

CURRICULUM PROPOSAL COVER SHEET
University-Wide Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

LSC Use Only
Number <u>LS-83</u>
Action _____
Date _____

UWUCC Use Only
Number _____
Action _____
Date _____

I. TITLE/AUTHOR OF CHANGE

COURSE/PROGRAM TITLE RS 250: Understanding the Bible**
 DEPARTMENT Philosophy & Religious Studies
 CONTACT PERSON R. Thomas Schaub

**A refinement on the old title Biblical Interpretations

II. THIS COURSE IS BEING PROPOSED FOR:

- Course Approval Only
- Course Approval and Liberal Studies Approval
- Liberal Studies Approval only (course previously has been approved by the University Senate)

III. APPROVALS

S. Montgomery
 Department Curriculum Committee

S. Montgomery 2-28-89
 Department Chairperson

College Curriculum Committee

[Signature]
 College Dean*

[Signature]
 Director of Liberal Studies
 (where applicable)

Provost
 (where applicable)

*College Dean must consult with Provost before approving curriculum changes. Approval by College Dean indicates that the proposed change is consistent with long range planning documents, that all requests for resources made as part of the proposal can be met, and that the proposal has the support of the university administration.

IV. TIMETABLE

Date Submitted
 to LSC _____
 to UWUCC _____

Semester/Year to be
 implemented Fall 89

Date to be published
 in Catalog ASAP

COURSE SYLLABUS

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

RS 250 Understanding the Bible

3 credits

An introduction to scholarly methods and major themes necessary to understand the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

In completing the course the student will:

1) have gained introductory knowledge of the basic contents and types of literature of the various books of the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testaments.

2) will be familiar with the basic principles of biblical criticism and the different textual, historical and literary methodologies used to interpret the Bible.

3) have a basic understanding of the major themes of the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testaments and recognition of the importance of these themes for the religions of Judaism and Christianity

4) understand what is involved in establishing a balanced, nonsectarian interpretation of the Bible.

5) understand the importance of critical evaluation of the uses of the biblical text as well as of the themes and issues raised in the Bible.

III. Course Outline

A. Introduction

1. Basic information about the bible, reasons for studying the bible, difficulties in studying the Bible and various views on the nature of the Bible

2. The Canon of the Bible - the differences between Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholic Bibles.

3. The Biblical world - setting in the Ancient Near East and historical overview.

B. Method in the study of the Bible.

1. Definitions and Presuppositions of Biblical Interpretation

2. Steps in Biblical Interpretation - overview of the basic interdisciplinary methodologies used in addressing textual, literary and historical questions.

C. Hebrew Scriptures (Themes and selections will vary with instructor)

1. The Historical traditions and theological themes found in selected passages.

- a. Patriarchal traditions - Abraham, Model of faith
- b. The Exodus experience - Formation of the Community
- c. The Monarchy - Political and Religious Unity
- d. Theological World view - Creation and the Fall
- e. Basic Themes of Covenant and Election
- f. The Monarchy - Division and Destruction

2. The Prophetic Tradition.

- a. Nature of Prophetic literature
- b. Amos and Election
- c. Hosea and Covenant
- d. Isaiah, Monotheism and Messianism
- e. Jeremiah, Retribution and Individual Responsibility
- f. Exechiel, the Father of Judaism

3. The Legal and Liturgical literature

- a. Law codes
- b. The Psalms
- c. Judith and the role of Women in the Hebrew Scriptures

4. Israel's Wisdom Movement and its literature

- a. Practical Wisdom
- b. Theological Wisdom
- c. Sceptical Wisdom

D. The New Testament

1. The Gospel, Growth and Development

- a. The Gospel according to Mark
- b. The Gospel according to Luke
- c. The Gospel according to Matthew
- d. The Gospel according to John
- e. Formation of the Gospel- The Synoptic Problem
- f. The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith
- g. Theological Themes

2. Formation of the Christian Community

- a. Acts of the Apostles
- b. Paul and the Church of Corinth
- c. Persecution and the Book of Revelation
- d. Women in the New Testament

E. Summary and Evaluation

IV. EVALUATION METHODS (will vary with instructor)

The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Exams including multiple choice, true-false and essay questions.

Periodic unannounced quizzes on reading assignments

Essay assignments

V. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- 1) The Bible, any edition
- 2) Stephen Harris, Understanding the Bible

VI. SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

There will be some slide presentations to assist the student in gaining familiarity with the biblical world.

VII. ASSIGNMENTS:

- a) careful reading before class of the assigned passages in the Bible and Harris
- b) responsibility for class lectures
- c) brief essays on themes or passages

LIBERAL STUDIES COURSE APPROVAL FORM

About this form: Use this form only if you wish to have a course included for Liberal Studies credit. The form is intended to assist you in developing your course to meet the university's Criteria for Liberal Studies, and to arrange your proposal in a standard order for consideration by the LSC and the UWUCC. If you have questions, contact the Liberal Studies Office, 353 Sutton Hall; telephone, 357-5715.

Do not use this form for technical, professional, or pre-professional courses or for remedial courses, none of which is eligible for Liberal Studies. **Do not** use this form for sections of the synthesis course or for writing-intensive sections; different forms will be available for those.

PART I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. For which category(ies) are you proposing the course? Check all that apply.

LEARNING SKILLS

- First English Composition Course
- Second English Composition Course
- Mathematics

KNOWLEDGE AREAS

- Humanities: History
- Humanities: Philosophy/Religious Studies
- Humanities: Literature
- Fine Arts
- Natural Sciences: Laboratory Course
- Natural Sciences: Non-laboratory Course
- Social Sciences
- Health and Wellness
- Non-Western Cultures
- Liberal Studies Elective

B. Are you requesting regular or provisional approval for this course?

- Regular
- Provisional (limitations apply, see instructions)

C. During the transition from General Education to Liberal Studies, should this course be listed as an approved substitute for a current General Education course, thus allowing it to meet any remaining General Education needs? yes no

If so, which General Education course(s)? _____

PART III. DOES YOUR COURSE MEET THE GENERAL CRITERIA FOR LIBERAL STUDIES? Please attach answers to these questions.

(SEE ATTACHED ANSWERS)

- A. If this is a multiple-section, multiple-instructor course, there should be a basic equivalency (though not necessarily uniformity) among the sections in such things as objectives, content, assignments, and evaluation. Note: this should not be interpreted to mean that all professors must make the same assignments or teach the same way; departments are encouraged to develop their courses to allow the flexibility which contributes to imaginative, committed teaching and capitalizes on the strengths of individual faculty.

What are the strategies that your department will use to assure that basic equivalency exists? Examples might be the establishment of departmental guidelines, assignment of responsibility to a coordinating committee, exchange and discussion of individual instructor syllabi, periodic meetings among instructors, etc.

- B. Liberal Studies courses must include the perspectives and contributions of ethnic and racial minorities and of women wherever appropriate to the subject matter. If your attached syllabus does not make explicit that the course meets this criterion, please append an explanation of how it will.

- C. Liberal Studies courses must require the reading and use by students of at least one, but preferably more, substantial works of fiction or nonfiction (as distinguished from textbooks, anthologies, workbooks, or manuals). Your attached syllabus must make explicit that the course meets this criterion.

[The only exception is for courses whose primary purpose is the development of higher level quantitative skills; such courses are encouraged to include such reading, but are not expected to do so at the expense of other course objectives. If you are exercising this exception, please justify here.]

- D. If this is an introductory course intended for a general student audience, it should be designed to reflect the reality that it may well be the only formal college instruction these students will have in that discipline, instead of being designed as the first course in a major sequence. That is, it should introduce the discipline to students rather than introduce students into the discipline. If this is such an introductory course, how is it different from what is provided for beginning majors?

E. The Liberal Studies Criteria indicate six ways in which all courses should contribute to students' abilities. To which of the six will your course contribute? Check all that apply and attach an explanation.

- 1. Confront the major ethical issues which pertain to the subject matter; realize that although "suspended judgment" is a necessity of intellectual inquiry, one cannot live forever in suspension; and make ethical choices and take responsibility for them.
- 2. Define and analyze problems, frame questions, evaluate available solutions, and make choices
- 3. Communicate knowledge and exchange ideas by various forms of expression, in most cases writing and speaking.
- 4. Recognize creativity and engage in creative thinking.
- 5. Continue learning even after the completion of their formal education.
- 6. Recognize relationships between what is being studied and current issues, thoughts, institutions, and/or events.

PART IV. DOES YOUR COURSE MEET THE CRITERIA FOR THE CURRICULUM CATEGORY IN WHICH IT IS TO BE LISTED?

Each curriculum category has its own set of specific criteria in addition to those generally applicable. The LSC provides copies of these criteria arranged in a convenient check-list format which you can mark off appropriately and include with your proposal. The attached syllabus should indicate how your course meets each criterion you check. If it does not do so explicitly, please attach an explanation.

CHECK LIST -- HUMANITIES: RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Knowledge Area Criteria which the course must meet:

- Treat concepts, themes, and events in sufficient depth to enable students to appreciate the complexity, history, and current implications of what is being studied; and not be merely cursory coverages of lists of topics.
- Suggest the major intellectual questions/problems which interest practitioners of a discipline and explore critically the important theories and principles presented by the discipline.
- Allow students to understand and apply the methods of inquiry and vocabulary commonly used in the discipline.
- Encourage students to use and enhance, wherever possible, the composition and mathematics skills built in the Skill Areas of Liberal Studies.

Religious Studies Criteria which the course must meet:

- Introduce students to the study of religion as a means to understanding Western culture and, therefore, to understanding themselves.
- Provide a balanced, critical, nonsectarian examination of religion.
- Emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to the study of religion.
- Investigate the nature of religion and the forms of its expression, or the foundational roots and development of one or more Western religious tradition(s) over a significant time span.
- Investigate relationships with non-Western traditions and cultures where appropriate.
- Give due attention to the religious involvement and perspectives of women and minorities.
- Acquaint students with religious texts and documents as appropriate, and encourage the development of independent judgment and critical evaluation of moral issues raised by these texts and by religious thinkers.

Explanations for Liberal Studies Course Approval

II. Liberal Studies Goals

PRIMARY

B. Acquiring a Body of Knowledge or Understanding essential to an Educated Person.

The Bible is the primary source book and norm for the beliefs and morals of Christians and Jews. Knowledge of the stories, personalities, theological themes, moral ideals, legal, social, and religious institutions found in the bible is essential for understanding western religious traditions as well as many of its greatest cultural achievements in literature, art and music.

A. Intellectual Skills and Modes of Thinking:

4. Historical consciousness - The bible has often been described as 'sacred history'. It frequently describes and professes, through the eyes of faith, the action of God in the stories and traditions of individuals, institutions, tribes, nations, and communities. Historians, particularly aided since 1800 by a series of discoveries of primary extra-biblical historical sources, including libraries and extensive material remains, some much older, some contemporary with the biblical traditions, have been able to re-create the secular history of the Ancient Near East and, at times, to situate the events described in the Bible within the broader context. 'Historical consciousness' is now indispensable in any attempt to understand or interpret biblical literature, institutions and developing theological concepts.

1. Inquiry, critical analysis etc. - In addition to using methods of historical criticism the course will include the use of textual and literary criticism. Examples of selected different English translations of the Bible will be used to show how these translations may rely on different manuscript traditions of the Hebrew and Greek texts. Literary criticism will include methods of source analysis based on vocabulary, stylistic, and theological characteristics to examine questions of unity of authorship and date of composition. Methods of form criticism, identifying the characteristics of myth, saga, legend, differing legal forms, proverbs, poetry, prophecy, apocalypses, parables and pronouncement stories, will be used to determine the literal sense of the texts, i.e. the sense intended by the author.

2. Literacy - For reading see the methods of literary and form criticism above. Learning how to read the Bible will be a primary goal.

SECONDARY

A.2 Literacy - Writing. The emphasis on methods of literary and form criticism should contribute to the student's perspective on writing. Depending on class size and the instructor writing may also be a secondary goal through essay assignments.

A. 6. Basic ethical and religious values inherent in the biblical themes of sin, corporate, individual and social responsibility, righteousness, practical moral wisdom, legalism, grace and salvation will be discussed in their original setting and development throughout the bible.

III. General Criteria

A. All instructors who have previously taught the course and all who

intend to teach it in the following academic year will meet at the conclusion of the spring semester. They will review this document, including the generic syllabus. They will exchange individual syllabi and then will discuss whether they are meeting the specific goals and criteria outlined in this document. Any problems or conflicts will be brought before the entire department for resolution.

B. Some of the attitudes and perspectives in the Bible towards women reflect patriarchal and social attitudes current during the historical periods in which the Bible was written. The historical conditioning of these attitudes and perspectives will be treated as background to discussions on the appropriateness of using them as absolute norms for determining contemporary roles of women in religious institutions. Nonsexist and nonracist language will be used throughout the course.

C. The primary text for this course is the Bible. Reading assignments will include major representative texts from all of the various types of literature as well complete books in some instances.

D. There is no special course designed to introduce our majors into the discipline of biblical studies.

E. Contributing to students' abilities:

1. The most challenging ethical choices are those in which an individual is confronted with the possibility of endangering his own security, and even life, in opposing prevailing attitudes, customs and practices of his contemporaries, often supported by dominant religious and political authorities. The conflicts, ambiguities and consequences of individual ethical choices will be highlighted in discussing the ethical issues in the various historical contexts of the biblical narratives of Abraham, David, the Prophets, Job, Jesus, and Paul.

2. The textual, literary and historical criticism approaches described above will define and analyze problems, frame questions, and evaluate available solutions, including faith interpretations, to enable students to become familiar with the implications of various methodologies in interpreting the Bible.

3. Depending on class size, discussions and essay assignments will be used to encourage the communication and exchange of ideas.

4. One of the major benefits of the literary and historical critical approaches to the biblical text is the liberating stimulus they have provided for developing new approaches in interpretation.

5. It is likely that many students will continue to encounter the Bible in different ways throughout their lives. The perspectives communicated in this course should have a lasting impact on the way they read and interpret the bible. An extensive bibliography will highlight major commentaries and aids such as biblical atlases and dictionaries for their future use.

5. The bible is frequently cited, often quite loosely, in

discussions of current issues, thoughts, institutions, and/or events. One of the major goals of the course will be to stress the necessity of understanding what the Bible meant in its original context before one attempts to see what the Bible means for today. Examples of modern interpretations will be used to enable the student to recognize different levels of use and abuse of the Bible in modern contexts.

Knowledge Area Criteria

The introductory lectures will stress the major questions/problems of biblical studies and discuss the various methods of inquiry used in the discipline. Throughout the course these problems and methods will be exemplified in the treatment of basic concepts, themes and events in passages selected to be treated in depth by the instructor. The broad outline in the generic syllabus suggests the basic themes and the context in which they may be treated without specifying the detailed passages. While it will be important to treat certain themes and events in depth a further primary goal of the course is to introduce the student to the broad variety of the contents and types of literature found in the various books of the Bible.

Religious Studies Criteria

The course is obviously designed to meet the religious studies criteria as a balanced, critical, nonsectarian approach to the biblical text using methods drawn from from other disciplines such as history and literary criticism. Recognizing the relationships of the biblical text to the ancient near eastern cultures and traditions, including perspectives on women and 'outsiders', will be an important contribution of the course. Encouraging critical evaluation of the uses and abuses of the biblical text as well as of the themes and issues raised is one of the primary objectives of the course.