning Outcomes** for **Arts and Humanities:**

**Goal: Students will understand the rich history and diversity of human knowledge, discourse and achievements of their own and other cultures as they are expressed in the arts, literatures, religions, and philosophy.**

**Therefore Students will**:

1. Explain and reflect critically upon the human search for meaning, values, discourse and expression in one or more eras/stylistic periods or cultures;

2. Analyze, interpret, and reflect critically upon ideas of value, meaning, discourse and expression from a variety of perspectives from the arts and/or humanities;

3. Produce work/works of art that communicate to a diverse audience through a demonstrated understanding and fluency of expressive forms;

4. Demonstrate ability to engage and reflect upon their intellectual and creative development within the arts and humanities;

5. Use appropriate critical vocabulary to describe and analyze works of artistic expression, literature, philosophy, or religion and a comprehension of the historical context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged;

6. Describe and explain the historical and/or cultural context within which a body of work was created or a tradition emerged.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

**Sumney, Jerry, L. *The Bible: An Introduction, 2nd edition*. 2014.Minneapolis: Fortress Press.**

**An English Translation of the Bible. (Recommended: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. 2010)**

**http://bibleodyssey.org/**

**Course Requirements:**

Students take **three** scheduled exams on the assigned days, 2 midterms and a final each worth 30%. The final 10% is based on attendance and class participation.

The plus and minus grading format will be used. (Note: GE classes as well as classes in one’s major and/or minor must be taken on a graded basis.) Approximately five extra credit assignments will be given at random in class that will help in preparation for exams and significantly improve one’s grade. Extra credit cannot be made up, students must attend class to receive credit**. Note: Attendance is taken and unexcused absences result in a 2% drop from one’s overall grade. Hence, 5 unexcused absences will lower one’s grade a full letter, A to B, etc.**

Reading assignments must be completed before class meetings to enhance discussion and student progress. Students who cannot participate in class discussions because they have failed to do the assigned readings will forfeit 2% points for each ill-prepared class. Lectures are not taken from the text but will only elaborate on some of the readings with additional information. **You are responsible for all reading assignments even if not discussed in class.**

***Note:*** Disrupting class in any way and inconsiderate behavior to other students will not be tolerated. Turn off cell phones. Students arriving late for exams may **NOT** take the exam after another student turns in his/her exam. Students are responsible to know the University’s code of conduct found in the University Catalogue.

Accommodation for Disabilities:

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (DCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611. Please contact me if you intend to use DRES services for taking exams.

**READING SCHEDULE:**

**Note: Check Moodle for Additional Materials including some lecture content, study guides, power points.**

**Week 1**

**Read Sumney chap 1 (3-18).**

**Bible: *Genesis* chaps 1-3.**

**Week 2**

**Read Sumney chaps 2 &3 (19-45).**

**Bible: *Gen* 4-11, Exodus,** **Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.**

**Week 3**

**Read Sumney chap 4 (49-78).**

**Bible: Joshua, Judges.**

**Week 4**

**Read Sumney chap 5 (105-140).**

**Bible: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Chronicles.**

**Week 5**

**Read Sumney chaps 6 and 7.**

**Bible: Ezra, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the 12 Minor Prophets**

**Week 6**

**Read Sumney chaps 8 and 9.**

**Bible: Psalms and Song of Songs, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.**

**Midterm review**

**Week 7 #First Midterm**

**Read Sumney chap 10.**

**Bible: New Testament, *The Synoptic Gospels*, Mark, Matthew, Luke.**

**Week 8**

**Sumney chaps 11.**

**Gospel of John and Acts.**

**Week 9**

**Read Sumney chaps 12.**

**Bible: I Thessalonians, I Corinthians, II Cor., Galatians, Philippians, Philemon, Romans.**

**Week 10 (review for 2nd midterm)**

**Read Sumney chaps 13.**

**Bible: 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus**

**Week 11 # 2nd midterm**

**Read Sumney chap 14.**

**Bible: Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, Jude, 1,2, & 3 John**

**Week 12**

**Read Sumney chap 15.**

**Bible Revelation**

**Week 13**

**Read Sumney chap 16**

**Week 14**

**Read Sumney chap 17**

**Week 15**

**Course review and preparation for the final exam**

**Week 16**

**Final Exam**

***Why Consider a Religious Studies Major, Double Major, or Minor?***

Most students enjoy Religious Studies courses but wonder what they can do with a degree in Religious Studies. Here are some answers.

1. Go to graduate school, including Law School and Medical School.
2. Learn important skills sought after by employers.
3. Teach a variety of topics in the humanities and social sciences.
4. Human Resources, Social Service, Law Enforcement, Ministry.
5. Gain personal insight and knowledge to last a life time.

Come to my office hour and learn more about Religious Studies or contact the Department Chair, Dr. Rick Talbott at ex. 2741.