University of St. Thomas
THEO 1301/3301 - Introduction to the Sacred Scriptures
Fall Semester 2015

♦ Mission Statement

We are the University of St. Thomas, the Catholic university in the heart of Houston. We are committed to the Catholic intellectual tradition and the dialogue between faith and reason. By pursuing excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service, we embody and instill in our students the core values of our founders, the Basilian Fathers: goodness, discipline, and knowledge.

We foster engagement in a diverse, collaborative community. As a comprehensive university grounded in the liberal arts, we educate students to think critically, communicate effectively, succeed professionally, and lead ethically.

♦ Course Details

• **Instructor:** Rev. Dempsey Rosales-Acosta SSL, STD.
• **Email:** drosale@stthom.edu
• **Office Hours:** 7:30 am - 9:15 am, 12:30-1:30 pm TTH, and 7:00 am - 12:15 pm MW., and by appointment (use the email).
• **Office:** Hughes House #201
• **Weight/Times:** 3 credits (3-0-0): Tuesday & Thursday

1. **Course Description**

This course surveys the Old and New Testament of the Christian Bible through an analysis of their literary forms and content. In the course we will study the diverse writings of the OT or TaNak as literary products of their original social and historical contexts. We will ask how ancient Israelites used these texts to respond theologically and ideologically to their lived experiences. We will also investigate some of the ways in which later communities appropriated these texts for new situations and consider why these writings continue to be culturally important. Participants in this course will engage in academic study of the OT/Tanakh. We will not approach these writings devotionally as one might within a faith community in a parish.

Also in the course we will study the diverse writings of the NT as products of their original historical, social, and religious contexts (Sitz im Leben). We will ask how these ancient writings served to interpret and respond to the life situations of the earliest Christians. By asking
this question, we prepare ourselves for thinking critically about the ways the NT writings have been appropriated and interpreted in later contexts.

Students should be able to describe and distinguish the basic theological themes, theories of composition or History of the Redaction of every book of the OT and NT. Therefore the students should recognize that this course engages in the academic study of the Scripture. While many modern faith communities understand these writings as a source of divine guidance and a tool for personal reflection, these are not the foci of this class. After discussion of several preliminary matters (canon, language, text criticism, inspiration, etc), proportionate time will be devoted to each of the major sections of the Old Testament (Pentateuch, Historical Books, Prophetic Books, Wisdom Literature) and of the New Testament (Gospels and Acts, Epistles, Apocalyptic Book). The Pentateuch and the Gospels will receive extra attention. Some emphasis will also be given to biblical scholarship, the nature of exegesis and literary tools for biblical study.

This course welcome students of all faith traditions and religious backgrounds or lack thereof (including those who were raised in non-religious contexts) as we explore together how these writings reflect the concerns of Jews and Christians and their cultural importance.

2. Learning Objectives

Regarding the didactic objectives that I aim to attain in this course, I present them in three groups. The first one portrays the general goals that served as pattern in the designing of the course and its exposition in class. The second group of objectives highlights the skills that are not exclusive of the study of Scripture. This aspect of goals emphasizes that skills that can be used or applied to any field in Humanities and Sciences, namely, research, writing, use of primary and secondary sources. The third group is a final corollary that summarizes my main didactic goal in "verbs" that express actions that can be assessed and evaluated objectively in the exams or tests.

2.1 Learning Objectives: Content

This course has been designed to give students the following opportunities:

♦ To gain familiarity with the varied contents, canonical arrangements, and social/historical contexts of the OT/Tanakh and NT.
♦ To develop critical and academic skills for reading and interpreting biblical texts
♦ To develop analytical tools for assessing diverse interpretations and appropriations of biblical texts (including their own)
♦ To apply various scholarly approaches for understanding the New Testament as you explore its contents, themes, history, social setting, etc.
♦ Demonstrate Biblical literacy:
  • Identify structural features of the Biblical Texts (e.g., Old Testament, New Testament, Apocrypha, Pentateuch, Prophets, Writings, Gospels, Letters, etc.);
• Recount in chronological order the biblical narrative of the OT and NT books, identifying major historical figures, and events

♦ Identify factors that influence Biblical interpretation

• Identify the impact of historical events on the writing and theology of the different books in the Bible
• Identify the various authors of the books of the Bible, their concerns and strategies (including genre), bias, dates, and social position;
• Describe the various Biblical genres, providing examples
• Describe how and why the Bible became an influential book (canon - canonization)
• Explore presuppositions of our culture
• Identify factors that influence reading strategies of the Bible
• Find resources that will help you to extend your study of the Bible.

2.2. Learning Objectives: Transferable Skills

• Read a biblical text closely
• Write an effective short and cogent argument using the primary source: the biblical text.
• Write an effective short argument integrating research from secondary sources: research papers
• Engage in professional and respectful discussion and behavior
• Reflect on your own development as a student

2.3. Corollary: at the end of the semester the students will be able to:

• Read a biblical text closely.
• Express a cogent argument about a biblical text.
• Explain how the Bible developed: Biblical Canon and the theories of composition of the canonical books.
• Describe the narrative structure, content, and theological themes of the biblical books.
• Compare the multiple voices found in biblical texts and compare diverse texts among themselves.
• Analyze how earlier texts and traditions are reconfigured by later texts.
• Compose clear and coherent biblical interpretations.

3. Required Texts/Readings

a. A Bible (it is accepted in different languages and versions). It is recommended, if you don't have one, to buy a Jerusalem Bible, study version.

b. Various photocopied articles and handouts provided by the professor will be posted on Blackboard.
c. **Writing a research Paper.** This book, consisting of handouts for writing the research papers, is not available in the book store but it will be posted on the Blackboard.

d. Suggested reading of different authors will be presented in every class according to the topic (c). It is **strongly recommended** the reading of the **COLLINS, John, J., Introduction to the Hebrew Bible** (Minneapolis 2004) and **HARRIS, S. L., The New Testament. A student's Introduction** (Boston - New York 2002)

e. **Obligatory readings:** Gn 1-2; 7-8; Det 6; Joshua 1; Jdgs 3; 1Sam 16; 2Sam 7; 1Kgs 12; Isa 6; Jer 15; Ez 37; Matt 1-2; Lk 1-2. **All the material uploaded on Blackboard.**

4. **Approach and Assessment**

- The course will have four (4) major grades: each evaluation will have the value of **25% of the final grade**.
- The tests are not cumulative.
- **Three evaluations will be written exams, including the final test.** One evaluation will be a **research paper** because this course is designated “writing course.” The topic and specifications regarding the Research paper will be posted as a separate article on Blackboard.
- The grading scale is the usual one at UST: 90, 80, 70, 60. In detail:

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- **Attendance:** **IS REQUIRED.** Be prompt. After every week’s worth of absences (2 for TTH courses, 3 for MWF), a **next absence will lower your final grade one step** (B to B-, etc.). Please be punctual for class, to be present for the roll. It is your responsibility, if you are tardy, to remove an absence at the end of class **that same day.** Removal of an absence thereafter will require a written excuse on a medical agency’s Letterhead.

To be successful in this course students must demonstrate independent, critical thinking. Students are expected to come to class ready to participate meaningfully and enthusiastically in classroom activities. This requires prior completion of assigned readings. Students are responsible for knowing what is required and when assignments are due. Absences will make it very difficult to do well in this course.

- Tests must be taken at the times they are scheduled. The paper must be due on the established date. Failing to the established dates will imply a penalty. Meaning that the evaluation or paper taken out of the assigned date cannot have the value of 25%.
- If opportunities to extra-credit will be given, the extra-credit won't surpass the total value of 4% of the class grade. **The extra-credits DO NOT substitute the main evaluations of the semester.** The maximum value of an extra-credit is 2.5 points.
5. Code of Honor

The Students in this course are expected to be familiar with and follow this basic Academic Honor Code. According to this code, the students of the University of St. Thomas are expected to:

- Refrain from cheating, including plagiarism.
- Refrain from lying.
- Express opinions with civility and with consideration for the opinions of others.
- Respect shared intellectual property and resources.
- Promote the importance of the honor code in all their interactions for the benefit of the learning community.
- Refrain from doing anything that will embarrass yourselves and your families.
- Everything that you do, must be for the major glory of God: *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.*

Academic *honesty and integrity* is essential to the academic enterprise and the College community. All written work submitted must be your own. Guidelines for Research Writing defines plagiarism as the failure to give credit where credit is due: “To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written something original which in fact you have borrowed from another without acknowledging that other person's work” (Guidelines for Research Writing, 2002, p. 5). If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, or include direct quotations in your written assignments, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly by in-text citation or footnote. It is also wrong to copy another person’s work or to submit an assignment previously handed in for credit in another course. **Students guilty of plagiarism will receive a grade of zero for the assignment and will be brought to the attention of the College’s Discipline Committee.**
Course Schedule: Fall 2015

**AUGUST 2015**


**SEPTEMBER 2015**


**1st Exam**

OCTOBER 2015


6 T Prophets (continuation)


12-13 Mid - Semester Break (Fall Break: no classes)


22 TH New Testament (continuation)


NOVEMBER 2015


2nd Exam


17 T Paul (continuation)

19 TH Paul (continuation)


Research paper due.
25-27 Thanksgiving Break (No classes)

DECEMBER 2012

1 T Catholic letters (continuation)


Final Exam: TBA (to be assigned)

Classroom: TBA (to be assigned)