This course approaches the Bible as a composite text of multiple genres (mythical, historical, epistolary, poetic, sapiential, prophetic, apocalyptic). Issues include the development of a canon, parameters of interpretation, biblical poetics, and biblical influence. Some comparison with related non-biblical texts. (Of additional and crucial interest will be history/histories in/of the biblical text and the historical-critical method.)

**Required Texts:** The Norton Critical Editions of the Old and New Testaments:


**Notes about “the Bible”:** You are likely aware that the precise collection of texts referred to as “the Bible” depends, for religious purposes at least, upon the religion or denomination involved. Jewish Bibles consist of three groups of writings: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. This complete group, the Hebrew Bible or the Tanakh (an acronym), is essentially the same as the Protestant Old Testament (order and precise book division varies). Catholics and some non-Catholic Christians include in their canonical (i.e., official or normative) Old Testaments a collection of texts known as the Apocrypha (or the Deuterocanonical Books), and we will briefly look at some of this material. The Christian Bible (as opposed to the Jewish/Hebrew Bible) includes a New Testament of 27 books in addition to the Old Testament, and these two testaments will constitute “the Bible” in this course. This group of texts is, as Robert Alter and Frank Kermode make clear in their introduction to *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, “the Bible of the central Anglophone tradition, the single book that most easily comes to mind when we speak of the Bible.” (Do be aware that, in certain contexts, the designation “Old Testament” might be considered religiously prejudicial, as if these writings have necessarily been updated or fulfilled by the “New Testament” later adopted by Christianity. But when used conscientiously, it is generally acceptable.)

Another point concerns English translations. We are using the King James/Authorized version (KJV or AV), since it is the best-known and most historically important English translation (from 1611 forward) and since most verbal allusions to the Bible in English literature will echo the KJV. I would encourage you, however, to compare readings in multiple translations as time allows.

**Statement Concerning Course Methodologies and Assumptions:** Per the course title, we will be reading the Bible as literature, not as revealed Truth. In other words, our approach to the Bible in this course will be an “academic” one, which is to say that essentially confessional opinions and assumptions (i.e., those based on the position that the Bible truly is the word of God and hence exempt from criticism or qualification or necessarily inerrant) will figure in the course only as ideas for consideration. Whereas it is important to disparage neither the study of religious matters from a confessional perspective nor particular confessions of faith, we will proceed on the assumption that the Bible, and any other texts we may study in the course, are texts to be read and interpreted in similar manner as other texts.

**Course Objectives:** The Program Learning Outcomes for the English major are as follows:
1. The student will demonstrate the ability to read complex texts, closely and accurately.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to comprehend both traditional and contemporary schools/methods of critical theory and apply them to literary texts to generate relevant interpretations.
3. The student will demonstrate knowledge of literary history in regard to particular periods of world literature.
4. The student will demonstrate ability to effectively conduct literary research.
5. The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes in regards to literary analysis.

The Student Learning Outcomes for this course expect that the student will, upon completing the course,

1. Appreciate the diversity of materials within the Bible (daily reading and discussion);
2. Appreciate its influence on world literature (daily reading and discussion);
3. Possess a basic familiarity with biblical characters, events, themes, history, and concerns (daily reading, discussion, tests, response papers);
4. Understand important hypotheses that inform academic study of the Bible (e.g., the documentary hypothesis and the two-document theory [discussion and tests]); and
5. Possess enhanced analytical and critical reading and writing skills (response papers).

Course Requirements: With considerable ground to cover, this upper-level course will require (and reward) your commitment to steady reading. The course grade will be determined as follows:

- Response #1: 15%
- Response #2: 20%
- Response #3: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 25%

Specific instructions on the response papers will be given as we progress through the course. Exams will test knowledge of terminology, characters, events, and themes using a variety of formats (primarily short answer). (The final will not be explicitly cumulative, but it cannot help being somewhat cumulative.)

Attendance: The attendance policy for this course is the official SFASU policy as stated at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/class-attendance-6.7.pdf; i.e., regular and punctual attendance is expected for all classes, laboratories, and other activities for which a student is registered. Valid excuses are limited to health, family emergencies, and participation in certain SFASU-sponsored events. Students with acceptable excuses may be permitted to make up work for absences to a maximum of three weeks of a semester when the nature of the work missed permits. Whether an absence is excused or unexcused, or in the case of a late add, a student is still responsible for all course content and assignments. Late response papers will lose one letter grade per business day of lateness. I will not accept the submission of material via e-mail without prior approval.

Acceptable Student Behavior: Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic, or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform
poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance available to help SFA students succeed.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is the responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways, including instruction on the components of academic honesty as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit. Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf).

**Withheld Grades Policy:** Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**Students with Disabilities:** To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**Schedule**

NB: An entry such as “Genesis 1–11” means chapters one through eleven of Genesis; an entry such as “Genesis 12–25:18” means Genesis chapter twelve through the eighteenth verse of Genesis chapter twenty-five (a number immediately preceded by a colon is a verse number). If no chapters are listed, then the entire text is to be read. Be sure to read any introductions to the biblical book or section (some are explicitly assigned); read the footnotes as desired. Assignments are to be read for/by (i.e. sometime before) the date beside which they are listed.

**Week 1**
22 Jan Introductions to the course and the Bible
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
24 Jan Genesis 1–3 (creation, fall)
Commentary on the Expulsion from the Garden (pp. 2165–84)

**Week 2**
29 Jan Genesis 4–25 (flood, Babel, Abraham)
_Gilgamesh_ (pp. 1722–30)
Commentary on the Binding of Isaac (pp. 2198–209)
31 Jan Genesis 25:19–36:43 (Jacob/Israel)
Week 3
5 Feb  Genesis 37–50 (Joseph)
      The Qur’an, Sura 12 (pp. 1877–78)
7 Feb  Exodus 1–20, 32–34 (Moses, the Exodus, Song of Moses, Sinai, Ten Commandments)

Week 4
12 Feb  **Response #1 due**
       Leviticus 11, 16 (laws)
       Numbers 1, 9–14, 20–25 (wilderness, Canaan, Balaam, Phinehas)
       Deuteronomy 5–6, 28–30 (Shema)
14 Feb  Joshua 1–6, 11:16–23, 23–24 (conquest)
       Judges 1–5, 13–16 (Deborah, Jael, Samson and Delilah)

Week 5
19 Feb  1 Samuel 1–3, 8–13:15, 15–20, 28, 31
       2 Samuel 1–7, 11–12:25 (Samuel, Saul, David)
       Meir Sternberg, “Ideology of Narration and Narration of Ideology” (pp. 2087–96)
21 Feb  1 Kings 1–12, 16:21–22:53 (Solomon, the divided kingdom, Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah)
       2 Kings 1–2, 16–20 (Elisha, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Isaiah)
       Isaiah 1–11, 36–39

Week 6
26 Feb  2 Kings 21–25 (Manasseh, Josiah, the exile)
       2 Chronicles 33–36:21
       Jeremiah 7, 26–32, 37–39 (Temple sermon)
       Lamentations
       Alan Mintz, “The Rhetoric of Lamentations” (pp. 2081–87)
28 Feb  Ezekiel 1–4, 8–11, 18, 20, 23, 33, 36–37, 43 (the Glory departs, the valley of bones)

Week 7
5 Mar   Isaiah 40–55 (return from exile)
       2 Chronicles 36:22–23
       Ezra 1, 3–6 (postexilic adjustments)
       Nehemiah 1–6
7 Mar   **Midterm Exam**

Week 8
12 Mar  Psalms 1, 2, 6, 8, 14, 18, 19, 22, 23, 30, 32, 34, 38, 40, 41, 42, 44, 51, 68, 72, 74, 78, 79,
       82, 86, 89, 102, 106, 109, 110, 114, 130, 132, 137, 143, 150
14 Mar  Proverbs 1–10, 25–26, 30–31
       Ecclesiastes

**Spring Break**

Week 9
26 Mar  Job (esp. 1–14, 31–42)
       Martin Buber, “The God of the Sufferers” (pp. 1965–70)
28 Mar  Song of Solomon
       Bernard of Clairvaux (pp. 1900–2)
       Thomas Aquinas (pp. 1904–8)
Week 10

2 Apr  Response #2 due
Daniel
1 Maccabees 1–9 (in NT volume)
Susanna (in NT volume)
Bel and the Dragon (in NT volume)

New Testament

4 Apr  Mark
“Preface: Introduction to NT and Apocrypha” (pp. xiii–xxxi)

Week 11

9 Apr  Matthew 1–7, 13, 26–28
Josephus (pp. 975–80)
Paul Ricoeur, “Listening to the Parables of Jesus” (pp. 1208–13)
11 Apr  Luke 1–4, 15–16, 22–24
John 1–9, 18–21

Week 12

16 Apr  Acts 1–9, 15, 17, 21–28
18 Apr  Easter Break

Week 13

23 Apr  Galatians
James
“The Pauline Collection” (pp. 301–312)
25 Apr  1 Corinthians

Week 14

30 Apr  Romans
2 May  Response #3 due
Hebrews

Week 15

7 May  Revelation
9 May  Christian Apocrypha/pseudepigrapha (to be supplied)

Final Exam