

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 505a, New Testament Interpretation I: The Gospels and Beyond Yii-Jan Lin
Historians analyzing the writings of the early Christian movement usually ask, “Who was Jesus?” and “Who were his followers? Who was the audience for these texts?” Lectures aim to (1) illuminate possible social, cultural, and religious contexts of the Jesus movement and emergent Christianity and (2) foster a basic knowledge of the NT and other text’s historical, literary, and theological characteristics as scholars understand them. The history of these texts’ reception and their current interpretation are no less important. Some important questions asked vis-à-vis these areas of reading are “Who is Jesus? Who are his followers? Who is the audience for these texts?” This course also aims to (3) provide guidance in the art and methods of interpretation, (4) nurture students’ sensitivity to the importance of social location in the interpretation of Christian Scripture, and (5) introduce students to distinct modes of reading ancient sacred texts. 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. 3 Course cr

REL 506b, New Testament Interpretation II: The Letters of Paul and Beyond Michal Beth Dinkler

This course is the second half of a two-semester introduction to the literature of the New Testament and to the methods and resources useful for interpreting that literature. This semester focuses on the Pauline letters, pastoral and catholic epistles, and the Apocalypse of John. Students develop a general understanding of the historical, literary, and theological characteristics of the New Testament epistolary writings; gain a basic grasp of the great diversity of historical and contemporary interpretations (e.g., historical-critical, feminist, womanist, theological, African-American, literary approaches, among others); and develop critical exegetical and hermeneutical skills. Special attention is given to students’ self-examination, questioning their own interpretive assumptions and convictions regarding biblical interpretation, in respectful, constructive dialogue with different reading communities. Students also gain appreciation of the significance of contextual considerations in the interpretation of the NT and early Christian history, particularly the roles of power and privilege, race, ethnicity, gender, and other forms of difference in determining intellectual and ecclesial discourses about these materials. No prerequisites: all students are welcome, regardless of background, experience, and prior knowledge of the New Testament (or lack thereof). Students may take one semester without taking the other. 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 Language and Exegesis Judith Gundry

This course is designed for students who have completed two semesters (or a six-week intensive) of Elementary New Testament or Attic Greek. The course teaches particular

skills involved in Greek exegesis of the New Testament and other advanced work with ancient Greek texts, for example, analyzing how words and phrases relate to each other in a sentence (syntax) and derive meaning from their literary contexts; how to read New Testament texts in the light of their literary genre and authorial style; and how to understand the differences between the manuscripts that are the basis for critical editions of the New Testament. The goal is to equip students to create and defend their own translations of NT Greek texts and to understand the reasons for a plurality of translations of a particular text. Classes incorporate the use of reference works for New Testament Greek study and sight-reading of Hellenistic Greek texts outside the New Testament, such as the Septuagint, the Didache, and the papyri. This course also helps students expand their Greek vocabulary. Successful completion of the course should allow students to take fuller advantage of advanced Greek exegesis courses. Area I. Prerequisites: REL 3605 and REL 3606; GREK 110 and GREK 120; or REL 3609. 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

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 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 576b, Advanced Biblical Hebrew Joel Baden

This course examines topics in the grammatical and syntactical analysis of Biblical Hebrew. 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. Prerequisite: At least two years of Biblical Hebrew. 3 Course cr

EXEGESIS BASED ON THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

REL 561a, Ezekiel Jacqueline Vayntrub and Molly Zahn

This course explores the book of Ezekiel and its history of interpretation in modern biblical scholarship through two of the work's more prominent themes: embodiment and utopia. The work of the course is grounded in translation and analysis of the Biblical Hebrew, evaluating its grammar, syntax, semantics, poetics, and text-critical issues where necessary. Preparation of the translation and analysis of each week's selected passages is supported by readings that illuminate the passage's broader themes in more recent scholarship. Area I. Prerequisite: At least one year or equivalent of 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 513a, The Jewish World of Jesus Molly Zahn

The aim of this course is to introduce students to the religious landscape of Judaism in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the landscape that provides the context for the emergence of the early Jesus movement. Emphasis is on appreciating the diversity of Jewish thought and culture in this time period and exploring how this diversity might influence our historical understanding of emergent Christianity. Area I. 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 REL 504 or equivalent. 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 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

REL 599a, The Secret Life of Texts: Issues in Ancient and Modern Biblical Textuality

Yii-Jan Lin and Jacqueline Vayntrub

This class explores the realities of textuality vis-à-vis biblical texts in ancient and modern contexts. These include the production (material and otherwise) of texts and manuscripts; their collection in libraries and canons; their discovery, circulation, purchase, and display; and their reconstruction and deconstruction (both materially and theoretically) today. Area I and Area III. Prerequisite: At least one course in history and interpretation of biblical and/or other ancient texts at a graduate level. 3 Course cr