THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE
ENGL 365. 500 (Cross-listed with RELS 360)

Prof: Bedford Clark
TTh 11:10-12:35
Office: 3XX LAAH
Office hours: TTh 12:30-2:15

Spring 2013
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Course Description: The Bible serves as the foundational text for Western civilization, but it has traditionally been regarded as much more than that, nothing less than the revealed Word of God mediated through the inspired authors of canonical scripture. It is thus no mere book (or compilation of books), and biblical study is no single activity. The study of the Bible as “literature” is but one of many ways of coming at holy writ, and it has its limitations as well as its advantages. A course of this kind does not aim at doctrinal certainty so much as the recovery of what might be called biblical “literacy.” We will be collectively engaged in an exercise in reading, not piety. Thoughtful men and women have long noted that the contemporary world suffers from a kind of cultural amnesia. This course seeks to counter that trend through a process of interpretive restoration. Historical and textual questions are important and will frequently be addressed, shedding much-needed light on our discussions, but our primary goal is the recollection and reclamation of biblical resources that have enriched humanity’s worldwide cultural heritage in the past, maintained their relevance in the present, and offer creative possibilities for the future.

Learning Outcomes:
1. Identify central motifs and diverse literary genres contained in the Judeo-Christian scriptures
2. Perform close readings of written and visual material
3. Formulate a thesis and develop and support an argument with textual evidence
4. Synthesize, integrate, and cite secondary scholarly sources in a formal paper

Core Curriculum Objectives
Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion, writing and visual texts of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading.
Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

Evaluation of Core Objectives
CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

CS: The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

PR: The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as religion in the public square, the dynamic centrality of the Judeo-Christian vision to questions of justice, individual and social, and the tension between what has been called the "dictatorship of relativism" and Biblical foundationalism. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

Requirements: There will be two essay examinations made up of short and long essay question (a midterm worth 25% of course grade and final worth 25% of course grade) and a substantive scholarly paper of approximately 10 pages in length. Final paper will be based on coherence, insight, grammar and proper use of sources and will be worth 50% of your final course grade.

Attendance: Regular attendance and active participation in class discussion is assumed. http://studentrules.tamu.edu/rule07/ for a list of university rules regarding absences.

Grade scale: 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; less than 60 = F.
Academic Dishonesty
All policies, including those on academic dishonesty, outlined in TAMU’s Student Rules (http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/) apply: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit http://disability.tamu.edu.

Schedule of Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Genesis and Revelation</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Genesis and Revelation cont</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Exodus</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Joshua 1-11, Judges 1-5, Ruth</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Psalms and Song of Songs</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Proverbs and Ecclesiastes</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Job. Midterm</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Isaiah 1-12, 24-27</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Isaiah 32-35, 40-66</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Jeremiah 1-6, 23-31; Lamentations</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Daniel and Jonah</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Gospel According to Matthew</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Gospel According to John</td>
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Final: On the final exam students will be asked to answer a question in which they will have to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures that
may be different from their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.