This semester we will be exploring the wonderful world of the Bible. We will discuss its historicity and its compilation in an effort to better understand the stories that make up the crux of this most essential literary text. We will be looking both at passages familiar to students as well as those that are often ignored in most circles. We will look at these stories for their narrative and literary value as well as for their historical importance. We will compare these tales to other similar tales from contemporaneous cultures as well as gaining a better understanding of the stories in their own right.

**Texts:**

Students need to have a hard copy of the Bible and bring it to class when needed. The recommended version for this course is the Oxford Annotated Edition and it is sold at the City College bookstore. If students already own a different Bible (preferably NRSV, JPS or RSV), please bring it to class the first or second day so it can be approved for use in this course. The Bible must be brought to every class after the first week.

In an effort to save students money in a less than robust economy, texts do not need to be purchased. Instead, every text that students will need can be read freely online. The instructor has either provided links to the readings from the course website or will email assignments to the class. Students must be sure instructor has their email addresses and must check these accounts regularly. The website for this course is “members-only” and students must request access— a copy of this syllabus with embedded links to the readings is available on the website. The website is [http://bibleanditsstories.pbworks.com](http://bibleanditsstories.pbworks.com)

**Aims:**

By the end of this course, students should be able to do the following:

- Explain how the Bible developed from its oral origins to its modern written form.
- Define how the stories of the Bible are both individual works as well as an incorporated canon.
- Analyze primary sources (biblical as well as other contemporary literature) as they pertain to both the Bible as a canon as well as the individual stories.
- Compare and contrast modern scholarly understandings of the Bible and its stories.
During the course of this semester, we will look at both primary and secondary sources in an attempt to understand biblical narrative. Through analysis and discussion, we will learn about the world of the Bible and by doing so place it firmly in its ancient context. Students will engage in writing assignments and group work in an attempt to find the historical stories, an understanding of the Bible that is not always the focus of subsequent religious movements.

**General Education Information**

As part of the College's General Education Curriculum, this course is designed to enhance your understanding of world cultures and global issues. Students successfully completing this course will develop the following proficiencies:

- Students will produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
- Students will evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Students will gather, interpret and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is presenting as your own a phrase, sentence or passage from another's work without using quotation marks or otherwise citing it: this includes any facts gathered from print texts or the Internet. City College regards acts of academic dishonesty as a serious offense — if plagiarism is confirmed, students will fail the course.

**Assignments:**

**Weekly Assignments:** Every Wednesday, beginning on Week 3, students must hand in a one paragraph paper describing a modern piece of art (music, film, painting, sculpture, poem, etc...) that incorporates the specific biblical themes we are discussing that week. Examples would be the Charlton Heston classic *The Ten Commandments* for week six or Rufus Wainwright's “Danny Boy” for week nine (no, students may not use these two examples). Students should be prepared to discuss their choices in class. This is worth 15% of your grade.

**Project:** Biblical book and its academic meaning (due 10/15)

In groups which will be chosen/assigned in class, a presentation should be developed and given discussing the historical and literary development of a specific book of the Bible. Books will be assigned to the groups in class. Students will discuss the history, content, authorship and make up of the book and how the book relates to the Bible as a whole. The group must present together and provide an outline of the presentation. Powerpoint presentations are suggested, though not required. (25%)

**Paper:** The Bible in modern scholarship (sources due 11/13 and paper due 11/18)
In 750-1000 words, discuss three different scholarly articles and their academic perspectives on an historical, literary or political issue in the Bible (for sources, students may choose websites, e-texts, online articles or print). Compare and contrast these scholarly perspectives. Is their evidence solid? Why or why not? Is their reasoning logical? What conclusions can be drawn about the academic approach to the Bible? (Choice of scholarship is worth 5%, and must be handed in and approved before the paper can be accepted; paper is worth 25%).

In-class Assignments: Throughout the semester we will be looking at primary sources and trying to uncover what they have to tell us about Bible -- often we will look at these sources in groups, and your participation is required. Pass/fail essays/outlines on previously assigned readings may be assigned in class as well. This is 10% of your grade.

Exam

Final:
The final will be a take home. It will be given out the second to last day of class and due the last day of class. All information must come from our course materials. Anything extraneous will be considered cheating. Students may work in pairs on the exam and may hand in one exam for both people. The exam must be written by both participants equally. It is worth 20%.

Attendance:

Attending class and participating in class discussion are vital to the course— if more than 4 classes are missed, the student may be dropped from the course. Two late arrivals to class will be counted as an absence; two early departures from class will also be counted as an absence. If you are seriously ill, please let me know ASAP so we can be sure you don’t get too far behind.

Do not use your cell phone/BlackBerry/iPhone/tablet during class, unless otherwise authorized by the instructor. Do not email, text, message or use the Internet during class sessions.

Class Sessions & Readings

WEEK 1
Welcome to the Bible
No readings

28 August
Introduction

WEEK 2
The Bible
Read this article.
9 September
Compilation

11 September
Historicity of the Bible

The Torah, Pentateuch, The Five Books of Moses or the Chumash
WEEK 3
The Creation
Read Genesis, paying special attention to Gen. 1-6
Read Psalm 65 and 104

16 September
The Canon
The Creation Stories

18 September
The Creation Stories
*first weekly assignment due today, hereafter they are due every Wednesday.*

WEEK 4
Creation continues
The Flood and this.
Gen. 7-11

23 September
The Creation Story as told elsewhere
The Flood

25 September
The Flood

WEEK 5
The Patriarchs
Read Gen. 12-27.
Read Gen. 28-50.

30 September
Abraham

2 October
Isaac & Jacob

WEEK 6
The Patriarchs to Moses
Reread Gen. 28-50 and this article.
Read. Ex. 1-15, 21-23 and this.

7 October
Jacob & Joseph

9 October
Miriam & Moses

The Prophets or Nevi'im
WEEK 7
Judges
Read Judges 1-12, paying particular attention to Jgs. 4-5 and read this.

Tuesday 15 October (as per City College, Tuesday 15 October is a Monday)
Deborah & Barak
**PRESENTATIONS DUE NEXT CLASS**

16 October
*Presentations

WEEK 8
Prophets
Read 1Kgs 18-19 and 2Kgs 2-5 (skim 6-13)

21 October
Presentations

23 October
Elijah and Elisa

Wisdom Literature
WEEK 9
Read Job, paying special attention to the first 5 chapters and the last 3.
Read these Psalms.

28 October
Job

30 October
Psalms
WEEK 10
Wisdom Literature
The Psalter
Read these psalms.
Read Lamentations

4 November
Psalms

6 November
Lamentations
3 SCHOLARLY SOURCES DUE NEXT CLASS

WEEK 11
Wisdom Literature
Lamentations & Proverbs
Read Lamentations & Proverbs and this.

**11 November is Veteran's Day, no class**

13 November
Lamentations and Proverbs
**DUE: 3 scholarly sources are due**
PAPER ON SCHOLARLY ARTICLES IS DUE NEXT CLASS.

Introducing The Apocrypha
WEEK 12
Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus
Read Ecclesiastes and Ecclesiasticus and this.

18 November
Ecclesiastes
**DUE: Paper on scholarly sources.**

20 November
Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sira

WEEK 13
Non-canonical Psalms
Read the Wisdom of Solomon, Psalm 151 and this.

25 November
Psalm 151

**at City College, 27 November is a Friday, so this class doesn’t meet**
WEEK 14
Read Wisdom of Solomon
Read Tobit and this.

2 December
Wisdom of Solomon

4 December
Tobit

WEEK 15
Judith
The Bible in modern literature

9 December
Read Judith
TAKE HOME EXAMS WILL BE HANDED OUT.

11 December
FINAL EXAM DUE
Israeli snack foods will be consumed.