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.)

ENGL 3383 Bible as Literature (3 credits) typically meets three times each week in 50-minute segments or twice each week in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. Students have significant weekly reading assignments, as they read a fully representative complement of the composite (two-testament) Bible in one semester, not to mention secondary material on ancient near eastern history and academic biblical study. Students also write essays and take a midterm exam. All of these activities average at a minimum 6 hours of work each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

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. The Jewish Bible consists 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 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.”

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 or supernaturally informed) 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 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:

- Guided Response #1: 20%
- Guided Response #2: 20%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Final Exam: 25%
- Attendance and Participation: 10%

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.)

**General Grading Expectations:** A=exceptionally high performance in every element of an assignment, from content to expression. B=good performance in both areas. C=acceptable performance, but there were some issues of content and/or expression. D=minimal achievement, with significant issues of content and/or expression. F=the requirements of the assignment were not met.

**Program Objectives:** The Program Learning Outcomes for the English major are as follows:

1. The student will demonstrate the ability to analyze works accurately through close reading.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to conduct and apply effective textual research.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes.

**Attendance (6.7):** The attendance policy for this course is the official SFASU policy, by which 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, religious observation, family emergencies, and participation in certain SFASU-sponsored events—and documentation may be required. Whether absences are excused or unexcused by the instructor, a student is still responsible for all course content and assignments. Students with accepted excuses may be permitted to make up work for absences equaling no more than 15% of the scheduled course meeting time for the term, depending on the nature of the missed work. The timeline for completing make-up work will be determined by the instructor.

**Institutional Absences (HOP 04-110):** An Institutional Absence may be granted to a student who participates as a representative of the University in academic (including research), extra- or cocurricular, or athletic activities. Students will be excused for institutional purposes from otherwise required academic activity only when a valid Institutional Absence is approved by the appropriate administrative unit or official and the documentation of approval is provided to the faculty member at least five (5) days in advance. Institutional absences will not be approved for keystone events, defined as: a special or unique assignment, test, project, experience, or other academic exercise identified by the Faculty member as critical for successful completion of standards of the class and unable to be missed. These events must be identified on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and communicated to the students. Events added to the syllabus at a later date will not qualify for Keystone Event status. Keystone Events where the date/time is changed will no longer be considered a Keystone Event. Students should make themselves aware of any Keystone Events identified in the syllabus to ensure there are no conflicts. For keystone events where the assignment dates vary, it is incumbent upon the students to work with their faculty member to not select a conflicting date. More information on Institutional Absences, including how to apply, can be found at [https://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/institutional-absences](https://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/institutional-absences).
Academic Integrity (4.1): The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy. Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities. Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements. Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam. Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5): 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 coursework 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 to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

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, and Room 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 promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Student Wellness and Well-Being: SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources: The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.
To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

Crisis Resources:

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

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 or linked to a verse number 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. (So, e.g., you come to class on 23 January having read and ready to discuss Genesis 1–3 and pp. 2165–84.)

Week 1
18 Jan Introductions to the course and the Bible

Week 2
23 Jan Genesis 1–3 (creation, fall/expulsion)
   Commentary on the Expulsion from the Garden (pp. 2165–84)
25 Jan Genesis 4–25:18 (Noah, flood, Babel, Abraham)
   Commentary on the Binding of Isaac (pp. 2198–209)

Week 3
30 Jan Genesis 25:19–36:43 (Jacob/Israel)
1 Feb  
Genesis 37–50 (Joseph)  
The Qur’an, Sura 12 (pp. 1877–78)

Week 4
6 Feb  
Exodus 1–20, 32–34  
Deuteronomy 5–6, 28–34 (Moses, the Exodus, Sinai, Ten Commandments, the Shema)
8 Feb  
Joshua 1–6, 11:16–23, 23–24 (conquest)  
Judges 13–16 (Samson and Delilah)  
Ruth

Week 5
13 Feb  
1 Samuel 1–3, 8–13:15, 15–20, 28, 31  
2 Samuel 1–7, 11–12:25 (Samuel, Saul, David)  
Robert Alter, “Characterization and the Art of Reticence” (pp. 2070–81)  
Meir Sternberg, “Ideology of Narration and Narration of Ideology” (pp. 2087–96)
15 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
20 Feb  
Jeremiah 7, 26–32, 37–39 (Temple sermon)  
2 Kings 21–25 (Manasseh, Josiah, the exile)  
2 Chronicles 33–36:21
22 Feb  
Ezekiel 1–4, 8–11, 18, 20, 23, 33, 36–37, 43 (the Glory departs, the valley of bones)

Week 7
27 Feb  
Isaiah 40–55 (return from exile)  
2 Chronicles 36:22–23  
Ezra 1, 3–6 (postexilic adjustments)
29 Feb  
Midterm Exam

Week 8
5 Mar  
Psalms 1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 14, 19, 22, 23, 30, 32, 38, 40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 51, 69, 72, 74, 78, 79, 82, 86, 89, 102, 105, 106, 109, 110, 114, 130, 132, 137, 143, 150
7 Mar  
Proverbs 1–10, 25–26, 30–31  
Ecclesiastes

Spring Break

Week 9
19 Mar  
Job (esp. 1–14, 31–42)  
Martin Buber, “The God of the Sufferers” (pp. 1965–70)
21 Mar  
Song of Solomon  
Origen (pp. 1861–3)  
Bernard of Clairvaux (pp. 1900–2)  
Thomas Aquinas (pp. 1904–8)

Week 10
26 Mar  
Guided Response #1 due  
Daniel  
1 Maccabees 1–9 (in NT volume)
28 Mar  Susanna (in NT volume)

Week 11  New Testament
2 Apr  “Preface: Introduction to NT and Apocrypha” (pp. xiii–xxxi)
Mark
4 Apr  Matthew 5–7, 13
Josephus (pp. 975–80)
Paul Ricoeur, “Listening to the Parables of Jesus” (pp. 1208–13)

Week 12
9 Apr  John 1–9
Luke 1–4, 15–16, 22–24
11 Apr  Acts 1–19

Week 13
16 Apr  Acts 20–28
“The Pauline Collection” (pp. 301–12)
Galatians
18 Apr  Romans 8–11

Week 14
23 Apr  Hebrews
25 Apr  James

Week 15
30 Apr  Revelation
2 May  Guided Response #2 due
Christian Apocrypha/pseudepigrapha (to be supplied)

Final Exam