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  Robert Wilson
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  John Collins
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  Yi-Jan Lin
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. This first term focuses on the Gospels and Acts; the second term (REL 506) focuses on the Pauline letters, pastoral and catholic epistles, and the Apocalypse of John. Students can take one term without taking the other. Area I.  3 Course cr

REL 506b, New Testament Interpretation II  Yi-Jan Lin
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
A sequel to Elementary Greek, this intermediate Koine Greek course prepares students for advanced Greek exegesis courses. The course work consists of preparation and discussion of translations of a variety of New Testament texts, readings and written exercises on Greek syntax, sight-reading of Greek texts outside the New Testament, and vocabulary building. Students gain practice in using a Greek-English lexicon and advanced Greek grammars. Area I. Prerequisite: Elementary New Testament or Attic Greek.  3 Course cr

REL 570a, Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew  Eric Reymond
The course examines the development of the sounds and forms of Biblical Hebrew, paying particular attention to the following (partially hypothetical) stages of the language and its predecessors: Proto-Semitic, Proto-Hebrew, Hebrew in the Iron Age, and Hebrew in the Second Temple Period. The course begins with an introduction to Hebrew in relation to other Semitic languages and an introduction to the alphabet. It then addresses the phonology of Hebrew as attested in the time of the Masoretic scribes, in the time of early Judaism and Christianity, in the time of the Persian era, and in the time of the Iron Age and in earlier periods. Finally, the course addresses specific
morphologies of Biblical Hebrew: nouns, adjectives, verbs, and particles. Area I. Prerequisite: at least 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

EXEGESIS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

REL 556a, Hebrew Exegesis: Exodus  Joel Baden
A close reading of selected portions of the book of Exodus. Topics discussed include the grammar and syntax of the Hebrew, themes and theologies raised by the passages, and interpretive methods productively applied to the text. Students are expected to engage extensively with secondary scholarship. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 or REL 504 or equivalent, and at least one year of Biblical Hebrew. 3 Course cr

GRADUATE SEMINARS IN BIBLICAL AND COGNATE STUDIES

REL 502a, Bounty and Duty: The Hebrew Bible and Creation  Gregory Mobley
The course explores ideas about creation and the interconnectedness among the created realms in the Hebrew Bible, then juxtaposes the ancient worldview with the science and ethics of contemporary ecological concerns. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 509a, Exodus through the Ages  Joel Baden
This course explores the legacy of the Exodus story, from the Bible down to the present. Ranging over various themes, places, and time periods, we look at the remarkable variety of uses to which the Exodus story has been put. Topics include ritual (Passover, the Eucharist), the status of the law at Sinai in Judaism and Christianity, communal identity and social formation (the Pilgrims, the Mormon Exodus, etc.), civil rights movements, and liberation theology. How has the Exodus story, the core narrative of the Hebrew Bible, been appropriated for different purposes over the millennia? Area I. Prerequisite: REL 503, REL 504, or equivalent. 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 536a, English Exegesis: The Gospel of Matthew  Yii-Jan Lin
Through reading and analysis of the English text of the Gospel of Matthew, this course aims to familiarize students with the cultural-historical context of the gospel and its reception history. Secondary readings and class discussion focus on literary, theological, and explicitly contextual interpretations of the text. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 549b, Approaches to Old Testament Ethics  Robert Wilson
This course examines the various ways in which the Old Testament has been used in ethical reflection. The strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches are noted, and new approaches are explored by examining the Old Testament’s own basis for making ethical evaluations. The course aims to suggest new approaches for the use of the Old Testament in ethical reflection. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 and REL 504 or their equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 550b, Pauline Theology  Judith Gundry
This seminar examines key theological themes in the letters of Paul, the origins of these themes in debates among Paul and his opponents, the twists and turns in the interpretation of these themes in Pauline scholarship, and the significance of these themes for the contemporary church. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 506. 3 Course cr

REL 566a, Grief and Emotions: Ancient Philosophy and Theology, Modern Conversations  Laura Nasrallah
This course focuses on grief and theories of the emotions in the ancient Mediterranean world, touching also upon contemporary conversations about grief among scholars in black studies, as well as queer, feminist, and affect theories. Course materials include New Testament texts, Roman-period consolation letters and literature, philosophical writings, tragedies, and scholarly hypotheses regarding lifespan. Special attention is paid to political and economic issues (including slavery), as well as to instructions to women on how to mourn. The course examines the work of modern scholars such as Saidiya Hartman, Judith Butler, Claudia Rankine, and Eve Sedgwick. Area I and Area V. 3 Course cr
REL 583b, Archaeology of the Roman Empire for the Study of New Testament and Early Christianity  Laura Nasrallah
The first portion of the course introduces students to working with archaeological data from the Greco-Roman world (inscriptions, architecture, sculpture, coins). The second portion consists of seminars in Greece and Turkey during May, including some meetings with archaeologists and other scholars abroad. Area I. Prerequisites: some level of reading ability in Greek, Latin, or Arabic; some level of reading ability in German, French, or modern Greek; and previous course work in early Christianity, New Testament, or Classics/Roman history.  3 Course cr

REL 599b, Ezra-Nehemiah  John Collins
This course examines the evidence for the restoration and reorganization of Judah in the Persian period, focusing on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Students are expected to read the primary texts in the original languages (Hebrew and Aramaic). Area I.  3 Course cr

RLST 800a, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the History of Israelite Religion  Robert Wilson
Readings in selected problems in the history of ancient Israel's religion, including the ancient Near Eastern context of Israel's religion; the origins of monotheism; the distinctive religions of Israel and Judah; prophecy; and priesthood. Prerequisite: previous critical study of the Hebrew Bible.

RLST 801b, Hebrew Bible Seminar: Problems in the Book of Jeremiah  Robert Wilson
A close reading of selected chapters of the Hebrew text of Jeremiah in order to test recent theories of the book's compositional history.