



# BIBS 215

## The Bible in Religious Education

### Distance Course Outline 2021

#### SEMESTER 1 2021

**Lecturer:**

*Dr Gillian Townsley*

[gtownsley@shcs.school.nz](mailto:gtownsley@shcs.school.nz)

**Tutor:**

*Katie Montgomery*

[katie.montgomery@otago.ac.nz](mailto:katie.montgomery@otago.ac.nz)

**Course Coordinator:**

*Paul Trebilco*

[paul.trebilco@otago.ac.nz](mailto:paul.trebilco@otago.ac.nz)

This course is designed to familiarise students with the content and worlds of the Old and New Testaments which together comprise the Bible. The Old Testament is known as the Hebrew Scriptures, being the sacred texts of the Jewish people. The New Testament describes the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the beginnings of the Christian Church.

The intention of this course is to develop an understanding of the key themes, people, events, dates, and places in the Bible and also to be able to recognise various types of literature in the Bible. With this background, students are then able to relate and use this material and understanding in order to deliver the National Religious Education Programme in Catholic schools.

#### LECTURER'S INTRODUCTION

*Your lecturer for this paper is Dr Gillian Townsley, RE Teacher & Chaplain, St Hilda's Collegiate School, Dunedin*

Kia Ora! Welcome! I'm looking forward to getting to know you as we discuss many interesting issues related to the use of the Bible in Religious Education. I know you will each bring your own experiences to this course and I welcome the depth and richness your contributions will bring.

From time to time, you may feel anxious about your study progress, and it is important that these anxieties be resolved promptly. If you have any queries about this paper, please get in touch with me at: [gtownsley@shcs.school.nz](mailto:gtownsley@shcs.school.nz)

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete the paper will be able to:

1. Explain some of the key events, figures, and themes of the Old Testament.
2. Recognise and explain some of the various kinds of literature (genre) in the Bible.
3. Understand and apply accepted methods of interpretation of some scripture texts.
4. Outline the contents, formation, themes, and world of the New Testament.
5. Analyse the different ways in which the Gospels portray Jesus.
6. Apply aspects of the New Testament message to the Catholic Schools' Religious Education programme by various technological methods.

## TEACHING

- Twelve recorded lectures posted onto Blackboard (see below)
- Four videoconference sessions using Zoom (see below)

## RESOURCES

- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool
- This Course Book which explains how the course is taught and contains the information needed for assessments, readings, etc.
- An essential textbook: **Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible – An Introduction*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2014 (second edition)**. This can be purchased through the University Bookshop: [www.unibooks.co.nz](http://www.unibooks.co.nz)
- eReserve, a resource for the readings, which you can access via Blackboard
- The Theology Programme's "Study and Style Guide" which recommends students use the 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Chicago Style Guide when writing essays. It is available online at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>
- The handbook *Distance Learning Information and Support*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this course book and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).

## **THIS IS IMPORTANT!**

**Please Note:** You must have access to Blackboard and your University email address in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided **only** through Blackboard and your University email address, as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy, and you must check these emails regularly, or arrange for them to be sent to your usual address. eVision will also send important messages through your University email.

If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved. You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Theology Programme's website. In particular, we require you to read the section called "Essential Student Information." You will find it here:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

This webpage provides a number of useful resources such as the *Study and Style Guide* and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

## **TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE**

The translation that is used in the Theology Programme is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This translation attempts to stay reasonably close to the original Hebrew and Greek text, whilst using contemporary and gender inclusive language. A copy can be obtained from the University Book Shop. **You will be required to bring a copy of your Bible with you into the exam so it MUST be a hard copy version; electronic copies of the Bible will not be permitted in the exam. Please the requirements under 'Examinations' below.**

## COURSE OUTLINE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due Dates</b>
1 March	1	What is this thing called "The Bible"?	
8 March	2	The Call of Abraham	CR#1 – Topic 1 or 2 5pm 14 March
15 March	3	Moses and the Ten Commandments	CR#2 – Topic 3 5pm 21 March
22 March	4	The Creation Story	CR#3 – Topic 4 5pm 28 March
29 March	5	The World of the New Testament & the Gospels	CR#4 – Topic 5 5pm 4 April
2-11 April	<b>MID SEMESTER BREAK – EASTER</b>		
12 April	6	The Gospel of Matthew	Creative OT Assignment 5pm 14 April NB: No CR for Week 6
19 April	7	The Gospel of Luke	CR#5 – Topic 6 or 7 5pm 25 April
26 April	<b>ANZAC DAY OBSERVED (Monday)</b>		
3 May	8	The Gospel of Mark	CR#6 – Topic 8 5pm 9 May
10 May	9	The Gospel of John	CR#7 – Topic 9 5pm 16 May
17 May	10	Paul and His Letters	Creative NT Assignment 5pm 19 May NB: No CR for Week 10
24 May	11	Prophecy and the Role of the Prophets	CR#8 – Topic 10 or 11 5pm 30 May
31 May	12	Poetry and Wisdom Literature	CR#9 – Topic 12 5pm 6 June
			<b>EXAM</b>

## VIDEOCONFERENCES & LECTURES

The lectures will be recorded and be available on Blackboard under the *Lecture Recordings* link for this paper and should be viewed prior to the relevant Zoom session.

For *distance students* the course topics will be also covered during four main Zoom videoconference sessions, as outlined below.

For full instructions about using Zoom please see 'Zoom Instructions' section on Blackboard, **The URL you need to join in will be posted under Zoom Instructions on Blackboard - this URL will be the same for both sessions.** For information on how to access and use Zoom and Blackboard please read the 'Essential Information' website and follow the links given there: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/> If you have any problems or concerns do not hesitate to contact either the help numbers given on Blackboard or one of the administrative staff listed at the end of this Outline.

The Agenda for each session is given below the timetable. It would be beneficial to consider this before each session, but please attend even if you haven't been able to do so. Note that because of timing, some of the topics will be covered via Zoom before the lectures have been recorded. If you miss a Zoom session the link to the recording will be posted on Blackboard under 'Videoconference Recordings.'

### Zoom Videoconference Timetable:

#### **Introductory Session: (Monday March 1st) 6:10pm – 7:00pm**

Introductions  
Overview of Course  
Assessments – Critical Reflections  
Topic 1: What is this thing called “The Bible”?

#### **Session 1: (Monday March 22nd) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

Topic 2: The Call of Abraham  
Topic 3: Moses and the Ten Commandments  
Topic 4: The Creation Story  
Assessments – Creative OT Assignment

#### **Session 2: (Monday April 12th) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

Topic 5: The World of the New Testament & the Gospels  
Topic 6: The Gospel of Matthew  
Topic 7: The Gospel of Luke  
Assessments – Creative NT Assignment

**Session 3: (Monday May 3rd) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

Topic 8: The Gospel of Mark

Topic 9: The Gospel of John

Topic 10: Paul and His Letters

Assessments – Critical Reflections

**Session 4: (Monday May 24th) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

Topic 11: Prophecy and the Role of Prophets

Topic 12: Poetry and Wisdom Literature

Assessments – Exam Preparation

**ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCES AGENDA****Introductory Session: (Monday March 1st) 6:10pm – 7:00pm**

We will introduce ourselves and I will explain any aspects of the course that you are unsure about at this stage. In particular, I will go over the requirements for the Critical Reflections.

Topic 1 – What is this thing called the “Bible”?

- When we pick up a Bible and hold it in our hands, it feels like a book. But in fact what we are holding is more like a library. What is the significance of this?
- What does the word “canon” mean in relation to the Bible? What does this mean for both Jewish and Christian faiths; and Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity?
- When we open the Bible we usually read it in English or whatever is our first language. But unless we are reading it in Hebrew and Greek we are reading a translation. What is the significance of this?
- What does the word “genre” mean? Does it make a difference to your interpretation of a passage if you know that you are reading poetry or law or a letter for example?
- A useful strategy for reading the Bible (or any ancient text) is to consider (1) the world behind the text (2) the world within the text, and (3) the world in front of the text. How do you explain each of these “worlds”? Why is this a good approach?

**Session 1: (Monday March 22nd) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

## Topic 2 – The Call of Abraham

- How would you describe these words in everyday Western usage: election, promise and covenant. What do they mean in terms of faith and religion?
- Why is Abraham a central character in the story of the three faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam?
- What promises are made in Gen 12.1-3 and the covenant in Gen 15? In what ways are these still relevant (or not) do you think? Have they been problematic for relations between Jewish, Christian and Muslim people?
- Christians call the books of the Hebrew Scriptures the Old Testament and the Christian writings the New Testament. When you recognise that the word “testament” means a “covenant,” why do you think these two collections of writings came to be known in this way?
- The stories in the Pentateuch are often called the patriarchal narratives – why is this? Can you name some of the women in these stories? In what ways are their stories and their roles within these stories important?

## Topic 3 – Moses and the Ten Commandments

- Why is Moses a key figure in the story of the Jewish people? How is his role similar to that of Abraham? How is it different? Is Moses a key figure in the story of Christianity? How is this similar to his significance in Judaism? How is it different?
- When you look at the first chapter of the book of Exodus, what do you notice about the characters in terms of men and women? Who is named and who is not? What is the significance of this? What does the word “exodus” mean?
- What is the significance of the Torah (law)? What place does this have in Judaism? In Christianity? Do Christians follow the Torah? Why or why not?
- Some people say that the Ten Commandments should be followed by society today as a code of conduct for everyone, everywhere. Do you agree or disagree? Are some of the commandments more (or less) relevant today than others? Why?

## Topic 4 – The Creation Story

- The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is one of the most well-known stories of the Bible. But what differences do you notice between the creation accounts in Gen 1 and 2? How do we explain these differences? Should we try to reconcile them?
- A common debate about these texts is whether they are compatible with a scientific explanation of the origin of the universe. Do science and scriptures end up so far apart that they are irreconcilable?
- How does knowing the type of genre (or type) of this writing help us in understanding the purpose of these texts? What clues are there in these accounts that alert you to their genre? How would you describe the genre of Gen 1?
- How does a passage such as Proverbs 8.22-31 aid our understanding of Gen 1-3? What about a passage such as John 1.1-14? What do these passages tell us about the importance of a Creator God for both Judaism and Christianity?

Questions about the Creative OT Assignment.

**Session 2: (Monday April 12th) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

## Topic 5 – The World of the NT and the Nature of the Gospels

- The world of first century Judaism is very different to our twenty-first century world in terms of politics, culture, religion and historical events. How useful is it to know this “world behind the text”?
- With regard to the “world within the text,” what genre of material do we have in the New Testament? How different and/or similar is it to the sorts of written material we have today?
- How would you describe the genre “gospel”? Look up Mark 1.1 and discuss what this suggests with regard to the meaning of the word “gospel.”
- Look up Luke 1.1-4 and discuss the implications these statements have for understanding the process by which the gospel material came to written down.
- There other early Christian gospels in existence, so how and when did these particular four get chosen to be viewed as Scripture? Is Dan Brown (author of *The Da Vinci Code*) correct that the process of selecting the gospels is a conspiracy by the Catholic church?

## Topic 6 – The Gospel of Matthew

- What do you know about the Gospel of Matthew? Ideally for this discussion you would have sat down and read the whole gospel through in one sitting! If you have done this, comment on what you discovered about Matthew as a result!
- What are some of the distinctives of the Gospel of Matthew? How is it structured and arranged? Why did Matthew write this account of Jesus' life? What clues can we glean from the text itself about its purpose?
- Think about the Christmas story that we know from carols, nativity plays and scenes on Christmas cards. Then read Matthew 1.1 – 2.23 and Luke 1.1 – 2.40. How are they similar and/or different to each other? To the Christmas story we know?
- What is a parable? What are some parables with which you might be familiar, or at least know about from popular culture? Why did Jesus choose to teach in parables?

## Topic 7 – The Gospel of Luke

- What do you know about the Gospel of Luke? Just as above with regard to the Gospel of Matthew, ideally for this discussion you would have sat down and also read this gospel through in one sitting. If you have done this, comment on what you discovered about Luke as a result!
- Also above, we looked at Luke 1.1-4. Now look up Acts 1.1. What is the relationship between the Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles?
- What are some of the distinctives of the Gospel of Luke? How is it structured and arranged? Bearing in mind the point above, why did Luke write this account of Jesus' life? What clues can we glean from the text itself about its purpose?
- Jesus was known as a teacher but Jesus was also described by the gospel writers as a miracle-worker. Which miracles are you familiar with in terms of general knowledge about Jesus? But what is a “miracle”? Do they happen today? What are some of the ways people account for these events in the gospels? What was their purpose in Jesus' ministry?

Questions about the Creative NT Assignment.



### Session 3: (Monday May 3rd) 6:10pm – 8:00pm

#### Topic 8 – The Gospel of Mark

- What do you know about the Gospel of Mark? Just as above with regard to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, ideally for this discussion you would have sat down and also read this gospel through in one sitting. If you have done this, comment on what you discovered about Mark as a result!
- What are some of the distinctives of the Gospel of Mark? How is it structured and arranged? Why did Mark write this account of Jesus' life? What clues can we glean from the text itself about its purpose?
- Matthew, Mark and Luke are so similar in terms of their content that they are described as the “synoptic” gospels. What does this word mean? What does “Markan priority” mean? What is the significance of this idea?
- What do you notice about the ending of this gospel? Quickly look at Matthew 28, Luke 24 and John 20. What are some of the common features of these accounts regarding who saw the risen Christ? Look up 1 Corinthians 15.3-8 and see what you notice about Paul's account.

#### Topic 9 – The Gospel of John

- What do you know about the Gospel of John? Just as above with regard to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and Mark, ideally for this discussion you would have sat down and also read this gospel through in one sitting. If you have done this, comment on what you discovered about John as a result!
- John is very different to the synoptic gospels. Consider the account of Jesus feeding the 5000, the Cleansing of the Temple, and the Anointing at Bethany (see handouts). How do we explain the differences in John's account?
- What are some of the other distinctives of the Gospel of John? How is it structured and arranged? Why did John write this account of Jesus' life? What clues can we glean from the text itself about its purpose (see, for example, John 20.30)?

#### Topic 10 – Paul and his Letters

- Paul's letters to various fledgling churches were all written to address specific situations; in what way are we reading someone else's mail?
- Look at one of the letters Paul wrote to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians); what do we learn from the following verses about the “occasional” nature of this letter? See 1Cor 1.11, 5.1, 7.1, 8.1, 12.1, 16.1.
- Look at the opening verses of the following letters: 1 Cor 1.1-6; Phil 1.1-6; 2 Thessalonians 1.1-3; and 2 Timothy 1.1-4. What do you notice about the conventions for first century Greco-Roman letter-writing?
- Look up Colossians 4.16. What do we learn from this snippet of information? What would happen if Paul's letter to the Laodiceans was found by archeologists next week? Would it be considered as scripture and added to the New Testament?
- Depending on the situations Paul is addressing he stresses different aspects of Christian life and faith. Are there core beliefs at the heart of Paul's theology which he would never compromise?

Questions about the Critical Reflections.

**Session 4: (Monday May 24th) 6:10pm – 8:00pm**

## Topic 11 – Prophecy and the Role of the Prophets

- The books in the Hebrew Scriptures that concern prophecy can be divided into two categories; the former and the latter (or major and minor). Which books fall into each category and why?
- What is the role or purpose of prophecy in the biblical tradition? How does it differ from the other collections of writings in the Hebrew Scriptures such as the Pentateuch? How is it similar?
- Like Moses, the prophets experienced a call from God into their role. Compare and contrast the calls of Moses and Jeremiah, for example; how are they similar and/or different?
- In the New Testament we also find prophets operating in the early church; see 1 Cor 11.4-5, 12.28, and 14.29. See also Acts 21.8-9. How is this role different between the Old and the New Testaments? Some people argue that this role has now ceased in the church while others argue that it is still an essential role; what are your views?

## Topic 12 – Poetry and Wisdom Literature

- Another two categories of writing in the Hebrew Scriptures are that of poetry and wisdom literature. Which books come under each category? How do these collections differ between the Jewish and Christian canons?
- What kind of voices do we hear in the Psalms? In the wisdom literature? In what ways are these voices different to those that we have heard in the Law? The Prophets?
- The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is probably one of the most well-known texts from the Bible. How helpful is it to know its historical context? People often cite Psalm 139 as a statement of God's extraordinary love for us as individuals, but they will often leave out verses 19-22; why is this? Is that acceptable practice in terms of reading the Bible?
- The book of Job is perhaps one of the oldest writings that we have in the Hebrew Scriptures. What are some of the big issues that this book raises?
- We noted the passage Proverbs 8.22-31 above; who is this figure of "Wisdom" and what is the significance of this? Some scholars suggest that Jesus can be associated with this female figure of wisdom. What is your response to this?

Questions about preparation for the Exam.

## ASSESSMENT

The assessment for this paper comprises four elements:

Assessment Task	Percentage	Due
Critical Reflections (five)	25%	5pm Sundays <sup>1</sup>
Creative Assignment – Old Testament (Power Point)	15%	5pm 14 April
Creative Assignment – New Testament (A) Classroom Resource                      (B) Oral Presentation	(A) 15% (B) 5%	5pm 19 May
Two-hour exam	40%	

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Assignment 1 Critical Reflections

Value	25% of final mark
Due date	5pm Sundays (see the Course Outline above for specific dates)
Length	Max 300 words each

Please note:

- You can submit these up to ONE WEEK late. If you do submit late then you will get less feedback. There are NO extensions or late submissions after that one week.
- There are nine Critical Reflections (CR) available and your best FIVE will count as 5% each towards your final grade.
- These are to be a single paragraph using formal academic writing with Chicago (16<sup>th</sup> edition) style but you do not need to include a bibliography.

The task involves writing a paragraph of **your response to an idea or an issue from the relevant textbook chapter(s) or secondary reading(s)** (as per the Reading Guide below). Use your 'critical voice' to engage with an idea or an issue from the reading material that particularly caught your attention. It might be something you strongly agreed or disagreed with; something that surprised you; or something that made you reflect upon something else you have read or seen, events in the world or media, or your own personal experience.

---

<sup>1</sup> There are nine weeks that you can do a Critical Reflection; each of your top FIVE will be worth 5% of your final grade; see Assignments for more information.

This is not as easy as it seems! Here are some ideas to help you:

1. You will need to identify something in the reading that interests you and think about why it does.
2. Do not let your immediate reaction be your answer – think about why you reacted in that way; you could also discuss this with friends, family, or other students.
3. Find something else you have experienced, heard, read, or seen that can help you explain your ideas.
4. Connect with the key concepts of the course as presented in the lectures to help you explain your reasoning.
5. As you write, begin with what interested you, explain why and how you reacted, link to the course concepts and other material, and make sure your argument is reasoned, showing critical thinking (and referencing where needed).

One of the purposes of this task is to practice your academic writing skills, so aim for a professional writing style (as you would with an essay). Use correct spelling and grammar, full sentences, no slang, etc. You can – and should – use the first person in this writing (“I think ... I agree ... I disagree”) when you are expressing your thoughts and views, but make sure you fully acknowledge any sources, using footnotes as per the Chicago style. You do not need to include a bibliography. Write clearly and simply, with careful editing and proofreading.

As explained above, you can do up to nine CRs over the course with your top FIVE grades counting towards your final grade at 5% each. Some thoughts to consider:

- You might want to do the early ones since the semester gets busier not easier
- You might like to use these as a way to structure your study for the week
- You might want to use the first few as practice entries to develop your critical voice without worrying too much about the grade
- You might want to plan which ones you want to do based on other commitments such as school placements or assignments from other courses

CRs are important because they will help you to keep on track with the reading that is expected in this course. They will also encourage you to really think critically about what you are reading and to help you process and make sense of new ideas. They will also give you a chance to express your ideas through academic writing – and to get feedback to help you develop this important skill.

There are a couple of examples of CRs on Blackboard (from a different subject area) to give you an idea of what is expected.

## Assignment 2

### Creative Assignment – Old Testament

Value 15% of final mark  
Due date Tutorial Week 6

The stories of Abraham and Moses are taught in the Catholic Schools' Religious Education Programme. Using your background knowledge, design a Power Point presentation depicting the life of Abraham **OR** Moses. This must include **your understanding of their Call, Mission, and Covenant**. You will need to supply corroborating notes to the presentation and pitch the material to suit the age and class level of your choice, which needs to be made clear.

The marking of this assignment will take into account:

1. Shows evidence and understanding of reading and understanding the Abraham OR Moses story, including their **Call, Mission, and Covenant**.
2. Clear and succinct expression of ideas on Power Point.
3. Ability to pitch material to age group chosen.
4. Quality of creative presentation.
5. Corroborating notes explaining the Power Point slides.
6. All source material must be referenced (except for the Bible).

## Assignment 3

### Creative Assignment – New Testament

Value 20% of final mark

**Part A (15% of the final mark)**  
Due date Tutorial Week 10

Choose ONE miracle OR parable account from the Gospels of Matthew OR Luke. Design a presentation for a class using some form of information technology (eg. Voki.com, blog, wiki space, short video, etc. but NOT Power Point) conveying the **KEY POINTS** about the miracle or parable you have chosen. Supply corroborating notes to the presentation and show one teaching strategy (ie. how you will present this to your class). Clearly indicate the class level you have chosen.

The marking of this assignment will take into account:

1. Shows evidence of understanding the Miracle or Parable chosen.
2. Ability to pitch material at level of age group chosen.
3. Clear presentation using your chosen medium.
4. Quality of presentation.
5. Corroborating notes including the teaching strategy you will use.
6. All source material must be referenced (except for the Bible).

**Part B (5% of the final mark)**

Due date TBA

The miracle or parable you have chosen is to be presented orally (eg. learnt off by heart) and presented to the tutor. Times will be arranged. Your tutor will provide further details on how to present your assignment before the due date.

**REFERENCING SYSTEM**

For writing assignments, the Theology Programme requires that you use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is often recommended for theses in the humanities. The Theology Programme has prepared a *Study and Style Guide*, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Theology Programme's "Student Resources and Information" page:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

**SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK**

All assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form. They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted. This can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>. It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

All assignments shall be submitted by 5pm on the due dates notified.

Before you submit each Critical Reflection, make a backup copy, either in electronic form or on paper, and keep it in a safe place.

It is expected that the Old Testament assignment (a Power Point presentation) should be provided electronically (as an attachment or shared in Google Slides etc.) to your Tutor.

The New Testament assignment should be submitted as a working URL link or file in an email addressed to Katie Montgomery: [katie.montgomery@otago.ac.nz](mailto:katie.montgomery@otago.ac.nz)

Part B, the oral presentation, will be given via Skype or Zoom or another alternative. Further details will be provided nearer to the due date.

After assignments have been marked they will be returned via Blackboard or email. The intention is that assignments will be marked and returned to you within two weeks.

You need to make sure that you check your student email and/or your student email forwards to the email address you normally use. If you don't know how to set up forwarding, contact Ask Otago at (03) 479 8000 or: [askit@otago.ac.nz](mailto:askit@otago.ac.nz)

## EXAMINATION

There will be a **two-hour exam worth 40%** of the final mark.

Details of your examination will be posted on your eVision calendar as soon as they are set by the Examinations Office. All enquiries regarding exams should be directed to the Examinations Office: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/exams/>. The Theology Programme cannot make any arrangements or provide details about exams. Distance students must ensure that their **Semester Address details in eVision are up to date** as these will be used to arrange the venue for distance exams.

**Please note:** students are **required** to bring a Bible to the examination. It should be a copy of the NRSV and it may or may not have the Apocrypha. It must have **no annotations or underlining** and it must **not** be a study edition (which has extensive footnotes). It must **not** be an eBook or in electronic format. If you have any doubts about your edition, please check with your lecturer.

The examination supervisor will need to check your Bible before you are allowed to use it. If it does not comply with the above, the examination supervisor will hold your Bible until the examination is over, thus you will not have access to a Bible for the examination.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else's misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University's Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy and learn more, please visit the University's Academic Integrity website at [www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity](http://www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity) or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

## READING GUIDE

### Topic 1

## What is this Thing Called “The Bible”?

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- recognise that reading and interpreting texts is a complex and challenging task.
- understand that throughout history people have interpreted biblical texts differently.
- recognise that questions are the tools used in interpretation.
- work with the three approaches, that consider (1) the world behind the text (2) the world within the text, and (3) the world in front of the text.
- recognise the difficulties and challenges in translating the original texts into English.
- recognise that the Bible has its own whakapapa in the literature of the Ancient Near East.

**Text Book Reading 1** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 1. “The Bible: A Gradually Emerging Collection,” 3-18.

*This chapter is foundational for the rest of your study of the Bible in this course so take the time to read this carefully. You may well want to come back to it several times over this semester.*

**Text Book Reading 2** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 2 “From Then to Now: The Transmission of the Bible,” 19-32.

*We do not have any original manuscripts of the books in the Bible. What we have are hundreds of scrolls, papyrus manuscripts and various other texts that have been copied and transmitted over the centuries. So how do we get a whole Bible from that collection of manuscripts and how do we know that what we have is an accurate copy of the original text? How come we have so many different translations of the Bible? This chapter will look at some of these issues.*

**For Further Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 3 “Inspiration: The Claim that God Speaks in a Text,” 33-45.

*The idea that God might actually speak through the words of the Bible is a controversial subject. How do we understand the Bible as the “Living Word” of God? Did the writers just let God dictate to them what to write? Are there any mistakes in the Bible or is everything in the Bible true? What does it mean when people say that the Bible is inspired? What are some of the different ways in which people have understood this idea over the centuries?*



## Topic 2

### The Call of Abraham

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- identify the five books of the Pentateuch.
- discuss the nature and significance of the Abraham narratives .
- discuss the importance of the promises in Gen.12:1-3.
- discuss the significance of the covenant relationship.
- recognise the roles of Sarah and Hagar.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 4 “The Pentateuch, Part 1,” 67-77.

*Abraham is a central character in the story of the Jewish people. Therefore, he is also central to the stories of both Christianity and Islam. Thus, three important religions of the world trace their origins to Abraham! The section in Sumney’s chapter on Abraham is our focus here.*

**Recommended Reading** Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. “Genesis 12-50: The Patriarchs: Ancestors of Israel’s Faith,” 89-102.

*This chapter gives the background to this section of Genesis where we read the story of Abraham and Sarah and their call, and also of their descendants. In this reading the authors also discuss the theology of these stories – why they are important to faith in terms of the themes of election, promise and covenant. These are key ideas for this topic so this is definitely worth reading.*

**Further Reading** Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. “The Old Testament Narratives: Their Proper Use,” 93-111.

*Fee and Stuart note that, “the single most common type of literature in the Bible is narrative,” and that “over 40% of the Old Testament is narrative” (93). Yet they also note that Christians “have often read the Old Testament so poorly” (107). Pay attention to the wise advice they give on how to read the stories of the Old Testament in a way that does justice to the genre of narrative – does what they say change how you might approach the Bible? Their whole book is worth reading – we will read another one of their chapters in Topic 10 on Paul and His Letters.*

## Topic 3

### Moses and the Ten Commandments

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- recognise the importance of Moses in the ancient Israelite tradition .
- provide a detailed reading of the call of Moses.
- recognise the significance of the giving of the Law (Torah).
- provide a critical interpretation of the Ten Commandments.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 5 “The Pentateuch, Part 2,” 79-104.

*This reading takes us through the rest of the Pentateuch where the character of Moses and the story of the Exodus are of prime importance. Here we read the story of the Ten Commandments and the establishment of the covenant between the people of Israel and God.*

**Recommended Reading** Robert Kugler and Patrick Hartin, *An Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. “Introduction to the Pentateuch,” 45-50; “Exodus,” 68-79.

*These chapters will provide another perspective on this topic and focus on the story of Moses and the Exodus. One author is Catholic and the other is Protestant, which is interesting in itself! Look for information that supplements your first reading and helps you understand the importance of Moses to the story of the Jewish people and also to Christians. Also, look for material that tells you more about the call of Moses.*

**Further Reading** Phyllis Trible, “Bringing Miriam Out of the Shadows.” In *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, edited by Athalya Brenner, 166-186. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994.

*This essay reminds us that the stories of women in the Bible are overlooked even if they are there in the text. Why do you think they have been overlooked? What difference does it make to our understanding of the Bible to realise this has happened?*

## Topic 4

### The Creation Story

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session you should be able to:

- provide a critical reading of the creation hymn in Genesis 1.
- discuss the range of possible interpretations of the creation narrative in Genesis 2-3.
- compare these traditions with other creation texts, such as Proverbs 8:22-31.
- Recognise the theological importance of creation for ancient Israel.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 4 “The Pentateuch, Part 1,” 49-67.

*The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is one of the most well-known stories of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet it is also one of the most controversial; is it a true record of how the universe began? Do science and scriptures end up so far apart that they are irreconcilable? How do we deal with the two quite different accounts of events in Genesis 1-2? Can these stories really tell us anything about who we are as human beings in the 21st century? This reading will introduce you to some themes and issues in the creation story that you may well have never thought about before.*

**Recommended Reading** Antoinette Collins, “Genesis: Chapters 1-11.” In *Reading the Bible: An Introduction for Students*, edited by Maurice Ryan & Antoinette Collins, 19-33. Tuggerah, NSW: Social Science Press, 2003.

*This chapter focuses on the first 11 chapters of Genesis. The creation accounts are examined as well as the other events that follow (up to the story of Abraham and Sarah). What is myth and what is history? What questions are these chapters aiming to answer for the Jewish people? How do we respond to them today?*

**Further Reading** Edward J. Larson, “The Classroom Controversy: A History of the Dispute over Teaching Evolution.” In *The Panda’s Black Box: Opening up The Intelligent Design Controversy*, edited by Nathaniel Comfort, 63-82. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007.

*This essay looks at the history of the debate about teaching evolution in the USA. This debate is not as strong in New Zealand but we still hear discussion about “science versus creation” (or faith versus reason). The debate has moved over the years from a promotion of the belief of a literal six-day creation to what is known as “intelligent design.” If this is a topic that interests you, then this essay will be worth reading.*

## Topic 5

### The World of the New Testament & The Gospels

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- outline the major historical events that contributed to the formation of the world into which the New Testament was written.
- outline the contents of the New Testament.
- describe what is understood by the term “gospel.”
- explain why Matthew, Mark and Luke are termed “synoptic gospels.”
- briefly explain the four stages in the formation of the gospels.
- describe the gospels as four different portraits of Jesus.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 11 “The Gospels: Their Composition and Nature,” 225-37.

*We now focus on the specific genre of writing called a “gospel” and the story of Jesus. Although these are not the earliest writings in the New Testament (the letters were written earlier) they are of primary importance to Christianity since they tell us what the early church remembered about the life and death of Jesus. This chapter explores how these documents came into being and also examines the issue of who Jesus was historically; the historical Jesus as opposed to the Christ of faith.*

**Recommended Reading** Walter A. Elwell, and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. “The Middle East in the Days of Jesus,” 39-68.

*This chapter gives a good overview of the political, historical, geographical and religious life in first century Judaism. Knowing these things is tremendously helpful when we come to read the material in the New Testament.*

**Further Reading** Marielle Frigge, *Beginning Biblical Studies*. Revised Edition. Anselm Academic, 2013. “New Testament Background,” 140-55.

*This chapter covers the connections between the two testaments, the sociopolitical and religious contexts at the time of Jesus, the tensions within and beyond Judaism and the emerging Christian community, and Jesus as the Christ of the gospels. She has timelines, maps, a glossary of key terms and other useful features. There are also boxes with extra information on topics such as crucifixion in the Roman Empire and the different Jewish sects.*

## Topic 6

### The Gospel of Matthew

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- outline the contents of Matthew's gospel and describe some of its most important themes.
- explain the nature and the importance of the infancy narrative in Matthew's gospel.
- describe the key features of a parable and account for Jesus' use of parables in his teaching.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 12 "Four Views of One Jesus: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John," 239; 248-56.

*There are four gospels in the New Testament and this chapter considers how they relate to each other; three of the gospels are remarkably similar (Mark, Matthew and Luke – the synoptic gospels), while John is very different. Our focus in this topic is the Gospel of Matthew so the reading is just the section on this gospel.*

**Recommended Reading** Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. "Introduction to the Parables," 279-83; "The Parable of the Compassionate Employer: Matthew 20:1-16," 355-64; "The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Young Women: Matthew 25:1-13," 269-78.

*Bailey has a real insight into what life was like in first century Palestine and in these chapters you will find out about how to read parables from that era. They are deceptively easy to read but knowing the cultural context from which they come is really important and will reveal all sorts of new insights into their meaning. I suggest that you firstly read the parables that Bailey is looking at in his book before you read the relevant chapter.*

**Further Reading** Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*. Broadman & Holman: Nashville, 1997. "The Gospel of Matthew," 126-39.

*This chapter provides a good overview of the content and structure of this gospel. It looks at different topics such as the views of Jesus, the themes, circumstances and authorship. Blomberg has an easy style to read and also provides some good charts and diagrams to help make things clear. He also has extra reading and questions for review, which are helpful.*

## Topic 7

### The Gospel of Luke

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- outline the contents and purpose of Luke I Acts.
- name some of the characteristic of Luke's infancy narrative.
- define the term miracle and comment on the purpose of miracles.
- name some of the miracle stories in Luke's gospel

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 12 "Four Views of One Jesus: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John," 256-66.

*Our focus in this topic is the Gospel of Luke so the reading is just the section on this gospel. See what you can find out about this gospel, particularly with regard to the infancy narratives, the portrait Luke gives us of Jesus, and also the miracles.*

**Recommended Reading** Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*. Oxford: OUP, 2002. "Miracles and Exorcisms," 232-39.

*This chapter provides a good overview of topic of miracles in Jesus' ministry. We are so far removed from the first century that it can be hard to know what kind of event we are really talking about when we read these stories. Stanton also explores the question of why Jesus performed miracles.*

**Further Reading** Gerd Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*. London: SCM Press, 1987. "In Place of a Foreword," 1-2; "The Interrogation," 3-10; "Blackmail," 11-19.

*This is an extract from an academically rigorous yet creative and fictional account of the life of Jesus. It is hard to describe so I just encourage you to have a read; you may want to get the rest of the book out of the library and finish it!*

## Topic 8

### The Gospel of Mark

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- outline the contents and basic themes of Mark's Gospel.
- understand the purpose of the Gospel.
- explain the term exegesis.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 12 “Four Views of One Jesus: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John,” 240-48.

*There are four gospels in the New Testament and this chapter considers how they relate to each other; three of the gospels are remarkably similar (Mark, Matthew and Luke – the synoptic gospels), while John is very different. Our focus in this topic is the Gospel of Mark so the reading is just the section on this gospel.*

**Recommended Reading** Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. “Mark: An Apology for the Crucifixion of Jesus,” 150-83.

*This chapter provides another perspective on the Gospel of Mark. It also has lots of pictures, maps etc. As you read this, look for information that is new and/or different to that of Sumney. Look particularly for the portrait of Jesus that Mark gives us. It is also good to note that Gundry’s chapter is subtitled, “An Apology for the Crucifixion of Jesus” – it would be good to consider why this is the case. At the end of his chapter Gundry lists some questions under the heading, “How Much Did You Learn?” These are worth considering.*

**Further Reading** Nick Cave, *The Gospel According to Mark*. London: Canongate, 1998. “Introduction,” vii-xii. Also available online here:  
<http://www.nickcave.it/extra.php?ldExtra=78>

*This is a short and alternative introduction to the Gospel of Mark written by a musician and writer. It is non-academic but written with intelligence and an obvious understanding of the essence of this gospel. It is also a passionate and personal explanation for why this gospel is dear to his heart.*

## Topic 9

### The Gospel of John

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- outline the structure and contents of John's gospel and comment on the author's primary purpose.
- offer suggestions about the relationship between John and the Synoptic gospels.
- describe some of the distinctive features and themes of John's gospel.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 12 “Four Views of One Jesus: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John,” 266-76.

*The focus of this topic is John's gospel as it is very different to the synoptic gospels. How we deal with these differences is an important part of our approach to the Bible. John's gospel also has lots of stories and verses which people often remember and associate with Jesus and Christianity even if they do not go to church.*

**Recommended Reading** Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity*. Cambridge: CUP, 2002. “The Gospel of John,” 214-35.

*Just to give you a taste of a different author, I have included this chapter by Burkett. See if you can pick up on new material that Sumney misses. In particular, look for what Burkett says about the portrait of Jesus that John gives us. If you end up enjoying a particular author, you may want to look at what else they have to say on the other topics we cover. The wider you read, the more understanding you will gain on a topic.*

**Further Reading** Howard Marshall, “Gospels.” In *The IVP Introduction to the Bible*, edited by Philip S. Johnston, 185-205. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

*This chapter provides a detailed overview to all of the Gospels and so will be a good summary for you at the end of this section on the Gospels. With regard to John, he explores some of the differences between this gospel and the synoptics. He also considers how to read the gospels and also how to use them today.*



## Topic 10

### Paul and His Letters

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- describe Paul's letters and their aim.
- discuss the pattern that Paul's letter followed.
- outline the form and structure of Paul's letters and show how these were different from the form of the gospels.
- name Paul's central theology in all of his writings.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 14 “The Pauline Letters: Apostolic Advice to Early Churches,” 293-328.

*Paul's letters to various fledgling churches are the oldest documents in the New Testament. They were all written to address specific situations and therefore when we read these letters we are reading someone else's mail! Yet these “occasional” writings are in the Bible and we read them as important for the Church today. Consequently, learning how to read these letters is vital; they contain material that is not actually addressed to us, and many things that we find difficult to understand since they come from a different period in history and a different culture.*

**Recommended Reading** Gordon D. Fee & Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014. “The Epistles: Learning to Think Contextually,” 45-60.

*Fee and Stuart remind us that the letters are “occasional” documents and so they look at the importance of taking this into account when we read them. They focus on a section of Paul's letter to the Corinthians and demonstrate how thinking contextually is important.*

**Further Reading** Sandra Hack Polaski, *A Feminist Introduction to Paul*. St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2005. “Paul and His Churches,” 47-63.

*Polaski's book explores different feminist approaches to Paul, someone who many people either see as quite patriarchal and sexist or as a great liberator of women. In this chapter Polaski looks at the letters Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and the many controversial passages in those letters that have to do with women. Some of these passages have been used to control and abuse women for centuries. She explores how a Christian feminist approach to these passages might find ways to move forward and affirm women in both the church and society today.*

## Topic 11

### Prophecy and the Role of Prophets

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- have an understanding of what is meant by prophecy and prophet in the biblical tradition.
- discuss the difference between the collections of the Former Prophets and the Latter Prophets.
- recognise the connections between the prophetic writings and the Torah.
- discuss the significance of the relationship between the calls of Moses and Jeremiah.
  
- recognise that the prophetic works have been highly edited, and that the book of Isaiah is a collection of material from different times and contexts.

**Text Book Reading** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 7 “Thus Says the Lord: Israel's Prophetic Tradition,” 141-172.

*The prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures have influenced much of the way in which Christianity (and Judaism) have understood how God's people should live. The prophets are concerned with personal morality and faith but also with social justice and economics.*

**Recommended Reading** Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why The Right Gets It Wrong and The Left Doesn't Get It*. “Amos and Enron: What Scandalizes God?” 259-69.

*In this chapter Wallis examines contemporary issues of social justice and how the book of Amos can help us work out what an appropriate Christian response might be. Questions of politics and economics are considered and he challenges us to what difference we could make if Christians took the call to justice seriously.*

**Further Reading** Maurice Ryan, “Prophets and Prophecy in Ancient Israel.” In *Reading the Bible: An Introduction for Students*, edited by Maurice Ryan & Antoinette Collins, 72-88. Tuggerah, NSW: Social Science Press, 2003.

*This chapter offers another look at the historical aspect of this topic. It also focuses on the book of Amos, which is one of the Old Testament prophetic books. It would be good to read Amos alongside this chapter.*

## Topic 12

### Poetry and Wisdom Literature

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this topic you should be able to:

- recognise the different liturgical uses of the psalms.
- provide a detailed reading of a selected psalm.
- identify the works known as Israel's wisdom literature, and name their concerns and characteristics.
- recognise the significance of the Wisdom figure within this tradition.
- discuss the "big questions" raised by the book of Job.

**Text Book Reading 1** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 8 "An Alternative Worldview: Israel's Wisdom Literature and Esther," 173-185.

*There are many voices and perspectives in the Bible. We have looked at the collection of books in the Pentateuch and the Prophets and now we come to another group of books generally called The Writings, which contains the wisdom literature and poetry. This chapter looks at the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which are the wisdom books. It also looks at the story of Esther, which is more of a novella than wisdom literature but is contained here because of its outlook, which still fits with the perspective of the wisdom material.*

**Text Book Reading 2** Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction*. Chapter 9 "Israel's Response to God: The Psalms and the Song of Solomon," 187-194.

*In addition to different voices and perspectives in the Bible, there are also different forms (or genre) of writing; the one this chapter considers is that of poetry. There are many familiar lines and phrases that are in our current contexts which come from these books and with which we are familiar; "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23) through to "Love is as strong as death" (Song of Songs).*

**Further Reading** Christopher Gilbert, *A Complete Introduction to the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 2009. "Songs and Wisdom Literature," 113-28.

*This chapter provides good detail on the different kinds of psalms – from lament to hymns – as well as on the other key books of poetry and wisdom. Each book, from Job to Song of Songs, and everything in between, is given a clear overview and key issues are explored.*

## STUDENT SUPPORT

The “**Essential Information**” web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library’s resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative enquiries**, please contact the Theology Programme  
Email: [theology@otago.ac.nz](mailto:theology@otago.ac.nz) Phone: 03 479 8639

**We recommend that you contact the Theology Programme as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.**

### THEOLOGY PROGRAMME

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand  
[www.otago.ac.nz/theology](http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology)