AREA I: BIBLICAL STUDIES

This area is concerned with the interpretation of the Christian Scriptures in the broadest sense, including the study of the classical biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek), the content of the Old and New Testaments, critical methods of interpretation, biblical history, cultural and historical milieu of the Bible, and the theological and pastoral implications of the text.

1. Introductory courses are offered in the critical study of the Old and New Testaments. Except for the language courses, all courses in Area I normally have these foundation courses (or their equivalent) as prerequisites.

2. Language courses are offered at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Generally, elementary biblical languages are eligible for elective credit only.

3. Three types of exegesis courses are offered: those based on the English text; those based on the original text and requiring a working knowledge of the biblical language; and advanced exegesis seminars that require at least an intermediate knowledge of the biblical language. Exegesis courses of each type are offered each term on selected books or topics from the Old and New Testaments. It is possible, therefore, during the course of one’s program, to engage in detailed exegesis of representative sections of the biblical text.

4. Thematic courses are offered on a wide range of theological and historical issues raised by the scriptures. These include courses on the cultural and historical milieu of the Bible.

5. Advanced seminars are designed for YDS students with the requisite background and qualifications, and for doctoral students. Permission to enroll in these seminars must be received from the individual instructor.

6. Area I is also concerned with examining the implications of the scriptures for the contemporary church. In addition to doing this in courses offered specifically in Area I, members of the faculty in Area I join with other faculty members in offering courses dealing with the use of the Bible in Christian ministry.

YDS offers intensive courses in elementary Biblical Hebrew and elementary New Testament Greek for six weeks during the summer. Such work earns six hours of academic credit and prepares the student for the course in exegesis. Summer work will satisfy most denominational language requirements.

CRITICAL INTRODUCTIONS

REL 503a, Old Testament Interpretation I  John Collins
An introduction to the contents of the Old Testament (Pentateuch and Historical Books) and to the methods of its interpretation. The course focuses on the development of ancient Israelite biblical literature and religion in its historical and cultural context as well as on the theological appropriation of the Old Testament for contemporary communities of faith. The course aims to make students aware of the contents of the Old Testament, the history and development of ancient Israel’s literature and religion, the methods of biblical interpretation, and ways of interpreting the Old Testament for modern communities of faith. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 504b, Old Testament Interpretation II  Joel Baden
A continuation of REL 503. This course introduces students to critical study of the Prophetic Books and Writings (Psalms, Wisdom) of the Old Testament and introduces students to exegetical method. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 503. 3 Course cr

REL 505a, New Testament Interpretation I  Michal Beth Dinkler
This course is the first half of a two-term introduction to the literature of the New Testament and to the methods and resources useful for interpreting that literature. Term one focuses on the Gospels and Acts; term two, the Pauline letters, pastoral and catholic epistles, and the Apocalypse of John. The course considers the process of canonization, questions of genre, and contemporary implications of various modes of New Testament interpretation (e.g., historical-critical, feminist liberation, African American, narratological approaches, etc.). Emphasis is on students’ ability to engage in responsible, nuanced interpretation of the primary texts. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 506b, New Testament Interpretation II  Michal Beth Dinkler
This course is the second half of a two-term introduction to the literature of the New Testament and to the methods and resources useful for interpreting that literature. This second term focuses on the Pauline letters, pastoral and catholic epistles, and the Apocalypse of John. Students can take this term without having taken the fall course (REL 505). Area I. 3 Course cr

BIBLICAL LANGUAGES

Note: Elementary biblical languages are listed near the end of this chapter under Courses without Area Designations.

REL 518a, Intermediate New Testament Greek  Judith Gundry
This course is the sequel to Elementary New Testament or Koine Greek, and aims to prepare students for Greek exegesis courses by a thorough study of New Testament Greek syntax and translation of New Testament texts illustrating different genres and literary styles, as well as sight-reading of other early Christian Greek texts, the Septuagint, etc., building vocabulary, and reviewing grammar. Area I. Prerequisite: Elementary New Testament or Attic Greek. 3 Course cr

REL 572b, Post-Biblical Hebrew  Eric Reymond
The course explores the language of post-biblical Hebrew writings, primarily through a close study of text specimens written in unpointed or unvocalized Hebrew. We begin by studying briefly Late Biblical Hebrew texts before moving on to the study of the Hebrew
of the Wisdom of Ben Sira and the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and then concluding with a study of Mishnaic Hebrew. Area I. Prerequisite: one year of Biblical Hebrew. 3 Course cr

REL 574a, Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I  Eric Reymond
This course focuses on the reading of biblical texts but also offers a review of the elementary grammar of Biblical Hebrew and the introduction of more complicated grammatical concerns. More specifically, the course focuses on prose texts and reviews the morphology of verbs and nouns as well as basic components of Hebrew syntax. In addition, the form and function of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) are introduced. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 3603 and REL 3604 or the equivalent (i.e., one year of an introductory course in Biblical Hebrew). 3 Course cr

REL 575b, Intermediate Biblical Hebrew II  Eric Reymond
The course focuses on the reading of Biblical Hebrew texts but also offers a review of the elementary grammar of Biblical Hebrew and the introduction of more complicated grammatical concerns, especially syntax. The course introduces the student to Biblical Hebrew poetic texts, including those of Psalms, Proverbs, and the prophetic books. Students learn vocabulary from a textbook and consult an intermediate grammar for the study of syntax. The majority of each class is spent reading aloud a small portion of text, translating it, and studying the most important forms it contains and the elements of its syntax. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 3603, REL 3604, and REL 574; or equivalents. 3 Course cr

REL 576a, Advanced Biblical Hebrew Prose  Jacqueline Vayntrub
This course examines topics in the grammatical and syntactical analysis of Biblical Hebrew prose. It introduces students to the fine points of the Hebrew grammar and syntax so that students are capable of reading the biblical text fluently and carefully. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 574 and REL 575. 3 Course cr

EXEGESIS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

REL 581a, Greek Exegesis: Mark  Yii-Jan Lin
Through reading and analysis of the Greek text of the Gospel of Mark, this course aims to familiarize students with the cultural-historical context of the gospel and critical text and translation issues. Secondary readings and class discussion also focus on literary, theological, and explicitly contextual interpretations of the text. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 505 and REL 506 or equivalents; Greek reading ability. 3 Course cr

GRADUATE SEMINARS IN BIBLICAL AND COGNATE STUDIES

REL 588b, Book of Job and Contemporary Religious Life  Gregory Mobley
This course is devoted to a close reading of the Bible's most sustained exploration of questions of suffering, cosmic justice, and the chaotic features of creation in order to wrest theological and ethical insights for contemporary communities of faith. Moving between a detailed examination of the translated text and of interpretations of Job in Judaism and Christianity, art, literature, and popular culture, the following topics, among others, are considered: the human body as a controlling metaphor in biblical meaning-making; gender; theodicy; and the functions and styles of meaning-making in the biblical genres of wisdom, prose narrative, and apocalyptic. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 504 or an equivalent introductory course to the Latter Prophets and writings of the Hebrew Bible. 3 Course cr

REL 510a, The Letters of Paul: Ethnicity, Enslavement, Empire, and the End of the World  Laura Nasrallah
This introductory course focuses on the letters of Paul, key documents within the Christian Bible and so-called Western philosophical thought, which were written in the context of the Roman Empire and diaspora Judaism in the ancient world and are still used today to debate ethical and political action. We look at (1) the Pauline epistles in their first-century context, and their earliest interpretations; and (2) recent trends in Pauline studies, including feminist, womanist, queer, and postcolonial interpretations. Special attention is given to ideas of the gendered/enslaved body and its potential for transformation and pollution, ethnicity in the Roman world, the relations of communities to Roman imperial power, and views of time and the impending eschaton. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 511a, Past Tense: Classical Biblical Prophecy  Gregory Mobley
In an era that lasted barely more than two centuries, from about 740 to 540 BCE, the company of ancient religious geniuses we know as the classical Hebrew prophets composed and performed a body of work that has inspired and confounded the world for more than two millennia. In this class we seek to understand the biblical prophets and endeavor to enlarge our capacity to be prophet-like, that is, “prophet-ic.” The basic method of the course is to carefully read selected oracles and vision reports from the prophetic corpus in concert with secondary readings about the social and historical background of the prophets, the creative process, and contemporary poetic and political discourse in the spirit of biblical prophecy. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 517b, “Race” and the New Testament  Yii-Jan Lin
This seminar is divided into two parts. The first considers possible concepts of race and/or ethnicity in the ancient Mediterranean world, while the second focuses on racial/ethnic theory and minoritized hermeneutics. Ancient primary sources, the New Testament, and contemporary scholarship form the reading materials. Area I and Area V. 3 Course cr

REL 543a, Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls  John Collins
This course provides a close reading of the Community Rule from Qumran and related texts with the objective of understanding the nature of the sectarian community in the scrolls. Area I. Prerequisites: intermediate reading level of Biblical Hebrew; and REL 503 and REL 504 or equivalent. 3 Course cr
REL 544a, History and Methods of Old Testament Interpretation I  Joel Baden
In this course, students engage with classic secondary works from the history of Old Testament scholarship. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 and 504 or equivalent.  3 Course cr

REL 548b, The Composition of the Pentateuch  Joel Baden
This class examines the grounds for, and the application of, theories regarding the composition of the Pentateuch through close textual readings of selected biblical passages. It introduces students to the major theories of pentateuchal composition and teaches them how to approach constructively the issues raised by the reading of the Pentateuch. Area I.  3 Course cr

REL 555a, Gnostic Texts in Coptic  Daniel Bohac
The class reads selected portions of texts from the Nag Hammadi collection, including the Apocryphon of John, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Truth, the Treatise on Resurrection, the Tripartite Tractate, as well as other noncanonical texts preserved in Coptic, including the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Judas. Area I. Prerequisite: EGYP 510 or equivalent.  3 Course cr

REL 562b, What Are Biblical Values?  John Collins
This course examines what the Bible has to say about several issues that are controversial in the modern world. It also reflects on the difficulty of identifying a single, or even dominant, biblical position on some issues, and on the relevance of the biblical texts for the modern debates. The foundations for biblical values in creation, covenant, and eschatology are considered, and biblical attitudes to family values, gender and sexuality, social justice, war and peace, ecology, purity, and other issues are discussed. Area I and Area V. Prerequisite: introductory course in OT or NT.  3 Course cr

REL 563a, The Book of Lamentations  Joel Baden
This course examines the biblical Book of Lamentations with a focus on understanding its theology, poetry, and interpretation. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 and REL 504, or their equivalent; and at least one year—preferably two—of Biblical Hebrew.  3 Course cr

REL 568b, Women and Gender in Early Christianity  Judith Gundry
This course explores New Testament texts on women and gender as sources for early Christian views on these topics. The variety and roots of early Christian views on women and gender are studied, in comparison with other sources on these topics from the ancient Mediterranean world, especially in the biblical tradition, Second Temple Judaism, and Hellenistic philosophy. Students are asked to reflect on how the New Testament texts have influenced Christian tradition and practice with respect to women's roles and on the use of these texts in contemporary debates on a range of social issues with implications for women and gender. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 505 and previous or concurrent enrollment in REL 506, or the equivalent.  3 Course cr

REL 582b, Torah and Jewish Identity  John Collins
This course examines how the Torah of Moses came to define Jewish identity in the Second Temple period, and some of the different ways it was understood. It begins with Deuteronomy as an attempt to define Israelite/Judean identity. Sessions are devoted to Ezra, the Maccabean revolt, Jubilees, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Diaspora Judaism. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 or REL 504 or equivalent; and intermediate reading level of Biblical Hebrew.  3 Course cr