

ENG 374LEC

Bible as Literature

Registration #: 11063

Credits: 3.00 credits

Days, Time: M W , 6:30 PM - 9:40 PM

Dates: 05/21/2012 - 06/29/2012

Room: Cooke 127A

The Bible remains the most ubiquitous of books, but as such it may also be imperceptible as a text, present in clichéd forms, banished to a religious realm, or hidden in popular and literary allusions. We don't know what we think we know. Hence, to borrow a phrase from Marcus J. Borg, we'll attempt to "read the Bible again for the first time.

This course will center on close readings of selected Biblical texts, including, Genesis/Exodus, Proverbs, Job, Jonah, Esther, Amos, Mark, Luke/Acts, Romans, and Revelations. As the course title implies, we will focus on the literary aspects of the Bible--problems of genre, composition and authorship, historical background and setting. In short, we will begin with the perspective that the Bible produces meaning through varied and overlapping literary forms (such as narrative, prophecy, and parable) and literary strategies (such as metaphor, allegory and hyperbole). Our approach will thus be situated between two perspectives, noting the traces of multiple sources and intentions uncovered by previous forms of Biblical criticism—two divergent creation stories opening and resurfacing in the stories of Genesis; older collections of saying and parables incorporated into and disrupting the narrative of Mark—but using newer forms of criticism to see this disorder as inherent to and productive of a wider literary meaning.

*Required Texts:*

To be purchased:

- Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible*

Available via Course Reserve/Internet:

- Selected Secondary Readings
- King James Bible (our reading, writing and class activities will be based on the KJV because of its own importance as a literary text and source)

*Requirements:*

- Class discussion and participation
- Informal writing (reading journal, discussion boards, research Wikis)
- Formal writing (two 5 page interpretive papers incorporating class secondary material)