



ENG321-01 – Religion and Literature
College of Science and Arts
Fall 2011

Instructor Information

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Course Identification

Course Number: ENG321-01
 Course Name: Religion and Literature

Required Textbook

David Jasper and Stephen Prickett, *The Bible and Literature: A Reader* (Blackwell Publishing, 1999)

Jeanie C. Crain, *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, (Polity Press, 2010).

Course Description/Overview

ENG321 introduces you to reading, writing, and interpretation of religion (focusing on the Hebrew/Jewish and Christian religion) and literature. These remain the sacred texts that have most influenced secular literature. "...the Bible holds a unique status in the religious history of the western world...; what is less obvious, but no less true, is that it holds an equally unique status in literary history and even in what might be called our collective cultural psyche" (Jasper and Prickett, "General Introduction" in *The Bible and Literature* 2).

Catalog Description: ENG 321 Literature and Religion (3) F (odd-numbered years). Beginning with the ancient world and ending with electronic texts of the present, the course introduces a variety of religious literatures to explore the connection between religious impulse and literary form and to address profound questions of existence and faith. Prerequisites: ENG108 or ENG112 and ENG220, or departmental approval for non-majors. LAS Ethics; LAS International/Intercultural.

Your primary text, *The Bible and Literature*, structurally, introduces Hebrew/Jewish and Christian texts, moving from significant readings in the Jewish Bible to the Christian New Testament. It further introduces literary history and literature through periods and diverse authors. You will enjoy a wide-ranging excursion over the course of literary history and read select, familiar passages from sacred texts and secular literature. You will be encouraged (having given early notice of intent to do so) to explore (extra credit) the religious practices of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists, and Zoroastrians and influences on literature 5-7 page, single-spaced, research notes submitted in the last half of the semester.

Your secondary text, *The Bible as Literature* emphasizes the act of reading Hebrew/Jewish and Christian sacred texts, focuses upon whole texts as they exist in their current form, invites an experiential entering into and reliving of sacred stories, encourages analytical and holistic reading, explores multiple interpretations, and embraces a power of language originating in the mythological, metaphorical, and symbolic.

Such reading holds potential for helping you to understand literature generally and sacred texts in themselves. It introduces the common tools of literary analysis: language and style, the formal structures of genre (narrative, drama, and poetry), character study, and thematic analysis. This text serves as a resource for your primary text.

You will begin this course by reflecting on the meaning of “literature” and “religion.” A common definition of “literary” (Terry Eagleton) is “a special use of language that intensifies and transforms it from ordinary use” (Crain 1). Religion, broadly, addresses human “involvement in the meaning of... existence” or the “attempt to find a meaningful relatedness to all the significant events of human experience. It is, as Paul Tillich phrased it, ‘our ultimate concern for the Ultimate’” (James L. Christian, *Philosophy: An Introduction to the Art of Wondering* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977). Further, “Religion is not to be defined in terms of the *answers* which men give—for they are legion—but rather in terms of the *questions* men ask” (Christian 491).

Course Policies

Disability: If you have been diagnosed with a disability or if you suspect that you may have a disability that has never been diagnosed and would like to find out what services may be available, please visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Eder Hall, room 203N or visit the ODS website at <http://www.missouriwestern.edu/ds/> as soon as possible. This syllabus, as well as all other printed or electronic materials, can be made available in alternative/accessible formats if requested with sufficient prior notice. Missouri Western is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.

You should also contact me personally within the first week of classes to discuss class requirements. The course requires intensive reading, interpretation, and exploring ideas through writing.

Academic Honesty: Violations of academic honesty include any instance of plagiarism, cheating, seeking credit for another's work, falsifying documents, or academic records, or any other fraudulent classroom activity. Plagiarism is the unaccredited use (both intentional and unintentional) of somebody else's words or ideas. Violations of academic honesty will result in a failing grade on the assignment, failure in the course, or expulsion from school. Please consult your *Student Handbook*.

Attendance Policy: You must schedule sufficient time for reading, annotating, and completing journal entries for all assigned materials prior to each class. You will be expected to meet all classes.

Schedule Adjustments: The class schedule may be adjusted with prior notice provided.

Use of Electronics: Computers, tablets, and iPads may be brought to class for note taking only; this should not prevent you from participating in class discussions. Cell phones should be silenced and not used during class. Other electronic devices should not be used during class hours.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Acquire familiarity with several of the tools used for reading and understanding literature generally: language and style, the formal structures of genre (narrative, drama, and poetry), character study, and thematic analysis.
2. Learn that sacred texts share the mythological, metaphorical, and symbolic language that belongs to literature across the centuries.
3. Read and study significant passages of texts sacred to the Jewish and Christian biblical canons.
4. Explore secular texts that tell, re-tell, adapt, appropriate, and re-use sacred texts, blurring boundaries between the “sacred” and “profane” (Jasper and Prickett 5).
5. Discover a literary and religious library that invites you to engage at deeper levels of study and to greater depths of insight.

Course Requirements

The following guide should enable you to understand what work will be evaluated (annotated texts or written notes, interpretive journal, class responses, and possible extra credit project):

- Complete reading assignments, annotations (in texts), and electronic journal writing (interpretation) by the beginning of each class. Ideally, emphasis should be placed on learning, not grades. Grades will result from an overall pattern of work. Juniors and seniors should be able to work independently, to think and write in original and creative ways, and to meet assignment deadlines.
- Use annotations (25 points over semester) and journal writing (50 points over semester) to respond in thoughtful, original ways to readings. If you choose not to markup your texts, you must write out annotations. Bring hard copy of journal writing to class. Random submissions will be required.
- Respond in class by leading discussions as randomly called upon (25 points over semester).

Reading and Writing Assignments	Potential Grade Points	Requirements
Annotations (for all chapters): Carefully read the assigned chapters in the Jasper and Prickett and Crain texts. Ideally, use highlighting and margin annotations to save time; alternately, write out annotations on sheet paper and bring to class. Demonstrate connections among texts. Texts and annotations must be in class at all times.	25 (12.5 at mid-term and 12.5 at finals)	Reading, annotations, and journal completed prior to class
Electronic Journal: Complete thoughtful, original, and well-developed responses to reading assignments. Generally, respond to sections, list pages covered, and authors; summarize briefly, interpret broadly, and demonstrate a maturing connection of ideas among texts. Hard copy journal entries will be brought to class and checked randomly. Five points will be deducted for each missed submission. Journals will receive up to 25 points at mid-term and at finals. You will complete a self-evaluation of this work at mid-term and finals.	50 (25 at mid-term and 25 at finals)	Original, thoughtful, well-developed Responses to assigned readings
Class Response: You will lead several class discussions using your textual annotations and journal writings. You will complete a self-evaluation of your overall pattern of response at mid-term and at finals.	25 (12.5 at mid-term and 12.5 at finals)	Insightful, animated, and stimulating
Extra Credit Presentation: 5-7 page, single-spaced, research notes	10	Explore the religious practices of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Taoists, or Zoroastrians and influences on literature
Self-Evaluation: You will evaluate your overall work and request a grade with justification at the end of the semester. While excellent and good work should be the goal of all students, other constraints may result in average, below average, and failing work.		

Grading Scheme

Letter Grade	Percentage	Grade points/credit	Rating
A	90% & above	4.00	Excellent
B	80% - 89%	3.00	Good
C	70% -79%	2.00	Average
D	60% - 69	1.00	Below Average
F	59% and below	0.00	Failure
I	An incomplete grade may be given when accident, illness, death in the immediate family, or other documented circumstances beyond your control prevent you from completing some course requirements. An incomplete grade will be considered only when you have satisfied the majority of course requirements. An incomplete grade must be removed within six weeks after the first day of the next term (fall, spring, summer) of the semester in which it was received; otherwise, the grade will be recorded as "F."		

University Fall Schedule

Fall 2011		
Walk-In Registration	August 23	Tuesday
Griffon Edge	August 25-27	
Classes Begin	August 29	Monday
Labor Day Holiday	September 5	Monday
Family Day	September 10	Saturday
Homecoming	October 22	Saturday
Mid-term Grades Due	October 26	Wednesday
Last day to Withdraw	November 4	Friday
Registration Begins for Spring	November 7	Monday
Fall Break (no classes/campus closed)	November 20-27	
Last Day of classes	December 9	Friday
Final Exams	December 10-16	
Commencement	December 17	Saturday
Final Grades Due	December 20	
Wintersession	December 19-January 13	
Campus Closed	December 24-January 1	

- Number of class days - M=13, T=14, W=14, Th=14, F=14, Sa=13
- 6 Final Exam days
- Wintersession (transcribed in Spring) - 14 class days, plus Final Exam day

August 2011							September 2011							October 2011							November 2011							December 2011											
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S					
31	1	2	3	4	5	6	35				1	2	3	39						1	44		1	2	3	4	5	48			1	2	3						
32	7	8	9	10	11	12	36	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	40	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	45	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	49	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
33	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	37	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	41	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	46	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	50	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
34	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	38	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	42	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	47	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	51	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
35	28	29	30	31				39	25	26	27	28	29	30	43	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	48	27	28	29	30				52	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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Course Schedule

Week One August 29, 31, and September 2

Assignment: Jasper and Prickett xi-44

Week Two Labor Day holiday, September 5; 7, and 9

Assignment: Crain, Preface and Chapter 1, vi-21

Week Three September 12, 14, 16

Assignment: Jasper and Prickett, Creation, 65-77 and In the Beginning, 80-89,

Week Four September 19, 21, 23

Crain, Chapter 7, "Themes and Motifs"

Week Five September 26, 28, 30

Assignment: Jasper and Prickett, The Fall, Sacrifice of Isaac, 94-120, Jacob and Esau, Wrestling Jacob, 123-145

Week Six October 3, 5, 7

Assignment: Crain, Chapter 6, "Character"

Week Seven October 10, 12, 14

Assignment: Jasper and Prickett, David and Bathsheeba, The Still, Small Voice, The Lord is My Shepherd 147-176

Week Eight October 17, 19, 21

Assignment: Crain, Chapter 3, "Image, Metaphor, Symbol, and Archetype"

Week Nine October 24, 26, 28

Assignment: Jasper and Prickett, I Am a Rose of Sharon, The Nativity, The Problem of the Parables, 180-238

Week Ten October 30, November 2, 4

Assignment: Crain, Chapter 4, "Major Genres"

Week Eleven November 7, 9, 11

Assignment: Jasper and Prickett, Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, The Prodigal Son, and The Crucifixion, 240

Week Twelve November 14, 16, 18

Assignment: Crain, Chapter 5, "Sub-Genres"

Fall Break November 20-27

Week Thirteen November 28, 30, December 2

Jaspers and Prickett, Jesus and Mary in the Garden, The Conversion, Alpha and Omega, 289-324

Week Fourteen December 5, 7, 9 (December 9, last day of classes)

Assignment: Crain, Chapter 2, "Style, Tone, and Rhetorical Strategy";

Week Fifteen Final Examination December 10-16

Final grades will be posted December 20. Your final grade for the course will be based on the total points earned: Annotation (25), Journal (50), Class Responses (25), and extra credit (25).