



McMaster Divinity
College

KNOWING THE BIBLE

OT/NT 3XK3

McMaster Divinity College
Dr. Christopher D. Land
landc@mcmaster.ca

Spring 2021 (Online)
April 26–June 11
Monday 3:00–5:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Bible has permanently and irrevocably shaped human culture, so understanding the Bible is essential for understanding ourselves. For Christians, understanding the Bible is also essential for figuring out who God is and who we ought to be. Unfortunately, biblical illiteracy has become the norm even within the church. All too often, neither the Bible's opponents nor its defenders seem to have a clue what they are talking about. This course will survey the content of the Bible (key people, places, plot-lines, passages, etc.) and will discuss how this diverse content develops a number of key overarching themes.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through their active participation in this course, students will:

KNOWING

- Know the names of the books of the Bible;
- Know the various canonical orderings and their communal significance;
- Know the overall shape of key biblical narratives (i.e. history of Israel; life of Jesus; emergence of early church), including major locations, characters, and events;
- Know the general shape of each biblical book, including overall structure and major themes.

BEING

- Assume a receptive and diligent posture towards the Bible;
- Become self-aware as a modern reader of the Bible, recognizing the antiquity of the texts;
- Dispense with over-confidence (or lack of confidence) concerning knowledge of the Bible, adopting instead an attitude of life-long learning;
- Confess the ongoing usefulness of both Old and New Testaments as Christian scripture.

DOING

- Have the ability to quickly locate specific books in the Bible along with key passages within them;
- Have the ability to answer questions about the content of the Bible, such as might be asked during an ordination exam;
- Have the ability to draw together the entire canon when exploring matters of theological interest.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: Students are required to complete all of the following assignments. No unfinished assignments are permitted. *Written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn either as Word documents (.doc, .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf). Assignments cannot be submitted after June 21st without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (strickpd@mcmaster.ca).*

BIBLE READING (0%, WITH 5% PENALTY FOR NON-COMPLETION)

During the semester, each student will read through the entire Bible. This should be done using an easy-to-read English translation, or a suitable translation in another language (if the student's preferred language is not English). ***Students can begin this reading prior to the semester***, but it must not be commenced more than three months prior to the first day of class. Each student must report whether or not the Bible has been read in its entirety. Failure to report completion of the assigned reading prior to **Friday, June 18th @ 11:59pm** will result in a final grade reduction of 5%. ***Students who report that they are committed to completing the reading before the end of the summer will have the 5% penalty waived.***

ONLINE VIDEOS (10%)

Instead of face-to-face lectures, the course will involve a series of videos that will provide an overview of the entire Bible. These will be posted to Avenue to Learn, where they can be watched at any time. There will be approximately 60–90 minutes of video in total for each week, broken into several shorter videos that can be watched separately. Students are strongly encouraged to watch the videos in keeping with the course schedule, so that the Bible reading, quizzes, and videos stay in sync with one another. Because our synchronous discussions will not require the full two hours each Monday, each session will end with some time to begin watching the videos together with other students. In the event that a student falls behind, the videos need only be viewed prior to **Friday, June 18th @ 11:59pm**. Completion of the videos is automatically logged on A2L (and can also be manually logged, if necessary).

BIBLE CONTENT QUIZZES (10% EACH = 60% TOTAL)

Drawing on the Bible reading, the online videos, and supplied study notes, each student will write a series of quizzes that test familiarity with the content of the Bible. There will be six quizzes overall, covering: (1) Pentateuch; (2) Historical Books; (3) Prophets; (4) Gospels, General Epistles & Revelation; (5) Acts & Pauline Epistles; (6) Poetic Books. The quizzes will be fifteen minutes in length and will consist primarily of short answer questions. The quizzes will be cumulative, with a small number of questions on each quiz relating to the material covered in any earlier quizzes. Specific resources will be posted on A2L to aid in studying for the quizzes, but students are also expected to be familiar with the relevant biblical texts from their Bible reading. Each Monday session will begin with a synchronous class quiz, which will be completed using A2L.

SYNCHRONOUS CONVERSATIONS & SELF-REFLECTION ESSAY (30%)

Following the initial meeting, which will introduce the course, each synchronous session will begin with a quiz and then move into small-group discussions of the assigned Bible reading. These will provide opportunities for students to talk with one another about the things they are noticing by reading the Bible in such a short time. Students are encouraged to come to class with short notes of things they have

noticed, and to take notes regarding interesting points raised by other students. These notes will eventually form the basis of a concluding self-reflection essay, in which students will consider their experience of reading the Bible and offer some specific insights that they have gleaned from the process. There is no prescribed focus for these essays, so students can take them in any direction—provided the focus is on the Bible and what the student has learned about it. These essays need not contain bibliographies (unless a source is for some reason quoted) and explicit self-reflection is encouraged (meaning, it is fully appropriate to talk about yourself as a specific Bible reader). The essay should be approximately **2,500 words** in length. For students who are uncertain about what constitutes a good reflective essay, a detailed grading rubric is available on Avenue to Learn.

GRADING SUMMARY

Primary Reading	0% (with 5% penalty for non-completion)
Online Videos	10%
Bible Content Quizzes	60%
Self-Reflection Essay	30%
Total	100%

TEXTBOOKS

All students are required to possess a copy of the Bible in whatever language or translation is easiest for the student to read.

All students are recommended to possess a good Bible dictionary, such as:

Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
(Paperback edition: 2019)

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the MDC chapel entrance. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON, M9A 3C3: phone 416.620.2934; mobile 416.668.3434; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks	WebEx Meetings	Content	Bible Reading (KJV Word Count)
Apr 26–May 2	Apr 26 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome & Introduction to the Course • Resources for Studying the Bible • Discussion of the Antiquity of the Bible • Pentateuch Videos (A2L) • Pentateuch Study Materials (A2L) 	Genesis–Deuteronomy (156,736)

May 3–9	May 3 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz & Discussions: Pentateuch • Historical Books Videos (A2L) • Historical Books Study Materials (A2L) 	Joshua–Esther (204,059)
May 10–16	May 10 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz & Discussions: Historical Books • Prophets Videos (A2L) • Prophets Study Materials (A2L) 	Isaiah–Malachi (164,397)
May 17–23	May 17 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz & Discussions: Prophets • Gospels, General Epistles & Revelation Videos (A2L) • Gospels, General Epistles & Revelation Study Materials (A2L) 	Matthew–John & Hebrews—Revelation (111,489)
May 24–30	May 24 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz & Discussions: Gospels, General Epistles & Revelation • Acts & Pauline Epistles Videos (A2L) • Acts & Pauline Epistles Study Materials (A2L) 	Acts–Philemon (67,522)
May 31–Jun 6	May 31 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz & Discussions: Acts & Pauline Epistles • Poetic Books Videos (A2L) • Poetic Books Study Materials (A2L) 	Job–Song of Solomon (84,077)
Jun 7–21	Jun 7 @ 3pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz & Discussions: Poetic Books • Concluding Reflections on the Bible • Catch-up on Reading and Videos (A2L) • Self-Reflection Essays (A2L) • Course Evaluations (A2L) 	

QUIZ & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Dates	Quiz or Assignment
May 3	Pentateuch Quiz
May 10	Historical Books Quiz
May 17	Prophets Quiz
May 24	Gospels, General Epistles & Revelation Quiz
May 31	Acts & Pauline Epistles Quiz
June 7	Poetic Books Quiz
June 18	Self-Reflection Essay Due
	Log Completion of Reading and Videos

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or

unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

In this course, we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection and the student's continuation in the course represents his or her consent to the use of this service. If a student has objections to the use of this service, alternate arrangements for assignment submission must be made with the professor in advance of the assignment deadlines.

A useful guide to avoiding plagiarism is the Harvard Guide to Using Sources:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

STYLE

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the latest edition of the McMaster Divinity College Style *Guidelines for Essays and Theses*:

<https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the respective professor. This syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.