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 Hebrew Bible and New Testament, 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 Hebrew Bible and New Testament. 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 Hebrew Bible and New Testament. 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, Hebrew Bible Interpretation I  Joel Baden
An introduction to the contents of the Hebrew Bible (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 Hebrew Bible for contemporary communities of faith. The course aims to make students aware of the contents of the Hebrew Bible, the history and development of ancient Israel’s literature and religion, the methods of biblical interpretation, and ways of interpreting the Hebrew Bible for modern communities of faith. Area I. 3 Course cr

REL 504b, Hebrew Bible Interpretation II  Jacqueline Vayntrub
A continuation of REL 503. This course introduces students to critical study of the Prophetic Books and Writings (Psalms, Wisdom) of the Hebrew Bible as well as to exegetical method. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 503. 3 Course cr

REL 505a, New Testament Interpretation I  Yii-Jan Lin
This course is the first 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 (REL 505) focuses on the Gospels and Acts; term two (REL 506), the Pauline letters, pastoral and catholic epistles, and the Apocalypse of John. As a historical record of the early Christian movement, the New Testament addresses the questions, “Who was (is) Jesus?” and “Who are we as his followers?” Lectures aim to (1) depict the social, cultural, and religious matrices of the Jesus movement and emergent Christianity; and (2) foster a basic knowledge of the New Testament’s historical, literary, and theological characteristics as scholars understand them. A series of discussion sessions facilitate engagement with issues raised in lectures. Attendance at both is expected, as is reading of assigned materials prior to class sessions. The yearlong course also highlights the living character of New Testament traditions for various communities, in distinct venues and modes, in different times and locales. Over

REL 506b, New Testament Interpretation II  Yii-Jan Lin
This is the second term of a two-semester introduction to the literature of the New Testament and to the methods and resources useful for interpreting that literature. Term two (REL 506) focuses on the Pauline letters, pastoral and catholic epistles, and the Apocalypse of John; term one (REL 505), the Gospels and Acts. As a historical record of the early Christian movement, the New Testament addresses the questions, “Who was (is) Jesus?” and “Who are we as his followers?” Lectures aim to (1) depict the social, cultural, and religious matrices of the Jesus movement and emergent Christianity; and (2) to foster a basic knowledge of the New Testament’s historical, literary, and theological characteristics as scholars understand them. A series of discussion sessions facilitate engagement with issues raised in lectures. Attendance at both is expected, as is reading of assigned materials prior to class sessions. The yearlong course also highlights the living character of New Testament traditions for various communities, in distinct venues and modes, in different times and locales. Over
the course of the year, we hope to (1) provide guidance in the art and methods of “exegesis,” broadly conceived; (2) nurture students’ sensitivity to the importance of social location in the interpretation of Christian Scripture; and (3) introduce students to distinct modes of reading the New Testament. Term one introduces students to basic exegetical skills and tools of historical interpretation; that skill base is expanded in this term to other modes of interpretation. 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 Greek and consists of a systematic study of New Testament Greek syntax; translation and syntactical analysis of New Testament texts illustrating different genres and literary styles; sight-reading of other early Christian Greek texts, the Septuagint, etc.; vocabulary-building assignments; and review of NT Greek grammar. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 3605 and REL 3606; or GREK 110 and GREK 120; or REL 3609; or equivalent study of Koine or Attic Greek.  3 Course cr

REL 572a, 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

EXEGESIS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

REL 556b, 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

REL 574a, Intermediate Biblical Hebrew and Exegesis 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 584a, Greek Exegesis: 1 Corinthians  Laura Nasrallah
This course is devoted to close reading and interpretation of 1 Corinthians. Discussion of the Greek text of 1 Corinthians focuses on literary style, use of rhetoric, philology, and the social and theological issues of the text. Hermeneutical approaches include feminist, African American, Asian, text critical, etc. Area I. Prerequisite: two terms of Greek.  3 Course cr

GRADUATE SEMINARS IN BIBLICAL AND COGNATE STUDIES

REL 508a, 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 511b, 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 classic 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 527a, The Hebrew Bible, Race, and Racism  Joel Baden
In this course we explore the ways that the Hebrew Bible, race, and racism have been aligned and constructed from ancient Israel to the present. Topics for the course include biblical texts related to slavery, ethnicity, and foreignness; race and the Bible in early interpretation

Note: Elementary biblical languages are listed near the end of this chapter under Courses without Area Designations.
and in modern discourse; the racializing of biblical characters; black, womanist, and Africana interpretations of the Bible; and the whiteness of traditional biblical scholarship. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 503 and REL 504 or the equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 538a, Mark, Wonder, and the Miraculous (English Exegesis of the Gospel of Mark) Michal Beth Dinkler
How do the visual and invisible worlds relate? What constitutes a miracle, and who decides? Can humans wonder at the sublime in the midst of trauma? This course focuses on close readings (exegesis) of the Gospel of Mark with special attention to the themes of wonder and the miraculous. Engaging theorists across a variety of discourses, including affect theory, trauma theory, disability studies, narratology, cultural studies, and postcolonialism, we situate the first Gospel in its social and historical contexts and explore varieties of readerly perspectives, both ancient and modern. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 505 or REL 506 or equivalent. 3 Course cr

REL 544b, History and Methods of Old Testament Interpretation I Joel Baden and Jacqueline Vayntrub
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 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 567a, Revelation and Imagination Yi-Jan Lin
Ernst Käsemann famously stated that “Apocalyptic…was the mother of all Christian theology.” While he was urging a return to the study of apocalypticism in the teachings and life of Jesus, this course takes seriously a broader read of this statement: apocalyptic and the Apocalypse of John, via their protean nature, birth theologies, movements, art, film, violence, and further visions. Students consider both ancient contexts of Revelation (literary, sociohistorical) and its influence since in movements, times of crisis, art, and activism. A Greek component is possible for this course. Area I. Prerequisite: REL 505 or REL 506. 3 Course cr

REL 571a, An Introduction to Rabbinic Literature Staff
This course explores the culture and provides an introduction to the major texts that shaped Judaism for centuries to come. Issues considered include gender and ethnicity, Jewish-Christian interactions, Jewish mysticism, creation of Jewish liturgy, and rabbinic modes of grappling with the Bible. These issues are considered through the lives and thought of key figures and as expressed in the major genres of rabbinic literature—Mishnah, Tosefta, Midrash, Targum, the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. The course assumes no prior knowledge of rabbinic literature or Hebrew. 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 590a, Jesus as influencer? Rhetoric, Storytelling, and New Testament Narratives Michal Beth Dinkler
Jesus sought to influence others through storytelling. Those who composed the stories about Jesus in the four canonical Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles sought to influence their audiences through narration, as well. And many people throughout the centuries have used the stories of and about Jesus to persuade others to believe certain things and to behave in certain ways. Who gets to tell whose stories? Whose stories remain untold? When is storytelling a form of gaslighting and oppression, and when is it liberating? What is the relationship among stories, truth, and identity? This interdisciplinary course weaves among studies of ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric, psychological and communications-based studies of influence and persuasion today, and the texts of the Gospels and Acts themselves to explore questions such as these. Additional topics include the ethics of storytelling, rhetoric and narrative/rhetoric of narrative, exemplarity and imitation across the literary and spiritual realms, “anti-rhetoricism,” embedded rhetorical performances (e.g., speeches, oratory, parables, etc.), non-verbal forms of persuasion (e.g., visual, emotional, etc.). Familiarity with either Greek or Latin preferred but not required. Area I. 3 Course cr