

San José State University
College of Humanities and the Arts: Spring 2021
Humanities 90, Bible History and Literature: Section 80

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Course Description

This is an introductory course on the Bible, a work that is scripture to millions of people around the world. Our main objective is to reconstruct the original context of this document, and to achieve that goal we cover the social settings of the Jews and Christians in light of the cultural and religious environments that influenced the writers of these texts. The literary genres used in the Bible are discussed in order to distinguish between literal and figurative uses of language. They vary and include: narrative, prophecy, poetry, wisdom, apocalypse, gospel, and epistle. Special attention is placed on the extra-canonical and contemporary literature that circulated during this same period. Discussions on Hebrew scripture are replete with references from rabbinic tradition, history, and archaeology and take into account the formation of the canon (including the Septuagint) through the Second Temple and Talmudic eras. The New Testament lectures likewise draw from patristic, apocryphal, and legendary materials from the Ante-Nicene period in order to attain a contemporary interpretation of the first-century text. The *Didache*, a catechism written in the middle of that century, contributes greatly to this study because it preserves the theology and culture of the early Jesus movement as well as the polemic between the synagogue and the church. This is one of several extra-biblical texts examined throughout the semester.

This course does not cover from the difficulties generally associated with studying sacred texts or from the attempts that some experts have made to answer questions about sources, authorship, audience, and date. One of our primary goals is to reach a balance, whenever possible, between what its writers assert and what historians, theologians, and scholars have concluded about this influential document. However, this is not a theology class, so students are admonished to leave their denominational and sectarian convictions at the door in order to approach this material without prejudice. At times the content may seem controversial, since we are dealing with texts that have been interpreted in various ways for hundreds of years. Schools of thought differ both in meaning and in application, and bearing in mind the number of acknowledged eras and reforms in the Jewish and Christian communities, please consider the diverse backgrounds of those around you before arguing a particular point of dogma or proclaiming a codified statement of faith. Your instructor does not promote the views of any religious organization; therefore, it is quite possible that expressed opinions may not reflect conventional or institutional tradition, especially concerning the origin and the transmission of the text and its original meaning.

Course Goals

This course qualifies for General Education Area C2 (Humanities and Arts-Letters). There are outlined learning objectives associated with such a class and every attempt is made to fulfill them. In order to accomplish the GE goals, after successfully completing the course students will be able to:

- recognize how significant religious documents reflect and illuminate enduring human concerns and the impact they made on Western civilization [correlation with course activity: quiz #1 and two-page typed double-spaced written reflection on the relationship between primary texts and contemporary commentary];
- respond to significant works by writing both research-based critical analyses and personal responses [final essay and two-page typed double-spaced personal written reflection summarizing the student's response to the meaning of the biblical texts studied in the class];
- write clearly and effectively and communicate the original context and meaning of these texts with others [quiz #2 shall focus on clear and effective writing, although it is also the case that all written materials submitted to the instructor are evaluated for good writing and effective communication];
- understand the learning process and one's responsibility and role in it as well as appreciate the diverse interpretations of others over the centuries [quiz #3 shall include a question that has imbedded in it the relationship between responsible personal and academic interpretations of the texts studied in the class];
- become a member of a metropolitan university community both socially and academically [quiz #4 shall include an imbedded question on the relationship between the student as an individual as well as a member of the SJSU learning community].

Learning Outcomes

Students shall study the religious traditions and literature of several cultures in order to develop an understanding and to appreciate the issues that often differentiate one society from another. They shall comprehend the significance of religious documents from various eras and learn their impact on human intellect and imagination. Students examine and analyze the context for these works as well as the literary process that led to their creation, transmission, preservation, and translation. The cultural environment for this literature is evaluated in order to determine the influence that it made on society as well as the individuals who interpreted and found meaning in its content. One of the main objectives of this course is to develop a tolerance for differing views that results from the study of religious documents. Other goals include the ability to:

- observe the significance of the historical and cultural contexts in which such works were created and interpreted,
- examine the interaction of analytical and creative processes in the production and perception of important works of the human intellect and imagination,
- differentiate between original and secondary interpretation of primary sources,
- appreciate the diverse interpretations and applications of religious documents,
- understand the influence that these works made on Western civilization and on modern politics and culture,
- recognize the role that the media has on interpreting foundational documents and mythologies, and
- describe this subject matter with others effectively and contextually.

Texts and Readings

The method of instruction for this course consists of lecture material and in-class discussion followed by readings assigned for each session. Content is often unique, and this makes it essential to attend class to get the most out of the semester. It is important that assignments are completed by the day appointed and that definitions are learned at the close of each lecture, since portions of each quiz are taken from this resource. *No late work will be accepted without previous arrangement in writing*, and all assignments are due in printed form on the dates indicated; no work will be accepted via email or by any other electronic format after it is due.

Any translation of the Bible may be used, but make every effort to avoid paraphrases such as the *Living Bible* and the *Message*. Nearly fifty English translations have been published over the past hundred years; a list of some of the best follows:

James Moffatt, *The Bible, A New Translation*, 1913; Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Bible, an American Translation*, 1937; *Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, 1946; J. B. Phillips, *The Bible in Modern English*, 1958; *New American Standard Bible*, 1960; *The New English Bible*, 1961; *The New International Version*, 1973.

If English is a second language, please obtain a biblical translation in your primary language. The instructor can inform you how to obtain a copy. Despite language barriers, under no condition may electronic devices of any kind be used during examinations, not even for translation work or spelling.

The readings include primary documents that are evaluated during the semester. These particular works were contemporary religious texts from periods of time covered in the lectures; they shed light on the Bible and assist students in determining the differences between history, legend, and tradition. Ten documents are chosen this semester: *Book of Jubilees*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Code of Hammarabi*, *Pirke Aboth*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Protevangelium*, *Didache*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, and *Passion of Perpetua*. Since these are primary works, it is important to understand their contribution to the development of Western religious dialogue. These are received via email.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed for success. It is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>. Furthermore, University policy F69-24 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf> states, "Students are expected to attend all meetings for the courses in which they are enrolled as they are responsible for material discussed therein and active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit to all class members." However, in-class assignments will not be offered after they are submitted, since the purpose of such work is to participate in group projects, and that cannot be accomplished alone.

The course outline for Bible History and Literature is divided into two sections: the Hebrew scripture (Jewish, often called the Old Testament) and the New Testament (Christian). The four quizzes cover the first half of the semester, while the final deals with the second half and thus is not comprehensive. A thorough prompt is provided for each quiz and the final (as well as all required written work) and is supplied at least one week in advance. Study groups are arranged for those who wish to take advantage of them. The instructor will show a copy of each quiz on the day the review is given to provide students the opportunity to see what is expected. *Make-up quizzes must be taken within one class period of their initial date; no exceptions are accepted without previous written approval*. Occasional pop quizzes may be anticipated during the semester; no preparation is needed for them.

A six-page term paper is required for this course, and it covers some aspect of the biblical text or the development of religious thought. Introductory reference materials for this assignment are provided

online, and a prompt is provided and discussed in class. It must be typed, double-spaced, and stapled; margins and font size must be conventional. The potential score for this essay is 100, and the removal of points may result from any or all of the following reasons: misspelling, poor grammar, brevity, use of previously submitted work, misunderstanding the writer's intent, overuse of the Internet, lack of documentation, or failure to respond to the questions prompted. Its due date is located on the syllabus schedule. *This assignment may not be submitted late without previous written approval or via email.*

Each student should be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each session. This includes selections from required texts, histories, and readings. In-class activities are collected and recorded, and feedback is provided when appropriate. All analysis should be non-sectarian in nature; that is, with the original intent of an author in mind rather than its institutional or modern explanation. The most beneficial aspect of these discussions is learning about the diversity of interpretation surrounding religious texts and fostering tolerance and understanding between differing points of view. For many students this is a fascinating lesson emphasized throughout the semester. Points missed due to absences from class cannot be made up in any form and no extra-credit is offered.

Course Grading Policy

An outline is provided on the course packet for each lecture as well as the list of the glossary terms relating to it, and a thorough prompt is supplied and discussed for each written assignment and examination. This is one of several ways a student is able to evaluate his or her progress and to estimate the amount of time needed to complete the weekly work. The grading process used for this class is based on a curve. The maximum points possible, as well as their percentages, is provided below; points are mainly drawn from three criteria: four quizzes, term paper, and a final examination.

Written feedback is provided on assignments submitted throughout the semester, and in-class discussions and detailed prompts are distributed in class. The estimated point breakdown is as follows:

Final Examination	200 points	40 %
Two Midterms	200 points	40 %
Term Paper	100 points	20 %

The total number of potential points for Bible History and Literature is 500. Even though the class is graded on a curve, the following point-spread may be anticipated as its base:

500-425	A
425-350	B
350-275	C
275-225	D
below 225	F

Grades of C- and lower do not meet GE requirements, so if low marks are achieved on a quiz or review, it is strongly encouraged that a student visit the instructor during office hours. He can suggest study methods and organizational techniques that might increase memory or enhance the learning process. Since this section meets twice a week, all work must be submitted separately and on its due date. No assignment will be accepted online, and each exam must be made up by the next session or it is forfeited.

Pandemic Changes

Since this course is delivered bi-weekly online, via Zoom, the usual discouraging of electronic devices in the classroom is temporarily suspended; in fact, there is a benefit, since each assignment is evaluated with greater detail. The format for each assignment requires access to Microsoft Word to utilize the standard pdf format for exchanges. No work is accepted using any other software, since all comments

are marked in red on all assignments submitted. Furthermore, this electronic form remains precisely how it was delivered. All work distributed, including the two finals, must be received on the date due, unless otherwise approved via email. It is encouraged that each student select a topic early in the semester, since the MLK Library will not be as available to students. The use of online sources will be discussed during the first week of school. Ultimately, attendance is required to remain current, for falling behind affects a student's overall grade. Two notices are sent, one via Zoom and another from the professor, regarding class time for each session as a reminder. Since office hours precede each class session, there is ample time to discuss this procedure. All the same, obtaining published sources for a full class of students is difficult, so it is advised that no one wait beyond the third session to select a suitable topic and to submit a viable thesis statement. There is no need, therefore, to meet on campus for any reason, and this assures the safety of each student.

University Policies

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and the responsibilities incumbent upon everyone participating in the institution. Students are encouraged to be familiar with SJSU's policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. See University Policy S90-5 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf>. More detailed information on a variety of related topics is available in the SJSU catalog at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html>. It is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not serve to address the issue, it is recommended to contact the Department Chair as a next step.

It is each student's responsibility to understand all policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawals, incompletes, classroom behavior, and other policies described in the catalog. Please read this resource thoroughly, and feel free to ask your instructor to clarify any ambiguity. Both office phone and email address are located on the front page of this syllabus. You are welcome to visit during office hours or by appointment for reasons germane to this class. Your library liaison will offer guidance concerning how to locate primary sources, reference materials, books, and articles. The Martin Luther King Library is an excellent resource for term papers; useful information about what it contains is located in the catalog and on the library website.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, and so on. Refer to the current semester's Catalog Policies at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the Academic Calendars webpage at http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars. The Late Drop Policy is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

University Policy S12-7, <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain the instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or to distribute the material in any form.

It is suggested that the green sheet include the instructor's process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by

class basis. In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.

Course material that the instructor developed is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor-generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit their own work, and any violation will not be tolerated. This course upholds the Academic Integrity Statement for this campus: "Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State and the University's Integrity Policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs." Academic integrity is essential to the mission of San Jose State University, since it ensures that each student is fairly evaluated. The complete policy on academic integrity may be found at <http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial%20affairs/index.html>.

Any attempt to obtain credit for academic work conducted through dishonesty, deception, or fraud will result in failure for that project and might require expulsion from the class. Violations include but are not limited to: 1) copying in part or in whole another's work, 2) submitting an assignment that was previously graded in another course (unless approval is first attained in writing), 3) presenting work simultaneously in two courses (unless approval is first attained in writing from both instructors), 4) the use of a surrogate to write papers or to take examinations on your behalf, and 5) borrowing from Internet sources without proper annotation.

Instructors have a moral obligation to expose all forms of cheating in order to promote fairness in the classroom. Plagiarism is defined at SJSU as, "the act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substances of another's work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one's own work, and representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as musical compositions, computer programs, photographs, painting, drawing, sculptures, or similar works as one's own."

American Disabilities Act

This course complies with the campus policy outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act: "If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see the instructor during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability." If a student uses the DRC in any way, please notify the instructor at least one week in advance so that proper arrangement may be made for scheduling at the student and professor's convenience so that lectures are not missed.

Canvas

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, assignment instructions, lecture content, and such can be found on my faculty web page at the Canvas Learning Management System course login website at: <http://sjsu.instructure.com>.

Date of Final

Tuesday, May 25, 9:45-12:00

ACADEMIC SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Texts and Readings	Midterms and Paper
01/27	Introduction		
02/01	Manuscripts and Texts		
02/03	Critics and Editions	Genesis 1-5	
02/08	Archaeological Discoveries	<i>Book of Jubilees</i>	
02/10	TANAKH	Genesis 6-20	
02/15	Creation of Universe	Genesis 21-40	
02/17	Adam and Eve	Genesis 41-60	
02/22	Jewish Origins		
02/24	The Deluge	Exodus; Numbers	Midterm 1: Adam to Abraham
03/01	Abraham	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>	
03/03	The Patriarchs	<i>Code of Hammurabi</i>	
03/08	Moses	Joshua; 1 and 2 Samuel	
03/10	Joshua-David	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	
03/15	The Prophets	Proverbs; Daniel; Ezra	
03/17	Wisdom and Apocalypse	<i>Pirke Aboth</i>	
03/22	Rabbinic Literature	Nehemiah; 1 Maccabees	Midterm: Moses to Rome
03/24	Hellenism		
	Spring Recess		
04/05	Roman Empire	<i>Protevangelium</i>	
04/07	Jesus of Nazareth	Luke	
04/12	Family of Jesus	James	
04/14	The Apostles	<i>Didache</i>	
04/19	The Didache	Acts	
04/21	Simon Peter	1 Peter	
04/26	The Gospels	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	
04/28	Paul of Tarsus	Romans	
05/03	Johannine Tradition	Gospel of John	
05/05	The Apocalypse	Apocalypse	
05/10	The Canon	<i>Acts of Paul and Thecla</i>	Term Paper Due
05/12	Patristic Writers		
05/17	Final Review		