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  Molly Zahn
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 505b, New Testament Interpretation I: The Gospels and Beyond  Laura Nasrallah
The texts of the New Testament emerged in the diverse social and complex political context of the Roman Empire and of second-temple Judaism within it. Along with REL 506, this course examines approaches that attempt to set New Testament texts within their first- and second-century contexts, pays special attention to archaeological materials which aid our understanding of the world from which these texts emerged, considers how and why these particular texts came to be a canon, and pays special attention to themes of race, ethnicity, women, gender, imperial power and resistance to it, and varieties of Judaism in antiquity. Students also consider the vibrant and controversial contemporary contexts in which they and others interpret the New Testament. Area I.  3 Course cr

REL 506a, New Testament Interpretation II: The Letters of Paul and Beyond  Laura Nasrallah
The texts of the New Testament emerged in the diverse social and complex political context of the Roman Empire and of second-temple Judaism within it. This course examines approaches that attempt to set New Testament texts within their first- and second-century contexts, pays special attention to archaeological materials that aid our understanding of the world from which these texts emerged; considers how and why these particular texts came to be a canon; and highlights themes of race, ethnicity, women, gender, imperial power and resistance to it, and varieties of Judaism in antiquity. Students also consider the vibrant and controversial contemporary contexts in which they—and others—interpret the New Testament. 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. 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 aims to prepare students for Greek exegesis of the New Testament. Twice-weekly required readings and written assignments focus on syntax, vocabulary-building, translation of a variety of New Testament texts, and textual criticism and other aspects of Greek exegesis. Class sessions focus on honing translation skills and sight-reading of the Septuagint, Didache, and other early Christian texts in Greek. Assignments and class sessions incorporate regular use of a Greek-English lexicon and advanced Greek grammar. Tools for review of basic New Testament Greek grammar will be recommended, not required. 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 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 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.

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 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

GRADUATE SEMINARS IN BIBLICAL AND COGNATE STUDIES

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 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. While not required, previous completion of REL 505 and REL 506 is recommended. Area I and Area V. 3 Course cr
REL 542a, Dead Sea Scrolls  Molly Zahn
An introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls and their sociohistorical contexts. Major themes include the diverse contents and dates of the scrolls, the nature and identity of the community that collected and produced them, the various tools and methods scholars use to study them, and their impact on our understanding of early Judaism. No knowledge of Hebrew required but previous coursework in Hebrew Bible is recommended. Area I.  3 Course cr

REL 552a, Readings in Second Temple Jewish Texts: Chronicles and the Temple Scroll  Molly Zahn
Close reading, in the original language(s), of selected texts dating to the Second Temple period, including but not limited to later books of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Chronicles, Daniel), the Apocrypha (e.g., Ben Sira, Tobit), and Dead Sea Scrolls texts. Topics include the syntax and grammar of the texts, their compositional histories, genre and other literary features, and their contribution to our understanding of the history and culture of early Judaism. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 or REL 504 or equivalent and at least one year of Biblical Hebrew  3 Course cr

REL 565a, Bodies and Embodiment in the Hebrew Bible  Joel Baden
In this course we explore the ways bodies are presented in, deployed by, and entangled with the Hebrew Bible and the theories that help us understand the relationship of body and Bible. The course is structured around three axes: the world behind the Bible, the world in the Bible, and the world in front of the Bible. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 and REL 504.  3 Course cr

REL 567a, Revelation and Imagination  Yü-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 597b, Readings in Recent Biblical Scholarship  Joel Baden
This course, intended primarily for M.A.R. Hebrew Bible students, provides an overview of the latest developments in the field of Hebrew Bible, and the critical tools to evaluate and engage with them, including learning how to respond responsibly to others’ ideas both orally and in writing. Each week students read all or part of a recent scholarly work in the field of Hebrew Bible (approximately 200 pages per week). The works to be read are chosen in consultation with the instructor over the course of the term, in line with the academic interests of students enrolled in the course. Students are asked to critically evaluate those works in class; prepare an oral response as if on a conference panel; and write book reviews. The course operates as a workshop, with all student contributions heard, read, and critiqued by their peers as well as by the instructor. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 503 and REL 504, or their equivalents, and at least one year – preferably two – of Biblical Hebrew.  3 Course cr