



Nazarene Theological Seminary

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BIB515 – Reading the Biblical Story (Online) Fall, 2011

Essential Information

Please refer to the following resources for information essential for the successful completion of courses and degree programs at Nazarene Theological Seminary. Links to these resources are available in the Essential Information section at <http://support.nts.edu>.

- NTS Mission Statement & Purpose Degree Objectives
- Tips for online learning success
- NTS library services
- NTS textbook information
- Online technical requirements and Moodle support information
- NTS Student Handbook including statements on quality of work, plagiarism, and academic probation
- *Handbook for Inclusive Language*

Instructor Information

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Catalog Description

An exploration of the historical, geographical, literary, and theological foundations for reading the Bible missionally in both faith and academic contexts. Passing a Bible Content Exam is required for successful completion of this course.

Course Narrative & Rationale

Reading the Scriptures is one of the most formative and fundamental practices of the Christian faith. The strategies that guide our reading represent some of the most important decisions we make in the face of the biblical text. This course addresses what the Bible is, by considering the history of its development; issues of its literary structures; where the Bible comes from in terms of its historical and geographical contexts; and what the Bible says, both in terms of its discrete content and of its theological themes. Together, we will reflect on differences and commonalities in our reading of the Bible in the life of the Church, and our reading in the context of the Academy. The purpose of the course is for the student to become more aware of, and equipped for, reading the Bible with strategies that include literary, historical, and theological perspectives. Certainly the full Bible curriculum at NTS is designed to accomplish the same thing. In that regard this course is introductory to matters that will be further developed in other courses in the curriculum, though the degree of development will vary.

Degree Objectives Addressed in This Course

This course addresses the following NTS Degree Program Objectives:

- M.Div. Objective 2: The articulation of the knowledge of God through prayerful, scholarly study and a deepening understanding of the Christian Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
- MACFD Objective 1: Appropriate and enhance the student's ecclesial understanding of the Word of God, the heritage of the faith, the doctrines of the church, and the fellowship of believers, sufficient to enable him or her to deepen a personal commitment to God and the Church and to inform a passionate, vital, and redemptive ministry.
- MAICS Objective 4: Graduates will articulate, communicate, and contextualize the essential affirmations of the Christian faith in a cross-cultural setting.
- M.A. (TS) General Academic Track Objective 1: Students will develop a comprehensive knowledge of the major theological disciplines and their interrelationships.

Course Outcomes

As purposed and designed at NTS, the essence of online learning is its communitarian and collaborative, rather than an individualistic, nature and structure. Especially is this true in the principal set of coursework requirements, the essentially daily postings to, and readings in, the forums in the Moodle course. We may characterize our work as a sustained conversation on the reading of the course texts, of other pertinent resources, and of each other other's contributions. Given this (almost) total commitment of the online course design to the collaborative interactivity of learning, it is not possible to assign discrete outcomes to discrete "assignments." Still, we may think in cumulative terms; at the conclusion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Describe the major steps by which the Bible came into its present form;
2. Identify the translation philosophies used in major contemporary English versions of the Bible;
3. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the translation philosophies in use;
4. Describe the general literary structure and story line of both the Old and the New Testaments;
5. Identify each biblical book's major genre(s) and each genre's general characteristics;
6. Describe the historical context of each major section of the Bible;
7. Identify the chief persons, places, events, dates, and texts of the Bible;
8. Describe the major theological themes of both the Old Testament and the New Testament;
9. Reflect on how literary structures, historical and geographical contexts, and theological perspectives impact one's reading of Scripture.

Church of the Nazarene COSAC Competencies

In the same manner as the Course Outcomes above, the following COTN COSAC competencies are addressed in and by this course:

- CN 1** Ability to identify the literary structure and the main story line of the Old Testament
- CN 2** Ability to identify the books of the Old Testament by genre
- CN 3** Ability to identify the basic thrust of each major section of the Old Testament
- CN 4** Ability to identify the main characters of the Old Testament and their role in the story
- CN 5** Ability to describe the historical context of the major sections of the Old Testament
- CN 6** Ability to order chronologically the main events and persons of the Old Testament
- CN 7** Ability to describe the major theological concepts of the Old Testament
- CN 8** Ability to identify the literary structure of the New Testament
- CN 9** Ability to identify the genre(s) and basic thrust of each New Testament book
- CN 10** Ability to summarize the significant life events of Jesus and of Paul
- CN 11** Ability to identify the significant elements in the message of Jesus and of Paul
- CN 12** Ability to describe the impact of the historical background of the New Testament on the message of Jesus and of Paul

- CN 13** Ability to order chronologically the significant events and persons of the New Testament
CN 14 Ability to identify and describe the major theological concepts of the New Testament
CN 15 Ability to describe how the Bible came into being up to contemporary translations

Required Texts & Course Materials

The Bible. If you do not read the Hebrew and Greek texts, it is important in all Bible classes at NTS that you use an “essentially literal” translation of the Bible (e.g., NRSV, NASB, ESV), rather than a “dynamic equivalence” translation (e.g., NIV, TNIV, NLT). You also should have an “essentially literal” translation of the Apocrypha (e.g., some editions of NRSV and RSV).

Bartholomew, Craig G. and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004. ISBN 978-0-8010-2746-8.

Coogan, Michael D., ed. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. ISBN 978-0-1951-3937-2 (2001, paper).

Dauphinais, Michael and Levering, Matthew. *Holy People, Holy Land: A Theological Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press (Baker), 2005. ISBN 978-1-58743-123-4.

Lawrence, Paul, ed. *The IVP Atlas of Bible History*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8308-2452-6.

Ryken, Leland. *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible* (2nd Ed.). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992. ISBN 978-0-8010-7769-2.

Course Outline

(Not a chronological course outline; rather, one of several possible logical course outlines.)

Prolegomena: The Significance of Reading the Bible

- I. What Do We Read?
 - A. The Theology of Scriptural Inspiration and Authority
 - B. What Is This Book? The History of How the Bible Came to Be
 - C. Biblical Languages and Bible Translation(s)
- II. “Where” and “When” Do We Read? The Bible in Its Geographical and Historical Contexts
 - A. The Geography of the Bible
 - B. The Historical Contexts of the Bible
 - C. The Significance of the Geographical and Historical “Gaps” between the Bible and the Present Reader(s)
- III. How Do We Read? The Bible as Literature
 - A. Macro-Literary Structures of the Bible
 - B. The Story Line(s) of the Two Testaments
 - C. Literary Conventions of the Bible
- IV. How Do We Read? The Bible as Theology and Theological Source
 - A. Approaches to Theological Reading of Scripture
 - B. The Drama of Scripture - Finding Our Place
 - C. Theological Themes in the Old and New Testaments

Course Assignments & Requirements

1. **Participation in Moodle Forums.** As participation in the Moodle forums is by far the largest measurable component of our coursework, it will be calculated as one hundred percent (100%) of the course grade; however, see the provisos under 2. Bible Content Exam, below. (All Course Outcomes; all COTN COSAC Competencies listed above)

Applying/adapting Seminary-wide protocols for work in the Moodle Discussion Forums of online courses, this course will be conducted in accord with the following *minimum* requirements:

- Five quality posts in a week is the minimum standard of participation in Forums.
- Posting for each week may begin on the Sunday; it will end at 11:55 p.m. (Central Time, U.S.A.) on the Saturday.
- Students are encouraged to read posts nearly every day.
- Students are to post at least three days each week; a four- or five-day spread is better.
- A quality original post addresses a new topic; some will be assigned; others, self-initiated.
- A quality response post exhibits critical reflection on another person’s post, and/or moves discussion significantly forward, or in a new direction.
- Specific to this course: original Forum posts should be at least three hundred (300) words.
- Specific to this course: Forum posts as responses to others’ posts should be a least one hundred fifty (150) words.
- Assignments posted in Discussion Forums are evaluated as quality posts at the discretion of the instructor; content, cogency, etc., are factors in this evaluation.
- As in all academic writing for graduate-level courses, correct grammar, spelling, usage, form, style, and other “best practices” are expected as a matter of routine.

2. **Bible Content Exam.** Passing the course requires passing the Bible Content Exam with a minimum score of seventy (70). Students who have earned that score (or higher) before enrollment in this course need not re-take the exam. Students who have not passed the B.C.E. prior to enrolling in this course must take it until they achieve the minimum score of seventy. Prudent time management suggests that first attempts should be completed no later than November 18, allowing nearly four (4) weeks, if necessary, to retake the exam. The latest possible date for taking the B.C.E. for this course will be Thursday, Dec. 15.
N.B.: It is not possible to pass BIB515 without passing the B.C.E.
 (Course Outcomes 1, 4, 5, 6, 7; COTN COSAC Competencies CN 1, CN 2, CN 3, CN 4, CN 6, CN 7, CN 8, CN 9, CN 10, CN 11, CN 13, CN 14, CN 15)

Distribution of Student Learning Hours

	hours
Reading of course texts	55
Reading of forum and other Moodle postings	30
Writing of original forum postings	30
Writing of responses to others’ forum postings	30
Miscellaneous research, consultation, etc.	10
TOTAL	155

Submitting Assignments

All work is to be done in (or uploaded into) the appropriate Moodle Forum(s). The only exception is the Bible Content Exam, which is accessed and taken in another location.

Form and Style Expectations

When referencing a course textbook, place the author’s (or editor’s) last name and (a) page number(s) within the body of the text, in parentheses, e.g., (Ryken 286). If referencing a source which is not a course text (the course does not *require* this), consult and follow Turabian.

Inclusive Language

NTS is committed to the equality of women and men. Because language can be used as a tool of exclusion, or to imply gender inferiority, NTS urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussions, and in their writings. All written work in this course must employ gender-inclusive language.

Policy Regarding Late Work & Scheduling of Bible Content Exam

Our Moodle Forum participation will be segmented into thirteen weekly grades. The first week's grade, and the lowest two grades of the other twelve weeks, will not be factored into the course grade. This provides ample consideration for any and all exigencies that may arise. Please do not ask for further considerations, exemptions, or exceptions; granting them would visit injustice upon your fellow students. Similarly, because the entire semester is available for taking (and retaking) the Bible Content Exam, the final date to schedule it (Dec. 15) also is nonnegotiable.

Additional Costs

No additional costs are anticipated for this course beyond tuition, textbooks, and equipping of one's computer to participate in the online course environment (if and as necessary).

Course Grading

Each week's Discussion Forum posts will be assigned a letter grade; these will be posted in Moodle Grades. The first week's grade, and the two lowest grades of the final twelve weeks, will be set aside; the other ten grades will be averaged, to arrive at a provisional grade for the course.

To pass the course, a student must pass the Bible Content Exam with a minimum score of seventy (70). A student may retake the B.C.E., as needed, to attain that minimum score. A lower-range, but passing, score on the B.C.E. cannot lower the course grade. However, a high score on the B.C.E. will raise a course grade on the cusp between "A" and "B" to the higher "A" grade.

The Seminary is committed to every reasonable effort to facilitate the learning of students capable of graduate-level seminary work. Any student with a condition that may prevent full demonstration of her or his abilities (e.g., difficulty seeing or hearing, dyslexia or other learning disabilities) should contact the instructor early in the course to discuss learning needs, and adaptive strategies which have been benefitted the student in the past. The instructor and the student will determine mutually acceptable accommodations to ensure the student's full participation and appropriate evaluation in the course. (The Seminary cannot provide tutorial assistance.)

Class Attendance

Attendance at classes is essential for realizing the maximum benefit of your education. Since the professor in each course is best acquainted with the importance of consistent attendance, he or she will determine the rules for attendance.

If a student does not meet class participation standards in an online environment for four or more weeks, the professor may automatically fail the student.

Course Calendar

This is a new course for NTS last semester, with a new professor (Coleson) and a new delivery model (online) this semester. It is to become a standard course, offered for those entering NTS without the requisite background for the Biblical Studies domain of the M.Div. curriculum. A first-time course in a first-time delivery model—especially the “atomized” model of the online environment—cannot be set in stone from the beginning. Our necessary flexibility this first time around is reflected in the generalized look of the Course Calendar. The professor assumes responsibility for keeping all of us current, and a bit more, with clarity, with accessibility, even with redundancy, if it appears redundancy will help. Be not afraid; we will build a very good version of this course, suited to our online delivery system.

Dates	Week	Assignments and Learning Activities
9/12-17	1	Read: Bartholomew & Goheen, “Prologue”; Ryken, “introduction.” Forum Posts: Post a brief self-introduction; further instruction is in the first Week 1 Discussion Forum. Having read classmates’ introductions, respond to several, including at least one without previous response(s), if any such still are in the Forum.
9/19-24	2	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
9/26-10/1	3	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
10/3-8	4	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
10/10-15	5	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
10/17-22	6	Reading and Research Week.
10/24-29	7	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.

10/31-11/5	8	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
11/7-12	9	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
11/14-19	10	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
11/21-26	11	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
11/28-12/3	12	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
12/5-10	13	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.
12/12-17	14	Reading and Discussion Forums to be assigned.

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