

Bible as Literature

Dr. David Wilson-Okamura ENGL 3630 Spring 2019 East Carolina Univ.

“Every judge who judges a judgement of truth, true to the truth of the matter, causes the glory of God to dwell in Israel.” —Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 7a

- Jan. 7 M Introduction
- 9 W Esther (the whole book)
- 11 F Esth. 1–3
- 14 M Bring a typed list of three plausible keywords for Esther. (= 1 reading quiz)
- 16 W Esth. 4–7
- 18 F Esth. 8–10
- 21 M Martin Luther King Day**
- 23 W Genesis chs. 1–3 (Creation and Fall)
- 25 F Gen. 4–11 (After the Fall)
- 28 M Gen. 12–24 (Abraham)
- 30 W Gen. 25–36 (Isaac, Jacob, Esau)
- Feb. 1 F Gen. 37–50 (Joseph)
- 4 M Exodus 1–15 (Egypt)
- 6 W Ex. 16–23 (Law)
- 8 F Ecclesiastes 1–2 (the Gatherer)
- 11 M Ecc. 3–6 (Observations)
- 13 W Ecc. 7–12 (Counsel)
- 15 F Job 1–3 (God, Satan, Job)
- 18 M Job 4–14 (Job’s friends: first dialogue; there are two more, 15–21 and 22–31)
- 20 W Job 29–42 (Job and God)
- 22 F Isaiah 1–12 (Judah and Israel)
- 25 M Is. 24–27 (Apocalypse)
- 27 W Is. 28–35 (Redemption of Judah)
- Mar. 1 F Mark 1–2 (coming of Jesus)
- Spring Break**
- 11 M Mk. 3–5 (teaching and healing I)
- 13 W Mk. 6–8 (teaching and healing II)
- 15 F Mk. 9–10 (disciples)
- 18 M Mk. 11–13 (Jesus in Jerusalem)
- 20 W Mk. 14–16 (passion)
- 22 F John 1 (coming of the Word)
- 25 M Jn. 2–6 (ministry, disciples)
- 27 W Jn. 7–12 (Jesus in Jerusalem)
- 29 F Jn. 13–17 (farewell discourse, prayer)
- Apr. 1 M Jn. 18–21 (passion, post-resurrection appearances)
- 3 W Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Mary Magdalene
- 5 F Romans 1–5 (law and faith)
- 8 M Rom. 6–11 (history and theology)
- 10 W Rom. 12–16 (practical corollaries)
- 12 F Revelation 1–4 (prologue, letters to the seven churches)
- 15 M Rev. 5–11 (seven seals, seven trumpets)
- 17 W Rev. 12–16 (seven signs, seven plagues)
- 19 F State holiday**
- 22 M Rev. 17–20 (Babylon, the Lamb)
- 23 T Rev. 21–22 (new heavens and a new earth)
- 26 F Exam-period activity (11:00–1:30)

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- *The Jewish Study Bible*. Ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler. ISBN 0199978468.
- For the New Testament and Gnostic gospels, I will distribute texts online, which you will print, staple, and bring to class.

OFFICE HOURS, PHONE, EMAIL

Office: Bate 2137. Office phone: 252-328-6714

Office hours: MF 2:00–4:00, W 2:00–3:00. If you need to contact me on days when I don't have office hours, you can phone me at home. Google knows my number, but please: no calls after 9 p.m.

Email: david@virgil.org. I use email every day, but instead of exchanging messages, let's have a conversation during office hours.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

If you leave class after taking a reading quiz, the quiz will come back to you ungraded. Participation in class discussion is encouraged but not required: I will invite you to comment, but won't insist.

REQUIREMENTS

Quizzes (25%). Reading quizzes are based on the reading for that day in the syllabus. Each quiz is worth 1% and there will be 28 quizzes. ~~There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes.~~ However, because there are three extra quizzes (#26, #27, and #28), you can miss two quizzes without harming your grade. Think of these extra points as free passes: you can use them to go to the beach, or you can use them when you're sick. Because this system is based on numbers, you don't need to explain why you missed class; the math will take care of it automatically. Of course, you'll still be responsible for the material discussed in class. But once you've used the three free passes, they're gone. My advice is to save them for when you're sick or need to care for a relative.

Tutorial essays (75%). There are two essays in this class: one on the Hebrew Bible and one on the New Testament. Each essay will be 1,500–1,800 words long and delivered to me during office hours, where I will read your finished paper and we will discuss it for about twenty minutes. So that I can spend time with everyone in the class, you will need to make an appointment; a schedule will be posted on my office door where you can write in your name. If you miss your appointment, you will need to sign up for another one, assuming there are free slots. If there are no openings left (and that may happen with a class of this size), you will not be able to complete the assignment. The last appointment for the first essay will be March 1. The last appointment for the second essay will be April 23.

For the first essay, choose a short book from the Hebrew Bible, identify a repeated word, phrase, or image, and formulate a thesis about what it means in the book as a whole. Don't waste space on summary: instead, give evidence and make arguments. For the second essay, do the same thing for a book of the New Testament.

- All papers should be typed.
- The word *Bible* is capitalized, but not the word *biblical*.
- Pages should be (a) stapled and (b) numbered by computer. If you don't know how to use your word processor's page numbering function, ask the help staff at the computer lab.
- First impressions count; so do spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you have trouble with these, I recommend *Grammar in Plain English* by Harriet Diamond and Phyllis Dutwin.
- Double-space. Use 12 point Times Roman.
- When you're done, do a word count and write the result on the first page of your paper. Word counts should not include long quotations.

Using secondary sources. By this time, you know that random web pages are not considered a reliable or authoritative source – so don't use them. Your main – in most cases, only – sources for this class should be (a) the text of the Bible itself and (b) the linguistic tools that will be introduced in class.

Essays will be graded according to the following characteristics:

| Characteristics of an F Paper | Characteristics of a D Paper | Characteristics of a C Paper | Characteristics of a B Paper | Characteristics of an A Paper |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The points made are valid but superficial: you could have written this paper without reading the actual text. | The points made are valid but superficial. There's nothing here that wouldn't occur to someone reading the text for the very first time. | Content is organized, and consists of points that wouldn't occur to a casual reader. | Fresh observations are organized to form a larger argument. | Anticipates objections, acknowledges limitations. |
| If your college admissions essay had been written like this, you would not have been accepted to ECU. | Numerous errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation distract from content; reads like a first draft. | Essay is written in complete sentences. Paragraphs start abruptly; transition sentences are the fix. | First paragraph is an introduction to the paper as a whole. Body paragraphs form a sequence. | The writing is finely crafted, elegant as well as clean. |
| No use of linguistic tools introduced in class. (The most important tools are the concordance and lexicon, both accessible through BlueLetterBible.org .) | No use of linguistic tools introduced in class. | Some use of linguistic tools introduced in class. An effort has been made, but the results aren't integrated into the paper's larger argument. | Linguistic analysis contributes to the larger argument; the essay would be different, as well as shorter, without it. | Linguistic analysis is integral to the larger argument. How things are said in the text matters as much as what happens. |
| No word count or too short. | No word count or too short. | Word count >= assigned length. | Word count >= assigned length. | Word count >= assigned length. |

Midterm and Final Exams. There will be no midterm or final exams in this course. However, all work for this course must be completed on or before the last day of class.

Please turn off your **cell phone ringer** before class begins. **Smart phones, laptops, and tablets** might be helpful in some courses, but not this one: please put them out of sight before class. If I need to remind you, it may affect your grade. If you need to monitor your phone during class – for example, because a relative is ill or a spouse is pregnant – please tell me about it privately before class begins.

PLAGIARISM

If you plagiarize another person's words or ideas, expect an F for the course. All plagiarism will be reported to the university. If you have questions about plagiarism, ask them before the assignment is due. If versions become an issue, the version that was submitted for a grade will be considered final.

ACCOMMODATIONS

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (Voice/TTY 252-737-1016).

GRADING SCALE

A = 94–100, A- = 90–93, B+ = 87–89, B = 84–86, B- = 80–83, C+ = 77–79, C = 74–76, C- = 70–73, D+ = 67–69, D = 64–66, D- = 60–63, F = 0–59. Decimals >= .5 are rounded up.

EMERGENCIES, UNIV. CLOSURES, CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION

If classes are postponed for any reason, I will give instructions by email. If email is not available, follow the schedule of readings in the syllabus until email service is restored.

HUMANITIES COMPETENCY

The following language is uniform for all Humanities Competency (HUC) courses:

Courses in the Humanities and in interdisciplinary areas linked to subjects in the humanities challenge students to critically examine their beliefs and the beliefs of others about what can broadly be called “human existence” or referred to as “what it is to exist as a human being.” Humanities courses address a range of issues that ancient texts show have captured people’s attention for over 3000 years. These problems include matters of value, and the courses that address them require students to critically assess diverse understandings of life’s aesthetic, ethical and moral dimensions. Humanities courses require students to learn one or more methods of critical analysis and to understand the value of knowledge both for its own sake and for its application. The knowledge gained by taking courses in the Humanities contributes to each student’s understanding of how to choose a life worth living.

The following program learning outcomes define the Humanities Competency. Students who have completed the General Education Humanities requirement can:

1. Distinguish artistic, literary, philosophical, or religious creations from other types of work and describe how they address enduring human concerns and the human condition.
2. Apply discipline-specific criteria and evaluate the significance of specific literary, artistic, philosophical or religious works to enduring human concerns and the human condition.
3. Apply discipline-specific knowledge in the humanities to contrast their understanding with that of others of the significance of specific artistic, literary, philosophical or religious works to enduring human concerns and the human condition.

These outcomes are implemented in ENGL 3630 as follows. Students who have successfully completed this course are able to:

1. Distinguish narrative treatments (such as that in Job) of enduring human problems (such as why bad things happen to good people) from philosophic treatments of the same issues. (HUC1)
2. Apply the methods of literary analysis to interpret symbolic texts such as Revelation, a book that has spoken to different audiences in different ways since it was written. (HUC2)
3. Recognize the Hebrew Bible as a literary text with its own history of interpretation, distinct from the Christian Old Testament. (HUC3)
4. Identify each of the Bible’s major genres.
5. Analyze books of the Bible as artistic wholes.