

RS102

Introduction to the Bible

1. Course Number and Name: RS102: Introduction to the Bible

Credites: 3

2. Course Description: The Bible, sixty-six works of history, law, prophecy, poetry and letters, is one of the great legacies of the ancient to the modern world. Students will read works that still influence issues that arise today and will likely arise tomorrow, while developing an historical perspective on the ideas, institutions and cultures which helped to shape the works and their authors. These cultures include the empires of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome.

3. Course Goals: The course will introduce students to a set of texts that are central to understanding the Ancient Near East and the Medieval and Modern World. Students will survey and critique the major literary genres of the Bible, which still influence the way Americans write and think and will investigate the historical contexts that influenced works that still matter to millions of people all over the earth. Students will assess the significance of these ancient texts for the modern world and their own lives.

4. Course Learning Outcomes: Students will develop their own insights into Biblical texts and their ancient and contemporary significance by close reading, class discussion, tests, written reports and papers. Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Analyze themes of creation and the image of God and apply them to parallel creation themes and images of God from other Near Eastern cultures.
2. Explore story patterns in myth and history.
3. Describe the origins and authority of law, apodictic and casuistic law.
4. Compare and contrast the conceptions of myth, political history and morality.
5. Explain what it means that the Bible is a book and what a prophet is.
6. Define lyric poetry and distinguish it from history, folk tales, prophecy.
7. Clarify what a gospel is and how it differs from biography and history.
8. Differentiate between political history and social history.
9. Classify theology, history, biography, and prophecy and examine their agreements and differences.
10. Interpret apocalyptic literature and evaluate how it differs from history and prophecy.

5. Course Concepts

1. The Bible as historical growth and divine revelation
2. The role of covenant and Kingdom in Biblical history
3. Prophecy as movement and literary genre
4. The genres of the Bible: folk tale, history, poetry, prophecy, gospel apocalyptic
5. The relation of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

6. Required Texts

- *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (Harper Collins) - ISBN-13:9780060786830. \$37.95
- Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East* (Paulist) - ISBN:13:9780809144358. \$22.95
- Harry M. Orlinsky, *Ancient Israel* (Cornell) - ISBN:13:9780801498497. \$11.50

7. Recommended Reading

- Michael Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2007) - ISBN-13: 9780195305050. \$11.95

8. Additional Resources