

Who Wrote the Bible? RLGS 251
Alfred University Fall 2012

Class meetings: Tue., Wed., Thu., Fri. 11:20 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.
421 Science Center

Professor: Dr. Wakoh Shannon Hickey

Office: 2nd floor, Kanakadea Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1- 2 p.m.; Wednesdays, 3-5 p.m.; Fridays, 9-10 a.m.

Please note: The worst time to catch me is immediately before class, *especially* if you have significant questions or concerns, because I will be gathering materials for class. Usually I can talk briefly after class, and if you visit me during office hours or make an appointment, I will be able to give you the undivided attention you deserve!

Phone: 607-871-2704
Email address: wakoh@alfred.edu or hickey@alfred.edu

OVERVIEW

The Bible is probably the single most widely read book on earth; billions of people consider some or all of it sacred. Who wrote and edited it? When? How? Why? This course will explore those questions. We will look at the political, social, and cultural background of several books of the Bible, and at the processes by which they were composed and eventually accepted as scripture. We will read the Torah/Pentateuch and some other portions of the Hebrew scriptures/Old Testament, the four Gospels of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and some letters of Paul. We will consider various interpretations of these texts, and ask how they might be relevant to us today.

Why This Course Matters

Jews, Christians, and Muslims — about half the world's population — regard some or all of the Bible to be holy scripture. It has been translated into thousands of languages. In the United States, more copies of the Bible are sold than any other book. Films, literature, and political speeches are full of references to Bible stories. People sometimes fight and even kill over how to interpret particular passages. To be a culturally literate American, it is necessary to be familiar with its contents. But the Bible did not simply drop, fully formed, from Heaven; all Bibles, whether Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, are collections of books that were produced by particular communities, in particular times and places, for particular reasons. Understanding these can help us to appreciate the Bible in a more sophisticated way. It can also help us think more deeply and carefully about the Big Issues Bible stories address: love, death, power, violence, morality, sex, family, community, the divine, and the meaning of life.

Methods

We will read several books of the Bible along with textbooks to aid our understanding. Class meetings will include some lectures but mostly discussions, as well as videos, audio recordings, writing assignments, and quizzes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to do the following:

Level 1, Remembering:

- Name the books of the Pentateuch and the four canonical Gospels.
- Describe the genres and organization of the Hebrew scriptures and New Testament.
- Pass short quizzes on the contents of the textbooks we use in class.

Level 2, Understanding:

- Describe the general themes and contents of the biblical texts we study.
- Explain the religious, political, and social background of various books of the Bible, and how they influenced the books' composition.

Level 3, Applying:

- Explain the Documentary Hypothesis and how it applies to the Torah and the Gospels.

Level 4, Analyzing:

- Develop their own interpretations of particular Biblical passages, and explain their relevance to people today.

Level 5, Evaluating:

- Explain why others' interpretations of Biblical passages are persuasive or not.

GRADING:

- 15 *short* quizzes on the textbooks we use, one per week. (Questions will be multiple choice, true-false, and/or fill-in-the-blank, 3-5 questions per textbook chapter.) Practice quizzes are available online. (30 percent of final grade.)
- Three short papers: one on the Torah, one on Jonah & Job, and one on the Gospels (15 percent each, 45 percent of final grade). All papers must be submitted to www.turnitin.com; the class ID is 5415331; the password will be provided in class. The rubric for grading writing is available on BlackBoard.

The papers on the Torah and the Gospels (5-7 typed, double-spaced pages) should address the following questions:

- 1) Explain how the Documentary Hypothesis explains the composition of a particular Biblical text or group of texts (texts to be announced).

2) Explain how the texts were responses to religious, political, and social conditions at the time they were composed. What evidence in the texts themselves and outside the texts help us to understand the circumstances and purposes of the texts?

3) Choose a passage from one of the texts we have studied, review at least three approved commentaries on the passage, explain why those interpretations are persuasive to you or not, and explain and defend your own interpretation.

Approved commentaries include the *New Interpreter's Bible*, the *Women's Bible Commentary*, the *Global Bible Commentary*, and *True to Our Native Land* (an African American commentary on just the New Testament). All of these will be on reserve in Herrick Library. You may also propose others, but must receive instructor approval.

The Jonah/Job paper (3-5 typed, double-spaced pages) should begin with a description of how the stories of Jonah and Job differ from the Deuteronomistic History in explaining why bad things happen to people. Then it should discuss why *you* think bad things happen, especially to good people.

- Participation (25 percent of final grade). This includes arriving in class prepared (which means that you have done the reading for the day, thought about it, and developed preliminary responses to the Review Questions in the textbooks and developed two or three questions of your own, preferably at Learning Level 3 or higher. It also includes actively participating in class conversations, and writing a final assessment.

If you are unable to do all the reading for a given class, focus on the textbook assignments. You do not need to memorize the details of each chapter, but you should have taken notes on the major points of each chapter. You will be quizzed on major points, not minor details. You should at least skim the Bible texts discussed in each chapter, to get an overall sense of them; we will focus on specific passages in class.

Grading Scales

Excellent		Good			Adequate			Poor	
A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D
94-100	90-94	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66
10	9.5	9	8.5	8	7.5	7	6.5	6	5.5
5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	.5
3				2			1		

COURSE POLICIES

Academic or Other Difficulties:

If you are having academic or personal difficulties that affect your schoolwork, and/or you need information about support services available on campus, please see the professor right away.

PLEASE DON'T HIDE and DON'T WAIT. Help is available.

Disability:

If you have a disability and need an accommodation to help you succeed in class, please let the professor know right away. All such information will be treated as confidential.

A Note from Special Academic Services re: Students with Disabilities:

Alfred University is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you wish to request accommodations, please contact Dr. Aubrey Elmore at the Office of Special Academic Services in Crandall Hall, or call (607) 871-2148. Many accommodations require early planning; therefore requests should be made as early as possible. All requests will be reviewed timely.

Tutor Services/Requests:

The office of Special Academic Services offers individual and group tutoring. Please contact Beth Niles at (607) 871-2148 for more information. Also, contact the instructor for additional support.

Writing Help:

Whether you want help getting started on a writing assignment or need help with organizing and editing along the way, the Writing Center offers individual assistance at every stage. To make an appointment, go to <http://my.alfred.edu/writing> and click on the link "Sign Up Here."

Religious Concerns:

Students who need to miss class in order to participate in the religious observances of their own traditions may do so, but they must make arrangements with the professor *in advance*.

Athletes:

Students who must miss class to participate in athletic events must notify the professor at the beginning of the semester *and* by e-mail at least one week before each class to be missed, and must make arrangements to get notes from class, contribute to class teamwork, and/or submit assignments timely. The one-week requirement will be waived in case of unscheduled playoffs, but you should let the professor know as soon as possible of an expected absence.

Lateness and Absences:

You are expected to arrive in class on time and attend all class meetings. If unforeseen circumstances will make you late, please make every effort to notify the professor before class, or ask a fellow student to do so. If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, you will be marked late, and every two late arrivals will count as the equivalent of an unexcused absence.

After the first week of class, you will be allowed **two** unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will reduce your final grade by one increment, e.g., from a B+ to a B. *It is possible to do all the work and still fail the course because of unexcused absences.* Even if you have straight As on all assignments, if you accumulate 12 unexcused absences, you will fail the course automatically. The lower the grades on your assignments, the lower the number of unexcused absences that will produce a failing grade.

If you know in advance that you must miss a class because of a schedule conflict, notify the professor by phone or e-mail at least 48 hours in advance. Prearranged absences will not affect your grade (but you should get notes from a classmate, and complete assignments timely). If you are too ill to attend class, notify the professor *no later than 9 a.m. the same day*. If you miss more than three consecutive days of class because of illness, you will be asked to provide medical documentation.

Mobile Phones and Pagers:

Turn them off before class begins. If use your phone during class, the professor will collect and hold it until the end of class. If this occurs more than once you will be asked to leave class and will receive an unexcused absence for the day.

Reading Schedule:

Complete the assigned readings *before* we begin discussing them in class. Additional course materials will be available on BlackBoard.

Conduct/Misconduct:

The classroom must be a productive environment for everyone present. Participants hold a variety of religious, moral, and political beliefs. In college, as in society, a functioning community depends upon our ability to talk about such differences respectfully. You are encouraged to question or disagree with one another, but to do so politely. Insulting remarks about other's religious/moral/political beliefs or practices are not acceptable.

Because personal integrity is fundamental to both good scholarship and to good citizenship, you are also expected to uphold the university's standards for academic and personal integrity, as expressed in the Honor Code, the Student Code of Conduct, and the Academic Dishonesty policy. Cheating, plagiarism, or harassment will not be tolerated.

A violation of the Academic Dishonesty policy will result in a failing grade on the assignment and will be reported formally, in writing, to your dean and the University Provost. This will become part of your permanent academic record (unless you appeal and are exonerated by a Judicial Council). Two violations *in this course* will result in automatic failure of the course. If your dean and the provost receive two formal, written reports of academic dishonesty (from one or more instructors), you will be dismissed from the university. *You are expected to inform yourself about and abide by school policies regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, and harassment*. If you have questions about these policies, ask the professor right away.

Alfred's Student Code of Conduct may be viewed here:

http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/student_policies.code_of_conduct_0708.cfm

Alfred's policy on Academic Dishonesty may be viewed here:

http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/academic_policies.academic_regulation_ug.cfm#700

Other campus policies and resources can be found here:

<http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/policies.menu.cfm>

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2d edition by Michael Coogan (Oxford University Press)
- *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 3d edition (available late September), by Bart Ehrman (Oxford University Press)
- *The Bible with Sources Revealed* by Richard Elliott Friedman (HarperOne).
Note: this book includes just the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures (Tanakh or Old Testament), and you will need this particular edition, which is unique.

We also will be reading other parts of the Tanakh/Old Testament. For these, you can use one of the Bibles in Herrick Library (the *HarperCollins Study Bible* will be on reserve), or read them online. The preferred translations are the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) version or the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

The JPS version of the Tanakh is available at:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Bible/jpstoc.html>

- *The New Testament, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*. A pocket version is available from Baker Publishing (the AU Bookstore has copies or can order them). Other recommended NRSV editions are *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* and *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, both of which are available in the AU Bookstore, as well. See below for information about online and PDF versions.

The entire NRSV Bible is available online at <http://bible.oremus.org>, and/or it can be downloaded as a PDF file from various sites, which you can find by Googling: Bible NRSV PDF.

Reminder:

If you're having difficulty with any part of the course, please meet with the professor right away. She'll be glad to help!

RLGS 251 Who Wrote the Bible? Reading Assignments & Tests Fall 2012

CLASS MEETS Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 11:20 a.m.-12:10 p.m

The reading assignment listed on each day is preparation for the NEXT day's class.

Unannounced short quizzes will be given weekly on assigned chapters of the textbooks.

If you cannot complete all the reading before class, focus on the textbook chapters!

Week 1 August 27-31 Introductions, Syllabus

Tuesday: Buy Coogan textbook and *Bible with Sources Revealed*, read Coogan Ch. 1

Wednesday: Read Coogan Ch. 2.

Pages 11-12 and from the bottom of p. 18 to 24 are highest priority.

Thursday: Read *Bible with Sources Revealed* Introduction, Skim pp. 7-31.

Friday-Monday: Read Coogan Ch. 3, Genesis 1-3

Week 2 September 3-7 Genesis

Tuesday: Coogan Ch. 4, Genesis 4-11

Wednesday: Coogan Ch. 5, Genesis 12-28

Thursday: Genesis 29-50

Friday-Monday: Coogan Ch. 6, Exodus 1-15

***Heads up:* Start reviewing commentaries for first short paper on Hebrew Bible.**

Week 3 September 10-14 Exodus

Tuesday: Coogan Ch. 7, Exodus 16-24

Wednesday: Coogan Ch. 8 to p. 117, Exodus 25-31

Thursday: Coogan p. 117-122, Exodus 31-40

Friday-Monday: Coogan p. 123-125, skim Leviticus 1-10

***Heads up:* Draft short paper on Hebrew Bible, take it to the Writing Center**

Week 4 September 17-21 Leviticus, Numbers

Tuesday: Coogan p. 125-128, skim Leviticus 11-16

Wednesday: Coogan p. 128-133, skim Leviticus 17-26

Thursday: Coogan Ch. 9 to p. 140, Numbers 1-10

Friday-Monday: Coogan Ch. 9 p. 141-143, Numbers 11-20

***Heads up:* Revise and polish short paper on Hebrew Bible**

Week 5 September 24-28 Numbers, Deuteronomy

Tuesday: Coogan Ch. 9 p. 143-146, Numbers 21-25

Wednesday: Coogan Ch. 9 p. 146-149, Numbers 26-34

Thursday: Coogan Ch. 10, Deuteronomy 1-11

Friday-Monday: Skim Deuteronomy 12-26, read Deuteronomy 27-34

***Heads up:* Paper due next Tuesday**

RLGS 251 Who Wrote the Bible? Reading Assignments & Tests Fall 2012

Week 6 October 1-5 Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges

Tuesday: **Short Paper on Hebrew Bible Due.** Coogan Ch. 11
Wednesday: Joshua (online or in library)
Thursday: Coogan Ch. 12, skim Judges 1-5, 13-16, 19-21 (online or in library)
Friday-Monday: Coogan Ch. 13, skim 1 Samuel (online or in library)

Week 7 October 8-12 Monarchy, Exiles

Tuesday: Coogan Ch. 14, skim 2 Samuel (online or in library)
Wednesday: Coogan Ch. 15, 1 Kings 1-11 (online or in library)
Thursday: Coogan Ch. 16 and pp. 297-298
Friday-Tuesday: Coogan Ch. 25 p. 387-396, 402-403, Jonah (handout)

Week 8 October 15-19 Jonah & Job, New Testament World

Tuesday: **Fall Break, No Class**
Wednesday: Ehrman Ch. 1
Thursday: Ehrman Chs. 2, 3
Friday-Monday: Ehrman Ch. 4

***Heads up:* Draft Jonah/Job paper, take to Writing Center**

Week 9 October 22-26 Synoptic Problem, Mark

Tuesday: Ehrman Ch. 5
Wednesday: Mark 1-9
Thursday: Mark 10-16
Friday-Monday: Ehrman Ch. 6, skim Q

***Heads up:* Revise & Polish Jonah/Job paper, due next Tuesday!**

Week 10 Oct. 29-Nov. 2 Q, Matthew

Tuesday: **Jonah/Job paper due!** Matthew 1-8
Wednesday: Matthew 10-18
Thursday: Matthew 19-28
Friday-Monday: Ehrman Ch. 7, Luke 1-8

***Heads up:* Start reviewing commentaries for Gospels paper**

Week 11 November 5-9 Luke

Tuesday: Luke 9-16
Wednesday: Luke 17-24
Thursday:
Friday-Monday: Ehrman Ch. 8, John 1-10

***Heads up:* Draft Gospels paper, take to Writing Center**

RLGS 251 Who Wrote the Bible? Reading Assignments & Tests Fall 2012

Week 12 November 12-16 John

Tuesday: John 11-21
Wednesday: Ehrman Ch. 9
Thursday: Ehrman Ch. 10
Friday-Monday: Ehrman Ch. 11, skim Acts

***Heads up:* Revise/polish Gospels paper**

Week 13 November 19-23 NO CLASS: Happy Thanksgiving!

Heads up: Gospels paper due next Tuesday!

Week 14 November 26-30 Acts, Paul

Tuesday: **Gospels paper due!**
Wednesday: Ehrman Chs. 12, 13, skim 1 Thessalonians
Thursday: Ehrman Ch. 15 pp. 233-241, Galatians
Friday-Monday: Skim Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Mary, Infancy Gospel of Thomas
(handout)

Week 15 December 2-7 Non-Canonical Gospels, Constantine

***Heads up:* Final Assessment due next week!**