English 2303 Section 008: The Bible as Literature

University of Texas at Arlington

Spring Semester 2017

Instructor: Joul Layne Smith

Classroom and Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am-12:20pm

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30pm-2:00pm

**Required Texts/Items:**

Any electronic or print (free or costly) New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible is highly recommended. Instruction will come from the Oxford Annotated NRSV (ISBN: 9708195289602). You may also use the Jewish Publication Society Bible (JPS, for Old Testament only), the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the English Standard Version (ESV), the New American Standard Version (NASV or NASB), or the New International Version (NIV). As you will see, translation is a major theme and dilemma for biblical literature, and a topic we will discuss vigorously.

**Purpose:**

The main objective of this course is to introduce you to the study of the Bible as a literary text within an academic context. To achieve this goal, you will read the Bible as an anthology of texts that were written at different times by different people for different reasons and in many different literary genres. You will also develop your general skills as a literary researcher by examining critical resources and discussing the ideas in the texts with your colleagues and your instructor. These discussions will include class lectures, short writing assignments, corporate projects, and in-class activities that draw on the rich tradition of scholarship and hermeneutics inspired by the texts of the Bible for nearly 3,000 years.

**Course Objectives under the Core Curriculum**

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture.

* Students will develop their critical thinking by learning to read literary texts closely, pay attention to relevant details, and organize their observation into cogent arguments.
* Students will develop their communication skills by discussing literature orally in class and by articulating their findings in written arguments.
* Students will develop their sense and practice of personal responsibility by learning to engage with and incorporate secondary sources into their writing.
* Students will develop their understanding of social responsibility by tracing the way that literature shapes and addresses urgent social questions, both historical and contemporary; students will do this in class discussion and most pointedly in the Signature Assignment (see below).

The Departmental guidelines for sophomore literature can be found by typing “sophomore literature” in the “Search UT Arlington” box on the University website: http://www.uta.edu/uta.

**General Course Goals**

* To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature
* To help students recognize that literature is in dialogue with complex cultural and historical contexts
* To develop students’ ability to read critically
* To develop students’ skills of writing and expression, particularly with respect to analysis of literary texts

**Requirements:**

READING –As this is a literature based course, doing the assigned reading is essential to both understanding the material and passing the course. Reading comprehension will be tested on the major exams.

ATTENDANCE NOTES- Each day of lecture will be accompanied by a handout that you will receive at the beginning of class. It is a lecture guide that will allow you to follow along with the course material that I am presenting. It’s fill-in-the-blank format will simultaneously serve as a daily quiz and an attendance record.

SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT –You will write one major essay for this course. It must be 3 pages in length. **Note**: The essay must be typed in 12pt font, Times New Roman, MLA headings, and 1” margins. Failure to comply with these specifications will result in a failure of the assignment. Failure to complete this assignment will result in a failure in the course. A separate handout on Blackboard will explain further details.

CULTURE LOGS-Each day in class, you will participate in a hermeneutic roundtable (more details on Blackboard). You will also keep a reference log of two items throughout the semester: 1) The terms we define in class and 2) Biblical references that you find in your everyday cultural experiences. Using the material from the hermeneutic roundtable, the course terms, and the cultural references you will write a response to an online discussion in Blackboard. Your original post should specifically address the prompt in at least 150 words. You must then respond to two (2) peers in at least 50 words each.

TESTS- There will be two (2) major exams in this class. One will come at the midway point in the semester and one will come on the final day of class. These examinations will amount for forty percent of your entire grade. They will both include objective and essay questions.

**Course Policies:**

PARTICIPATION –You are expected to participate in all aspects of the course. Participation includes: completing all reading and writing assignments on time, talking in and being attentive to class discussion both in class and in Blackboard, reflecting on assigned readings, respecting others’ opinions and their right to express them, and cooperating and collaborating with your peers.

ATTENDANCE – Come to class. Your presence in class is important to the success of the class as a whole. Attending class will only help you sharpen your reading skills which will, therefore, help you become a better scholar. You may miss two classes without penalty. **Each class missed after two will result in the lowering of your grade by five percentage points.** Note: I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. Choose carefully.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS –The syllabus clearly states when each and every assignment is due. Thus, if you do not turn in your assignments on the day they are due, they will not be given any credit. Should you need to make special arrangements concerning assignments, please see me. Please note that there will be no make-up opportunities for the Attendance Notes or culture logs.

**Grading Policies**:

90-100 =A

80-89 =B

70-79 =C

60-69 =D

<60 =F

**Weight of Assignments:**

ATTENDANCE NOTES: 15% (If 4-6 are a zero, your course score is capped at a C. If 7 or more are a zero, then your course score is capped at an F).

SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT: 25% (failure to complete this assignment results in failure of the course)

CULTURE LOGS: 25%

MIDTERM EXAM: 15%

FINAL EXAM (CUMULATIVE): 20%

**TITLE IX**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. It reads: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discrimination based on gender, including inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature.  Sexual harassment (including sexual violence, stalking, domestic violence and/or dating violence) and sexual misconduct in any form are prohibited and will not be tolerated. Any individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

Complaint against a UTA student, visitor, or staff or faculty member for sexual harassment, sex discrimination, or sexual assault, should be made to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Coordinators. Victims of sexual assault should also consider contacting the UTA Police Department at (817) 272-3003.

Students with disabilities or special needs should identify themselves at the beginning of the semester and provide the instructor with authorized documentation from the Office for Students with Disabilities (817-272-3364). Students needing academic counseling should consult their Undergraduate Advisor; for other types of counseling, contact the University College Hotline (817-272-6107). To prepare for emergencies, be aware of classroom exits. For on campus problems requiring police assistance, dial 817-272-300

**Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense at any university. If I suspect you have presented someone else’s work as your own, I will report you to the Vice President of Student Affairs for disciplinary action, in which case you will be given an incomplete for the course until your case is resolved. Forms of academic dishonesty include: **Collusion**—lending your work to another person to submit as his or her own; **Fabrication**—deliberately creating false information on a Works Cited page; and **Plagiarism—**the presentationof another person’s work as your own, whether you mean to or not. Even if you put someone’s ideas into your own words, you must properly credit the source.

**Library**

You will find online databases for English among the Arts & Humanities databases at <http://www2.uta.edu/library/subjguides/dbEnglish.asp>

**Drop Policy**

If you withdraw from the course you must follow university procedures. It is your responsibility to execute these procedures correctly and within the deadlines.

**Signature Assignment**

**Overview**

The signature assignment addresses all four of the course objectives. **Personal responsibility**: This essay includes the integration of outside sources; it, therefore, requires students to demonstrate personal responsibility as they use the words and ideas of other writers in an accurate and ethical manner. Citing sources properly isn’t just a matter of mechanics. It’s a question of personal responsibility (with real consequences for students) that overlaps with students’ responsibility to the academic community of which they are a part. The construction of a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a careful analysis of textual evidence demonstrates **critical thinking** and **communication skills**. The development of a well-organized essay that demonstrates the correct use of grammar and other writing mechanics and demonstrates an awareness of the how to appeal convincingly to an audience further addresses the communication objective. The critical analysis of the way the selected text engages a significant issue of social responsibility addresses the **social responsibility** outcome.

**Specific Requirements**

Write a well-organized, effectively developed, 3 page analysis of at least one of the course texts. The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility. Students should anchor the paper’s argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims.

**Responsible Integration of Sources**

Students must properly integrate material from two secondary sources into their analysis in a way that gives credit to the authors whose ideas and language they are incorporating. This is not a research paper or a summary of the work of literature, but a paper in which you draw on secondary sources to communicate an interpretive argument about your chosen text through the lens of social responsibility. Instructors may wish to require their students to take the UTA Library’s plagiarism tutorial available at <library.uta.edu/plagiarism/index.php>. This would be a separate assignment, not part of the signature assignment.

**Secondary Sources**

Here is a list of credible sources:

* National newspapers (e.g., *New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Fort Worth Star Telegram*)
* Print magazines (e.g., *The Atlantic, Harper’s, New Yorker, Time, Newsweek*)
* Online magazines (e.g., *Slate, Salon*)
* Scholarly articles (e.g., academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals; you can find citations for these articles by using the MLA International Bibliography database, JSTOR, or Project Muse—all of which UTA’s library gives you access to online)
* Scholarly books or book chapters (it’s a good bet a book is scholarly if it’s published by an academic press, such as Duke University Press; if you’re not sure, ask your instructor)
* Historical documents (e.g., old newspaper articles, letters, speeches, journal entries) from academic databases (see the History subject guide on the library website for ideas)

Students interested in using a source that isn’t listed here, should check with their instructor.

**Minimum Requirements**

Your essay should be a Word document that is double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt., Times New Roman (or some other easily readable) font. Follow the MLA’s recommendations for formatting, citation, and style.

In order to receive a passing grade on the signature assignment, students are expected to:

1. write an essay that is at least 3 pages long, but no more than 5.
2. integrate two appropriate sources.
3. have a thesis.
4. have a title.
5. incorporate evidence (i.e., quotations) from the literary text.
6. have a Works Cited page.