

English 3325-14165  
Bible as Literature  
Fall 2010  
Irby 313

Dr. Frontain  
Office: Irby 317  
Office Hours: MW 12-2 pm  
T Th 1.30-3.15 pm

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Bible functions *as* literature through its ambivalence. Because it was written to invite interpretation and stimulate awareness of a source of significance beyond the immediate reach of the auditor or reader, the Bible has, not surprisingly, proven an extraordinary impetus to subsequent writers and artists, provoking them either a) into retelling the biblical text to assert its meaning; or b) into adapting the biblical text in the service of one's own agenda. Thus, one way of exploring the possible meaning of a biblical text is to read it in the light of subsequent, possibly contradictory, appropriations and then evaluate what license the biblical text offers for each retelling.

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## TEXT

Michael D. Coogan, ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, fully revised 4<sup>th</sup> ed (Oxford Univ. Press, 2010)

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## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

M 30 Aug. Introduction to Course: The Bible and Interpretation

W 1 Sept. The Song of Songs

M 6 Sept. LABOR DAY RECESS

W 8 Sept. Ecclesiastes

M 13 Sept. Psalm 23 (discussion of Paper #1)

W 15 Sept. First Book of Samuel

M 20 Sept. “

W 22 Sept. Second Book of Samuel

M 27 Sept. “

W 29 Sept. David in Art

PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS

M 4 Oct. Joseph Story (Gen. 37-50)

W 6 Oct. Moses and God (Exod. 4: 24-26), Jacob and Angel (Gen. 32: 24-32), and Jesus in Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 36-46; Mark 14: 32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1)

M 11 Oct. Job  
W 13 Oct. “

M 18 Oct. “  
W 20 Oct. MIDTERM EXAMINATION

M 25 Oct. Isaiah  
W 27 Oct. “

M 1 Nov. “  
W 3 Nov. Jeremiah

M 8 Nov. “  
W 10 Nov. Ezekiel

M 15 Nov. “  
W 17 Nov. Revelation  
PAPER #2 DUE IN CLASS

M 22 Nov. Revelation and select parables  
W 24 Nov. THANKSGIVING RECESS

M 29 Nov. Tamar and Jael  
W 1 Dec. Ruth

M 6 Dec. Esther  
W 8 Dec. Judith (student must secure copy of this apocryphal text)

F 17 Dec. FINAL EXAMINATION (1-3 pm)

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#### OBSERVATIONS

1. Studying the Bible as literature means reading without the influence of sectarian belief. This is difficult for some readers to do. However, students must be careful not to impose their religious beliefs upon the text or upon other students.
2. Paper #1 will be a 3-5 page analytical reading of a psalm of the student's choice (excluding Psalm 23) in terms of the interpretive issues presented by *three* different translations.
3. Paper #2 will be a 5-7 page literary reading of one of the minor prophets (excluding Jonah).
4. The final grade for this course will be computed as follows: Paper #1 (20%), Paper #2 (30%),

Midterm examination (20%) and Final examination (30%).

5. Attend class, arrive on time, and prepare assiduously.

### **Course Guidelines** (rev. 8/10)

1. Spirit of education. Addressing a convention of high school teachers, James Baldwin observed that “the purpose of education is, finally, to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, . . . to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity.” There are only two ways for a student to approach a class: actively, by working with as much energy and commitment as possible, taking maximum advantage of the opportunities presented by the material and instructor; or passively, by suffering through a class, hoping that a safety net of some kind (sloped grades, last minute extra credit assignments, etc.) will save one from disgrace.

Sustained and intense engagement with the course materials and ideas is the single-most important prerequisite to an A. Decide from the outset of the term either to take the course seriously or to drop it. Keep up with the reading, and come prepared to discuss the ideas that engage or trouble you. Never dismiss an author’s ideas out of hand, but come prepared with evidence from the text to support any objections you may have. Take notes, mark significant passages in your textbook for easy reference, and make certain that you understand clearly the major ideas of the course. In a literature class, where the first act of interpretation is to read the text aloud, everyone will be called upon to read aloud in the course of the semester; a student uncomfortable doing so must find a way to negotiate this hurdle.

Take an active role in your education, not a passive one. Passive students not only rarely succeed, but invariably are unhappy in the process.

2. Decorum. Put the success of the course and consideration of your classmates before your own convenience, doing nothing that distracts the instructor or disrupts a colleague’s concentration.

\* You only have time for what you put first. Do not “multi-task” in the classroom. Turn off all beepers, cell phones, palm pilots, Blackberries, i-pods, watch alarms, etc. *before* entering the room. Should one go off during class, distracting others-- or should a student be observed occupied with such a device-- it will result both in the student being counted as absent and in the forfeiture of all credit on any graded assignment that day. Keep such equipment out of sight-- in a purse, a pocket, or a book bag-- the entire period. Should one be in evidence during a quiz or exam, it will result in an automatic Failure on that assignment.

\* Students who work on a laptop in class risk distracting their colleagues. Only those special needs students whom the Office of Disability Services has certified as dependent upon the

classroom use of a laptop computer may presume the right to employ one in the classroom and should confirm this with the instructor on the first day of term. Otherwise, the lectures/discussions sponsored by this instructor are such as permit easy note-taking in textbook and notebook.

\* Conduct private conversations, read the newspaper, do homework, eat snacks, and catch up on sleep *outside* the classroom. Visit the restroom *before* coming to class; do not burden the class with your daycare problems; and discuss personal matters with the instructor *outside of*, not during, class.

\* Disruptive behavior--that is, any behavior which interrupts or impedes another student's learning process--will be penalized as an absence and result in the forfeiture of all credit on any graded assignment that day. *Seriously* or *persistently* disruptive behavior may result in removal from the course.

3. Attendance. If you are able to pass this course without attending class, then you should either test out or transfer to a section that you find more challenging. Attendance is defined as being present and engaged for the full 50 or 75 minutes of the class period. After the third absence on a TTH or MW rotation, or the fourth on a MWF rotation, a student will be dropped for non-attendance or find his/her final grade penalized (5 points per absence on a TTH or MW rotation, 3.3 points per absence on a MWF rotation). Remember that you only have time for the activity that you put first, and by signing up for this course you are agreeing to make this class your first priority during the specified time period. While the instructor is always willing to work with a student in the event of a legitimate emergency such as the death of a family member or a student's sudden hospitalization, you should schedule dental appointments, elective surgery, court appearances, family celebrations, work, and any other non-emergency activity outside of class time. Unless he or she is taken suddenly ill, under no circumstance may a student leave class early. Remember that no other instructor has the right to preempt your attendance in this class.

Disrupting class by entering late is distracting to both the instructor and your fellow students. Be seated at the start of class, with your notebook and your pen poised to begin. Tardiness will be treated as an absence and will prevent the student from receiving credit for any quiz administered that day. Keep a written record of your absences/tardies so that you know your precise status.

The university allows students whose scholarship depends upon their participation in certain activities to miss class for scheduled events. These students *must* present the instructor with a printed schedule of such events the first week of term, and propose in writing how those absences will be made up (for example, by submitting in advance of the absence a 500-word essay on that day's reading assignment, the grade on which may be substituted for a pop quiz that day). To avoid any confusion at the end of the term, such an arrangement must be approved in writing by the instructor at least one week before the first university sanctioned absence.

Multiple sections of heavily subscribed courses render make-up exams difficult to create and administer, so unless a student is hospitalized for an emergency procedure shortly before the exam or has documented evidence of an emergency *accepted in advance of the exam by the instructor*

as such, there will be no make-up exams. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor in advance of, or at the time of, the exam. Any make-up exam approved in advance by the instructor will be administered 3-5 pm on the last day of final exams- -that is, during the only time in exam week when no other exam is scheduled. It is the student's responsibility either to resolve potential conflicts well in advance of the exam in the exam's favor or to drop the course; never presume upon the instructor to resolve your conflict for you. In the event of a personal emergency, Student Services will communicate with a student's instructors on his/ her behalf, thus relieving the student of that burden. Information regarding Student Services is available in the Student Handbook.

4. Legibility. The first requirement of communication is that your message is legible; do everything possible to ensure that your message can be received. Always write in blue or black ink pen, and make corrections neatly and clearly. Illegible penmanship signals that the writer cannot be bothered to make the effort to be understood, which excuses the reader from making an effort in return; negotiate penmanship problems by double spacing or printing in block letters. Remember that it is the writer's responsibility to ensure that the message is accessible, *not* the reader's.

5. Writing skills. The second requirement of communication is that the message can be understood. Every student at UCA has had eight years of elementary school training, four years of secondary school training, and at least two semesters of freshman composition or their equivalent before taking English 2305 or above. Thus, no student has any excuse not to write standard English grammar, to punctuate properly, and to spell correctly. Any student who begins the term with problems remaining in his/her writing is encouraged to seek from the University Writing Center the tutorial assistance that will remedy these problems before the semester advances so far, and so much ground is lost, that a successful semester's grade becomes impossible.

6. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty. The UCA general counsel has decreed that the following statement must appear in every course syllabus.

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the *Student Handbook*. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in the course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Plagiarism, which is the failure to acknowledge any verbal or ideational indebtedness on a formal writing assignment, will result in a zero being awarded the paper. If a documented paper is required, be certain to keep readily available all research notes, drafts, and/or hard copies of the

paper in its various stages of evolution until after a final grade has been assigned and accepted. Avoid even the appearance of possible impropriety during an exam or quiz: leave books and notebooks closed and out of sight; do not let your eyes stray to another's paper; do not leave the room while the exam is in progress; speak only to the instructor or the exam proctor; do not bring a cell phone into an exam room. A grade of zero will be assigned to any quiz or exam the integrity of which has been opened to question in any way; serious cases will be referred to the university authorities for discipline, which may include expulsion from the university.

7. Preparation and timely submission of assignments. Outside work is due at the start of the specified period; late work will be penalized at the instructor's discretion, generally one letter grade per day past deadline. Students who put off work on a paper invariably suffer last minute difficulties with unavailable library materials, temperamental computers, empty printer cartridges, and corrupted files. Complete your research well in advance of your due date, lay in an ample supply of appropriate paper, and make certain that you have a printer cartridge in reserve. Do not wait to consult the instructor on a problem until the day before the paper is due. Master the requisite MLA documentation format. Leave yourself ample time to proofread your hard copy. You and you alone are responsible for the condition and submission of your paper.

8. Communication with instructor. Keep the instructor informed in a timely manner about any problems that you are having; your failure to do so may preclude his being able to help you to your satisfaction. His office hours at the head of the syllabus. (Should you lose your syllabus, you may download another copy from the English department web page.) It is always best to conduct course business in person, but if you cannot come by his office remember that on a busy day he may only check his e-mail <[RJFrontain@uca.edu](mailto:RJFrontain@uca.edu)> upon opening his office in the morning, so may not see your message for another 24 hours. When e-mailing the instructor, be certain to include your name and some indication of your business in the subject line; the instructor does not open messages the identity of whose sender or the purpose of which is not immediately apparent. Do not waste the instructor's time requesting electronically or over the phone information available in the syllabus.

9. FERPA. A federal act guaranteeing the privacy of every student specifies that an instructor cannot discuss a grade or any other confidential matter with anyone other than the student in an insecure medium. The university counsel interprets the latter to include telephone and e-mail. Thus, a student wishing to discuss his or her academic standing should seek the instructor out during his office hours or make an appointment to meet at some another mutually convenient time. The instructor cannot discuss a student's academic standing with a third party (for example, a parent, roommate, or spouse), even with the student present, unless both the student and the third party have signed a FERPA agreement, which can be found on the university's webpage.

10. Return of graded papers. The rate at which papers will be corrected, graded, and returned to students depends upon two factors: 1) the number of students in the class; and 2) the strength of student writing and argument. Thus, the greater the number of students in the class and the less polished their efforts, the greater the length of time required by a serious instructor. In general, the instructor makes every effort to return quizzes within one week and exams or critical

papers within two weeks.

11. Grade scale.

- A (90-99) = excellent
- B (80-89) = superior
- C (70-79) = adequate
- D (60-69) = inadequate or barely acceptable
- F (0-59) = unacceptable

Sample unit conversion scale:

- C+/B- = 79
- C+ = 78
- C+/C = 77
- C/C+ = 76
- C = 75
- C/C- = 74
- C-/C = 73
- C- = 72
- C-- = 71
- C-/D+ = 70

Keep all graded quizzes, exams, and papers easily available for consultation until *after* the final grade has been recorded, both so that you may compute your average at any point in the semester, and so that any dispute over the final grade's computation may be efficiently resolved.

12. Withdrawal. It is always wise to speak with the instructor before withdrawing from any class in order to make certain that there is no confusion regarding your status, and to preempt your being dropped for non-attendance in the interim between the student's making a decision and executing it. After the second graded assignment of the term has been returned, a student's withdrawal grade will reflect the student's class average on the documented date of withdrawal. Keep track of your average so that you know exactly where you stand at any point in the semester.

13. Handbook policies. The University encourages students to familiarize themselves with all policies listed in the Student Handbook, but especially the University's Sexual Harassment Policy and all academic policies. In addition, the University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need accommodation under this act due to a disability, contact the Office of Disability Support Services at 450-3135. Remember that the instructor cannot certify you as disabled, and that he is able to make accommodations only *after* hearing formally from DSS. Such accommodations are not retroactive.