

Bible as Literature

Dr. David Wilson-Okamura ENGL 3630 Spring 2017 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. 9	M	Cancelled for snow	
11	W	Introduction	
13	F	Genesis chs. 1–3 (Creation and Fall)	
16	M	Martin Luther King Day	
18	W	Gen. 4–11 (After the Fall)	
20	F	Gen. 12–24 (Abraham)	
23	M	Gen. 25–36 (Isaac, Jacob, Esau)	
25	W	Library research session	
27	F	Gen. 37–50 (Joseph)	
30	M	Exodus 1–15 (Egypt)	
Feb. 1	W	Ex. 16–23 (Law)	
3	F	1 Samuel 15–30 (rise of David)	
6	M	1 Samuel 31; 2 Samuel 1–9 (reign of David)	
8	W	2 Samuel 10–24 (rebellion against David)	
10	F	Ecclesiastes 1–2 (the Gatherer)	
13	M	Ecc. 3–6 (Observations)	
15	W	Ecc. 7–12 (Counsel)	
17	F	Job 1–3 (God, Satan, Job)	
20	M	Job 4–14 (Job’s friends: first dialogue; there are two more, 15–21 and 22–31)	
22	W	Job 29–42 (Job and God)	
24	F	Isaiah 1–12 (Judah and Israel)	
27	M	Is. 24–27 (Apocalypse)	
Mar. 1	W	Is. 28–35 (Redemption of Judah)	
3	F	Mark 1–2 (coming of Jesus)	
5–12		Spring Break	
13	M	Mk. 3–5 (teaching and healing I)	
15	W	Mk. 6–8 (teaching and healing II)	
17	F	Mk. 9–10 (disciples)	
20	M	Mk. 11–13 (Jesus in Jerusalem)	
22	W	Mk. 14–16 (passion)	
24	F	John 1 (coming of the Word)	
27	M	Jn. 2–6 (ministry, disciples)	
29	W	Jn. 7–12 (Jesus in Jerusalem)	
31	F	Jn. 13–17 (farewell discourse, prayer)	
Apr. 3	M	Jn. 18–21 (passion, post-resurrection appearances)	
5	W	Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Mary Magdalene	
7	F	Romans 1–5 (law and faith)	
10	M	Rom. 6–11 (history and theology)	
12	W	Rom. 12–16 (practical corollaries)	
14	F	State holiday	
17	M	Revelation 1–4 (prologue, letters to the seven churches)	
19	W	Rev. 5–11 (seven seals, seven trumpets)	
21	F	Rev. 12–16 (seven signs, seven plagues)	
24	M	Rev. 17–20 (Babylon, the Lamb)	
25	T	Rev. 21–22 (new heavens and a new earth)	
Apr. 28	F	Exam-period activity (8:00–10:30 am)	

Aims

1. To quicken your powers of observation, inquiry, and argument by study, conversation, and continual practice.
2. To survey the entire Bible by studying examples of every genre.
3. To interpret individual books of the Bible as artistic wholes.

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: MWF 2:30–4:20 and by appointment. If you need to contact me on days when I don't have office hours, you can call me at home. My number is listed, but please: no phone calls after 9 p.m.

Email: david@virgil.org. But instead of exchanging emails, let's have a conversation during office hours.

REQUIREMENTS

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, Apr. 25.

Quizzes (25%). Reading quizzes are based on the reading for that day in the syllabus. Each quiz is worth 1% and there will be 27 quizzes. *There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes.* However, because there are two extra quizzes (#26 and #27), you can miss two quizzes without harming your grade. Think of them 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 two 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 paper will be March 3. All work for this course must be completed on or before the last day of class, Apr. 25.

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 short 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 count 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 on a ten-point scale 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.	The paper's 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, but paragraphs start abruptly; transition sentences are the fix.	First paragraph is an introduction to the paper as a whole. Paragraphs are sequenced to form an argument.	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.	Token use of linguistic tools introduced in class. An effort has been made, but the results aren't integrated into the paper's argument.	Linguistic analysis forms part of the larger argument; the essay would be different, as well as shorter, without it.	Linguistic analysis forms part of the larger argument; the essay would be different, as well as shorter, without it.
No word count or too short.	No word count or too short.	Word count >= assigned length.	Word count >= assigned length.	Word count >= assigned length.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas in such a way that they seem your own. Give credit where credit is due; otherwise, you are cheating. If you plagiarize, expect an F for the course. All plagiarism will be reported to the university, and additional sanctions may be imposed. If you have questions about plagiarism, ask them before the paper is due. Finally, be sure that the paper you do hand in is your final draft. If it's plagiarized, and you explain that you gave me "the wrong draft," I will feel sorry for both of us, but you will still get an F for the course. So check before you turn something in and make sure it really is your final draft. Better yet, avoid plagiarism in all of your drafts.

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).

EMERGENCIES, UNIVERSITY 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.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The requirements of this course are impossible to fulfill if you don't attend class. But I don't take roll or require that students participate in class discussion. I might invite you to comment, but I won't insist.

Please don't read, send, or monitor **text messages** in class. Please do turn off your **cell phone ringer** before class begins. **Laptops and tablets** might be helpful in some courses, but not this one; please keep them shut during class.