

## COS 121 Bible I: Introduction

Instructor: April Simpson

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the process of the formation of the Jewish and Christian canons of scripture.
2. Articulate and evaluate various perspectives regarding the inspiration of scripture and its authority within the universal community of faith; explain the United Methodist Church's (UMC's) stance on these matters.
3. Assess and articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
4. Apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
5. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the UMC's stance on the nM thod o

Anderson, Bernhard W. *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*. **Fourth edition**. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. ISBN: 978-0800635602. **(To be read as part of the pre-class assignment.)**  
Hayes, John and Carl Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0664227753. **(To be read as part of the pre-class assignment.)**

**Texts for reference:** (You will not be reading these texts in full during our course, *but you will be required to use them during the course. Substitute resources must be approved by me before you use them.*)

Petersen, David L. and Beverly Roberts Gaventa. *The New Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2010. ISBN: 978-0687334117.  
Harrelson, Walter J. *New Interpreter's Study Bible: NRSV*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-0687278329.  
Powell, Mark Allan, ed. *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*. Revised and Updated. New York: Harper One, 2011. ISBN: 978-0061469060.

## PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENT

### A. Overview of the Pre-Class Assignment

The pre-class assignment is worth 30% of the overall course grade. It includes readings, one 3-page paper (double spaced), and a lengthy open-book quiz. Additionally, you will be asked to attend a pre-class Zoom meeting and complete a pre-class module in Canvas.

1. **Scripture Reading and Reading Log: Due on the first day of class.** Read all of Genesis, Hosea, Amos, Mark, and Philippians. Complete the reading log (use the pdf provided), assessing how carefully you have read each chapter of each book. I recommend reading the New Revised Standard Version, which can be accessed online at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

**Note 2:** Your paper may be slightly longer than three pages (up to four), but it should not be shorter than three pages. Set 1-inch margins and use a 12-point font. Create a title page, but this does not count toward the total number of pages. If you discuss specific information from any of the required readings, cite the readings using either footnotes or parenthetical citations (in the future, footnotes will be required—we will discuss citation procedures together).

its own terms first” (4)? That is, what does it mean to understand the Old Testament *on its own terms*?

How does understanding the historical context surrounding the writing of particular biblical books enhance one’s interpretation of a particular biblical book or passage?

**STEP THREE:**

- Read Catherine Cory, *A Voyage Through the New Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), **pages 1–13, 17–19**. (Use the pdf documents provided.)
- Write Section 3 of the paper by addressing the following:
  - 1 paragraph:** How does recognizing the different types of literature that are present in the Bible (New Testament as well as Old Testament) impact interpretation? That is, what difference does it make that the Bible contains different literary genres?
  - 1 paragraph:** Articulate a few of your takeaways from the Boadt reading and/or the Cory reading regarding either the process of determining canon or the different canons adopted by different groups. In so doing, address one of the following: What can we learn by understanding that the biblical canon developed over time? What can we learn by recognizing that the biblical canon is different among various groups?

**STEP FOUR:**

- Read Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Black Cat” at the following link: <http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/blackcat.html>.
- While you are reading or after you read, record 3-5 questions about the story. The questions can relate to *any aspect* of the story, its composition, its characters, etc. (There are no right or wrong questions. What are you curious about in the story? What would you like to know more about?)
- Write Section 4 of the paper: (**A single-spaced bulleted list**)
  - List the 3–5 questions you’ve written. Do not attempt to answer the questions. Simply ask them.

**C. Rubrics for the Pre-Class Assignments**

**Reading Log Rubric: Total of 100 points**

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Timeliness: up to 7 points          | On time: 7 points<br>Up to 1 day late: 4 points<br>More than 1 day late: 0 points |
| Quality of Reading: up to 93 points | For each chapter of each book:<br><br>A = read thoughtfully = 1 point<br>B        |



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|  | <p>Needs improvement: 12-1 points<br/>(content/reflection needs significant improvements to detail, clarity, accuracy, etc.)</p> |
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|  | <p>Lacking: 0 points (this portion of the assignment is lacking)</p> |
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