

Las Positas College  
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**Course Outline for RELS 2**  
**BIBLE: HISTORY AND LITERATURE**  
**Effective: Fall 2005**

**I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:**

RELS 2 — BIBLE: HISTORY AND LITERATURE — 3.00 units

Study of the historical context and literary forms of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Emphasis on social, political and economic origins of the works, their literary motifs, and how their creation reflected ongoing cultural values.

3.00 Units Lecture

**Grading Methods:**

Letter Grade

**Discipline:**

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

**II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1**

**III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:**

**IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:**

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

1. identify the major works of the Bible;
2. identify various literary theories of the Bible's development, including questions of authorship and literary form (specifically including myth, legend, song, history, and sermon);
3. describe the historical and political contexts of the various books of the Bible;
4. articulate an understanding of how the authors have responded to specific situations in light of the traditions of their faith;
5. explain the Judeo-Christian tradition as it addresses both universal and particular questions concerning human values and cultural identity;
6. demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of viewpoints articulated by the biblical authors, and engage those authors by attempting to apply their insights to the student's own value formation.

**V. CONTENT:**

- A. The Bible as document
  1. Reading the Bible as a text
  2. Origins of biblical canon
  3. Problems of translation
  4. Reading the Bible historically as opposed to via 'faith'
- B. The Torah
  1. Primeval history and the question of creation
  2. Genesis/Exodus
    - a. The question of patriarchy/matriarchy
    - b. Moses and covenant
  3. Law and priestly theology in Leviticus
- C. Nation building
  1. Kingship and the narratives of David and Solomon
  2. Israel and Judah and the question of political loyalty
  3. Ongoing conflict between polytheism and monotheism in 1Kings
- D. Prophecy
  1. The nature of prophecy
  2. Question of exile: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations
  3. The prophetic tradition in the modern age
- E. Questions of ethical and value formation
  1. Suffering and the book of Job
  2. The Hebrew short story and loyalty: Ruth
  3. Praise and the Psalms
- F. The origins of Christianity
  1. Roman occupation and the fate of Temple Judaism
  2. Diversity within Judaism
  3. The beginning of Christianity as sect/cult
- G. The Gospels of Jesus

1. Literary and historical genres of the Greco-Roman world
2. Problems of interpretation with the synoptic gospel
3. Mark: Jesus as the suffering son
4. Matthew: Jesus as the Messiah
5. Luke/Acts: Jesus as savior of the world
6. John: Jesus as Heavenly Messenger
7. Gnostic gospels and the non-canonical scriptures
8. The question of the historical Jesus
- H. Paul and the spread of Christianity
  1. Thessalonians and the idea of mission
  2. Pauline theology and Romans
  3. Problem churches: 1Corinthians
- I. The oppression of women in early Christianity: Paul, Timothy and accommodation to the Greco-Roman world
- J. The Jewish Wars and the Christian-Jewish split
- K. The cosmos, Revelation, and the establishment of state religion

#### VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Written assignments showing engagement with texts in light of critical methods and value formation
- C. Group exercises in basic textual criticism
- D. Class and Group Discussion on Relevant Topics

#### VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading
  1. Read selection from Paul in 1Timothy and 1Corinthians
  2. Read selections on Mary Magdalene in gospels
- B. Class and group discussion of issues
  1. Group discussion of Biblical texts
  2. General discussion of role of women in religion today
  3. Implications of biblical sources to justify behavior and values
- C. Written assessment
  1. Student will write a research paper on two specific stories of women in the Bible (for instance, Ruth and Mary Magdalene), comparing the purposes of the stories, the way women are portrayed in each, and the implications of the similarities and differences.

#### VIII. EVALUATION:

- A. **Methods**
  1. Exams/Tests
  2. Quizzes
  3. Research Projects
  4. Class Participation
- B. **Frequency**
  - A mid-term and a final exam
  - Two to four quizzes
  - Research paper
  - Daily participation

#### IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. The Bible, in various acceptable translations.
2. Collins, John J. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.
3. Ehrman, Bart D. The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
4. White, J. Benton and Walter Wilson, From Adam to Armageddon: A Survey of the Bible. 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001.

#### X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: