

Brigidda Bell

**UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION**

COURSE OUTLINE – Summer 2020

Course: RELS 344 The Bible as Literature

Instructor: Brigidda Bell

Time: Web-based course with synchronous discussion classes on Zoom Thursdays 1pm-2pm

Office Hours: Individual online drop-in meetings on Wednesdays 1pm-2pm and by appointment

Email: brigidda.bell@ucalgary.ca

Required texts:

- Bart Ehrman, *The Bible: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)
 - Available through the University of Calgary Bookstore as an e-book rental or paperback
- A New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation of the bible (online or print)
 - No purchase necessary. An online bible is fine as long as it is NRSV. Try: bible.oremus.org
 - If you want to purchase a Bible for this course, I recommend: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: With Apocrypha*. Eds. Michael Coogan, et. al. New York; Oxford. 2007.
- Non-canonical sources and additional articles will be posted to the course website

Course description from course calendar:

An exploration of the various literary genres that make up the sixty-six books of the Bible, understood as a compilation of human literature reflecting millennia of communal struggle, vision, and engaged reception.

Expanded description:

While we may be familiar with *The Bible* as a single tome, in reality it is composed of many distinct books, letters, and discrete collections. Some Christians divide the Bible into Old and New Testaments, whereas Jewish traditions consider the Hebrew Bible to contain only the texts that document events before the life of Jesus. In any of its forms, you will find that the Bible has writings in genres ranging from histories of the Jewish people, poetry and letters, advice columns for kings, biographies of holy people, and literature describing ascents to heaven and fiery destructions of the known world.

In this course we will explore the bible as a *historical* and *literary* work. We will learn ways to read and think about how its texts were written and what they mean to different people. As a product of its time, we will examine its texts alongside works from the Near East, Egypt, Hellenistic Greece, and the Roman world. We will think about how biblical stories change when

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they are read and told in different contexts. What does it mean to read the Bible in today's world, thousands of years after it was written?

Online elements for this course: fully online hybrid class (synchronous weekly discussion meetings on Zoom Thursdays 1pm-2pm)

Core competencies:

- Knowledge and technical skills
- Communication
- Innovativeness/Initiative
- Personal effectiveness
- Teamwork

Learning Outcomes:

In this course you will:

- **Think historically (and critically!)** *through our Weekly Writing and our Writing Project.* Through our growing historical knowledge, we will assess the effects of context and history in the reading and interpretation of the bible.
- **Develop your reading skills** *through primary source readings and close reading exercises within modules.* We will develop skills in close reading and comparison of primary sources through a variety of critical lenses.
- **Improve your oral and written peer communication skills** *through group work on Zoom, participation in discussion board posts, and Peer Assessment exercises.* We will be talking to each other about what we're learning and we will be assessing each other's ideas critically, respectfully, and constructively.
- **Create new ideas** *through our Writing Projects on Reception History and Creative Retelling.* We will critically engage instances of contemporary reception and interpretation of biblical narratives towards new knowledge and creative output.
- **Become a better writer** *through our Weekly Writing, Writing Project, and exercises and self-assessments within modules.* We become better writers by writing. This course will prompt you to write.

Assessments:

| Date ¹ | Assessment | Weight (%) | Required pass/fail |
|-------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
|-------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|

¹ See course calendar

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| <p>Wednesdays at noon (except on weeks when Writing Project is due)</p> | <p>Weekly writing Each week you will submit a response to a single writing prompt based on the week's modules (max. 250 words unless otherwise noted).</p> | <p>30% total (6% each)</p> | |
| <p>Cumulative</p> | <p>Participation. Evaluated through:</p> <p>(1) contributions to the course discussion boards, which includes initiating, posting, and <i>replying</i> to your peers' posts (see Discussion Board Challenges)</p> <p>(2) attendance and active participation in Zoom class meeting group work and conversations²</p> <p>(3) weekly constructive Peer Assessments of three (3) of your classmates' submissions (weekly reading responses or project drafts depending on the week) due Fridays</p> <p>While much of the work of this class will be done at your own pace, we will meet once a week as a group on Zoom. If for some reason you are unable to attend a session please let me know in advance, if possible.</p> <p>We have 6 meetings together. You are permitted one, no-questions-asked, absence. You are required to notify the instructor within 24h to explain additional absences. At the instructor's discretion, the student may be provided an opportunity to make up the grade.</p> <p>Your participation will be assessed on the basis of active & informed participation in discussions. Informed participation requires reading & reflection on the required materials in advance of meetings & being prepared to answer questions, complete in-class exercises, & engage in group</p> | <p>30% total</p> | |

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| | <p>discussion. <u>You should always have your readings and an NRSV translation of the Bible accessible to you.</u></p> <p>If you do not feel comfortable speaking up on Zoom or on discussion boards, please schedule a meeting to talk to me about it <i>in advance</i> so we can figure something out.</p> | | |
| <p>July 21 (outline due on D2L Dropbox)</p> <p>August 4 at noon (draft file due on D2L discussion board with brief description)</p> <p>August 6 (in-class peer discussion of projects)</p> <p>August 12 (final draft posted to D2L project board)</p> | <p>Writing Project: Reception history or modern retelling.</p> <p>Choose one of the following tiered writing assignments (full descriptions of assignments and rubrics are available on D2L):</p> <p>Option A Reception history. Find a non-contemporaneous retelling of a Biblical story (for example, a modern account of a biblical story, or a late antique account of a story from the Hebrew bible, or even Paul, Josephus, or Philo’s version of a story from the Septuagint), and examine the ways that the story changes in the retelling. What literary choices are made? Is the story told in a different genre? Are there anachronisms produced in the retelling? How does the expected audience shift the narrative? Does this new context change how we might interpret it?</p> <p>Option B Creative retelling. <i>Write your own version of a biblical story in a modern genre of your choosing.</i> Discuss and analyze (1) the creative choices made, (2) how the new genre affects the telling and interpretation of the story, and (3) the modern influences brought to bear on the story.</p> | <p>40% total</p> <p>Outline 10%</p> <p>Draft* + Final submission 30%</p> <p>*Drafts will be given a placeholder grade and feedback. You must submit your final project with recommended revisions and incorporated feedback to confirm a final grade</p> | <p>Final submission required for pass (cannot simply submit draft)</p> |

No scheduled Registrars’ Final Exam

How this course works:

Each week we will complete two (2) modules, so start your work early in the week (or late the week before). **To begin**, complete the First Weekly Module and then write your *Weekly Writing* (due Wednesdays). **Now**, turn to working on the Second Weekly Module which should be completed *before* class on Thursday (your *Weekly Writing* will prime you for Thursdays’ discussion questions, but you will need to have completed the Second Weekly Module to be able to engage in the discussion). **After class**, complete your three (3) *Peer Assessments* by Friday. **Next**, look over the feedback you received to incorporate going forward. **Throughout the week** you should be thinking about your *Writing Project* and engaging the discussion boards.

Grading:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme, usually used within the Department of Classics and Religion:

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------|---|----------|----|-----------|
| A+ | 100 – 96% | A | 95 – 90% | A- | 89 – 85% |
| B+ | 84 – 80% | B | 79 – 75% | B- | 74 – 70% |
| C+ | 69 – 65% | C | 64 – 60% | C- | 59 – 55% |
| D+ | 54 – 53% | D | 52 – 50% | F | Under 50% |

N.B. All written assignments will be graded with regard to both form and content. Rubrics for each assessment can be found on D2L.

Policy with regards to missed assignments/assessments:

Assignments and peer feedback are due on the D2L course website (dropbox, discussion board, or Creative Project page, depending on the assignment) at the time specified on the calendar. Please check with the calendar and make sure you know what days, times, and locations, things are due. It is your responsibility to ensure that you can send your assignment at the required time, as well as to ensure that you have made appropriate backup copies in case of system failures or other technological mishaps. Computers crash; please back up your files regularly!

Life happens and sometimes you need extensions. As much as you can, please reach out as soon as you realize that a deadline is not going to work for you. This is an intensive course that requires you to schedule your time carefully to keep up with course work. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis and with the understanding that we continue to operate under special circumstances due to the ongoing public health crisis. If in doubt, please send me a note or drop by my Zoom office hours.

Late assignments will be penalized by **5% per day** for a maximum of 10 days total (for a total of 50% deduction on an assignment submitted ten days late). After ten days you will receive a zero on un-submitted assignments unless arrangements with the instructor are made. Due to the peer review system in place for several of our assignments, late submissions may not receive feedback.

Expectations for student conduct in this course:

This course examines writings that many people, including some of your peers, hold to be sacred and/or of special cultural, historic, and religious value. As with all religious texts, we approach our inquiry with respect for the beliefs of others, and we approach our peers as humans with diverse opinions and experiences. We learn best when we listen carefully and speak from a place of mutual respect.

While we acknowledge the differences that exist between us and the different experiences we bring to the reading of these texts, in this course we will be learning to talk about sacred texts from a critical—not confessional or faith-based—perspective. We will respect the opinions of others *and* we will respect the process of critical inquiry.

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Electronic Device Policy: Electronic devices required! You will need reliable access to the internet, a speaker and microphone (or working headphones with built in mic), and a web cam (optional but recommended for small group work).

Syllabus:

A complete syllabus will be available on D2L one week before the summer term starts.

Academic Honesty:

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Calgary is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Calgary describes academic integrity as a commitment to honest and responsible scholarship.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Conduct](#). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor (me!) or from other [institutional resources](#).

Copyright Regulations:

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the [Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright Policy](#) and understand their copyright responsibilities. Instructor created content (lecture presentations, assignments, exams, etc.) have been designed for use as part of this course at the University of Calgary and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters and articles) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copyright-protected materials may only be copied or distributed provided it is permissible to do so under [Canadian Copyright law](#), university agreements and permission from the copyright holder. Find out more about copyright at library.ucalgary.ca/copyright.

Student Accommodations:

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities and medical concerns. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University's courses and programs. If you require accommodation please register with [Accessibility Services](#).

Desire 2 Learn (D2L) Help:

Go to <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students> for Student Help and FAQ's about D2L. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are also available on this website.

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

- For program planning and advice, students in the Faculty of Arts will contact The Arts Students' Centre (ASC). Drop in at SS102, call at 403-220-3580 or email at

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ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Block.

Freedom of Information and Privacy:

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP):

https://www.ucalgary.ca/hr/freedom_of_information_and_protection_of_privacy

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act indicates that assignments given by you to your course instructor will remain confidential unless otherwise stated before submission. The assignment cannot be returned to anyone else without your express permission. Similarly, any information about yourself that you share with your course instructor will not be given to anyone else without your permission. As one consequence, students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number on each subsequent page

Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative:

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/ombuds/> for more information. The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at arts1@su.ucalgary.ca.

Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point:

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints. Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

Safewalk:

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.

Health and Wellness:

There are services available to students to help with physical and mental health, including the SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>

Learn more about the Campus Mental Health Strategy here:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>