

ST. PETER'S SEMINARY / KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
at The University of Western Ontario
 Fall Semester 2011

Theology Section 570, Biblical Studies 101A
 Introduction to Sacred Scripture
 Wednesdays 9:30 - 11:20 am, Thursdays 9:30-10:20 am St Peter's Seminary
 Room 108
 Instructor: Fr. Richard Charrette; Phone 519-432-1824 rcharrette@dol.ca or
rcharrett@uwo.ca Office Hours: By appointment

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course deals with introductory issues such as the history and environment of the Scriptures, the different types of biblical literature, the scientific methods of exploring the Scriptures and the development of new methods of scriptural interpretation. (*3 hours per week; antirequisite: the former Biblical Studies 136b*)

B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Knowledge

1. To introduce students to the notion of revelation or the Word of God.
2. To situate the written Scriptures in relation to the Word of God and to its community of origin.
3. To introduce students to the geographical, historical and cultural background of the Scriptures.
4. To introduce students to important tools and resources for the study of Scripture.
5. To introduce students to the official teaching of the Catholic Church on Revelation and Scripture through a study of selected documents of the Magisterium (teaching Authority of the Church).
6. To introduce students to the main kinds of literature found in the Old Testament and New Testament.
7. To introduce students to the main themes contained in the Scriptures.
8. To introduce students to the main (critical) methods of studying Scripture.
9. To present the meaning of the Resurrection as the basis of the New Testament through a study of pertinent texts, as allowed by the time limits of the course.
10. To alert students to the significance of such studies as archeology, comparative literature and comparative religion for the study of Scripture.
11. To introduce students to the meaning and use of the psalms in Christian liturgy

Skills

1. To enable the students to identify and use the important tools and sources for the study of Scripture.
2. To enable students to learn how to approach the Scriptures in order to determine their meaning.
3. To enable students to use the psalms in prayer.
4. To enable the students to relate the Scriptures to their use in Christian liturgy.

Attitudes

1. To engender in the students a familiarity and love of the Scriptures.
2. To foster a reverence for the Scriptures as the Word of God and one of the Church's greatest treasures.
3. To engender in the students a desire to know the Scriptures and to use them in one's personal and ecclesial life.

C. ASSESSMENT

The final mark will be determined on three bases:

- 1) The average of seven or eight short assignments of one page as the course proceeds, in relation to the topics treated in class. 60%. (Note: Each paper is due one week after the study of each unit is concluded - exact dates are given below)
- 2) Class participation in presenting one's assignment and in enlightened discussion: 10%
- 3) A final written examination on a choice of questions given to the students in advance. The examination will be held in the examination period after the end of classes. 30%

In order to ensure that the written work submitted fairly represents the work of a student, the instructor reserves the right, on an individual basis, to have the student undergo a final, oral exam on the written work submitted and other oral tests in the course of the semester in relation to papers submitted. The oral exams, if applied, will help determine the grade assigned to the written work in question.

D. READINGS/TEXTBOOKS

Students will be required to have the following two books::

1. A good contemporary English translation of the Bible which includes the Deuterocanonicals (also designated Apocrypha), such as the New Revised Standard Version (preferred, as it is used in our liturgy), the New Jerusalem Bible or the New American Bible.
2. Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Paperback reprint, 3rd edition. Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990. ISBN 0138598363. This text will be required from the first day of class as readings and assignments will be given from it on the first day. Note: This text will be available for purchase on the first day of class for \$75.00 (half price).
3. Students will also need a copy of each of the two following documents of the Magisterium on the Bible and its interpretation, namely, the document on the Word of God from the Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, on Divine Revelation (1965), and the document, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, from the Pontifical Biblical Commission of April 23, 1993.

Both documents may be downloaded from the following two internet sites: the Vatican site

www.vatican.ca or www.catholic.resources.org

These two documents are also available in the collection of church documents entitled, *The Bible Documents: A Parish Resource*, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago: 2001. ISBN 1-56854-249-6. This book contains the most important documents issued by the Catholic Church from the time of Pope Pius XII (1943) until 1993 and includes a commentary on each document.

E. SCHEDULE, TOPICS AND READINGS

Outline of Class Topics

1. Introductory Remarks. Revelation vs Natural Religion. Historical Background to the OT and NT. Manner of God's Revelation. What is the Bible? 1st paper due Sept 22/11
2. The Understanding of Scripture in the Catholic Tradition. Introduction to *Dei Verbum* and other Church documents. Purpose of Revelation. Question of Inspiration, Canonicity, Versions. 2nd paper due Sept 29/11
3. Dynamics of the Old Testament. Exodus, Covenant (Themes of Election, Community, Law). 3rd paper due Oct 6/11
4. Prophets. 4th paper due Oct 13/11
5. The Pentateuch (Content, Formation, Purpose). 5th paper due Oct 20/11
6. Apocalyptic Literature - Daniel. 6th paper due Oct 27/11
7. Wisdom Writings. 7th paper due Nov 3/11
8. New Testament: Resurrection. 8th paper (if assigned) due Nov 10/11
9. The Synoptic Gospels
10. The Infancy Narratives
11. The Gospel of John
12. The Pauline Corpus
13. Catholic Interpretation and Use of Scripture.

Method:

- A. After initial general considerations on revelation and literary forms, the preferred method followed will be to go from the consideration of particular passages or books to a more general grasp of the Scriptures.
- B. Visuals will be used as appropriate.
- C. Readings and/or exercises and handouts will routinely be assigned, either as a follow-up to class or preparation for the next class. These will be given at each class. They will be mainly texts of Scripture to be read for the next class and selections for the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*.
- D. At least seven times, and no more than eight times, students will be asked to write a short thesis or statement of twenty words or fewer in answer to a question given at the end of class, to

be developed in one, typed, double-spaced page and brought to class in one week for presentation or discussion. One or more of these will be selected at random and discussed by the class. Suitable sources will be given as a basis of research. All students will hand in their particular response at each class. Sources must be duly acknowledged. The standard form for all written materials in the course are found in, Alexander, Patrick H. *et al.* (eds.) *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999, especially Chapter 7 on proper form for bibliographies.

Because of their connection to classes, the short assignments in this course may not be submitted late.

F. UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

Students are responsible for knowing the University's academic policies and regulations and any particularities of their own course of study. These can all be found at the University's website (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>). Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for any violation thereof. The following policies are particularly important to note:

Submission of Assignments: It is the responsibility of the student to organize his or her work so that the assignments are completed on time. A penalty of 10% of the value of the assignment will be deducted for each day it is overdue without permission.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by quotation marks and /or footnotes. Plagiarism is a major academic offense. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Selection and Registration of Courses: Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all prerequisite course(s) have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any anti-requisite course(s) that they have taken.

G. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benedict XVI, Pope. *Verbum Domini: Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation*. Ottawa: CCCB Publications Service, 2010.

Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *God's Word: Scripture, Tradition, Office*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008.

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Biblical Commission's Document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church": Text and Commentary*. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995. *Found in SPS stacks; call number: BS587 C373 F578 1995*

Williamson, Peter S. *Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture: A Study of the Pontifical Biblical Commissions's, The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Biblico, 2001. (We will use this book as the basis to study the PBC's document in the final topic of the course).

Besides the text mentioned in D above, the following are introductory books on the Bible from a Catholic perspective which students will find helpful:

Bergant, Dianne, OSA. *Scripture: History and Interpretation* (Engaging Theology: Catholic Perspectives). Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008.

Binz, Stephen J. *An Introduction to the Bible: A Catholic Guide to Studying Scripture*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007.

Harrington, Daniel J., S.J. *How Do Catholics Read the Bible?* New York, Toronto, Oxford: Sheed and Ward, 2005.

Vogels, Walter. *Interpreting Scripture in the Third Millennium*. Ottawa: Novalis, 1993.

The following are good resources for the subject of biblical fundamentalism:

LaVerdière, Eugene. *Fundamentalism: A Pastoral Concern*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2000

Witherup, Ronald D., SS. *Biblical Fundamentalism: What Every Catholic Should Know*. Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 2001.

The following series of twelve introductory talks on CD by Fr. Michael D. Guinan is also very fine:

Guinan, Fr. Michael D, O.F.M. *The Bible: An Owner's Manual*, Now You Know Media: Des Moines, IA, 2008. (Re-issued under the title, *How to Read and Understand Your Bible*)

The following are two of many possible resources to aid in a prayerful use of Scripture:

Binz, Stephen J. *Conversing with God in Scripture: A Contemporary Approach to Lectio Divina*.

Ijamsville, Maryland: The Word Among Us Press, 2008

Martin, George. *Reading Scripture as the Word of God. Practical Approaches and Attitudes*. Anne Arbor MI: Word of Life, 1975.

Readings will be assigned from the required texts and from the Bible. From time to time, extra readings of interest from other sources may be encouraged or assigned.