# Religious Studies 150: Introduction to biblical literature | Spring 2016

# T & Th, 10:20-11:40 AM, 316 Bessey Hall

**COURSE ESSENTIALS**

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| Instructor | Dr. Chris Frilingos  [Department of Religious Studies](http://religiousstudies.msu.edu/)  (http://religiousstudies.msu.edu)  C729 Wells Hall | E-mail | frilingo@msu.edu |

### Description:

“The Bible,” Prof. Paula Fredriksen observes, “is not a book, but a library.” This semester we will explore the contents of this library. The first section examines the Hebrew Bible, which constitutes the biblical canon for Jews. It is similar but not identical to what most Christians refer to as the “Old Testament.” The second section turns to the New Testament, which, together with the Old Testament, forms the biblical canon for most Protestant Christians. These collections are likewise canonical for Roman Catholic Christians, who also include Deuterocanonical writings; Eastern Orthodox Christians consider still others texts authoritative.

This course teaches the critical study of religion. It is not confessional in character—that is, the course will not try to persuade you to adopt a religious viewpoint. Nor will it promote personal religious beliefs and practices. In the classroom (and in assignments), I will ask you to investigate religion, not practice it. Together we will learn from and make use of the insights of scholarship in the field of Religious Studies.

### Goals:

*To acquire knowledge of a wide range of biblical materials*. You will get to know the genres, themes, and plots of many biblical writings.

*To learn about the ancient religious communities that created and first read these texts*. You will ask and answer questions of origins, authorship, and history for the texts we examine. You will also seek to understand the religious character of the writers and ancient audiences of these texts.

*To examine critically the meaning of biblical literature for ancient and modern audiences*. Why does the Bible mean so much to so many people? How do biblical books address the "big questions" of suffering, existence, and meaning?

### course materials:

The books are available for purchase at the Student Bookstores and are *on reserve* in the Main Library (though editions may differ). Unless otherwise indicated, all readings, in print and online, are required.

* *HarperCollins Study Bible* (2006, Student Edition). We will be reading from the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and Apocrypha/Deuterocanon. It is important that all of us are on the same page when it comes to the translation of these texts. Older editions of the *HarperCollins Study Bible* are acceptable, as long as “the Apocrypha” is included.
* Christian E. Hauer and William A. Young, *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds*, 8th ed. (2012). Textbook for the course. Older editions may work for you, but the syllabus will reflect the 8th edition.
* Online reading
* Film: We will view “Crimes and Misdemeanors” (1989) in class, in two parts.

### expectations:

Arrive on time, prepared for class.

Attend every class (if medical or other emergency causes you to miss more than three class sessions, you should contact me; religious observance is excused—please let me know). If you miss more than three classes without a legitimate excuse, your Talking Points grade may be reduced.

Join in class discussion and listen respectfully to others. This involves putting away all handheld electronic devices. Please close laptops when asked to do so, and do not use the Internet or other electronic networks during class. I do not permit video or audio recording of class sessions.

Check D2L and email regularly for messages about the course.

### assignments:

Instructions for written assignments will be posted to D2L. I do not accept work by email: print copies only.

* Short in-class writing assignments, involving small-group work and/or class discussion. I may also use quizzes to assess learning.
* You will be assigned Talking Points papers this semester. These short assignments will help to generate discussion in class. Each assignment will ask you to respond to questions about a specific reading. Work will be graded as: S = satisfactory (full credit); U = unsatisfactory (partial credit); 0.
* You will write one essay of 2-3 pages about the film, “Crimes and Misdemeanors.”
* Three exams, as listed in the schedule. The final is comprehensive. You may not take the final at a time other than the time scheduled by the Office of the Registrar. Exams may include: timeline, identification of terms, identification of biblical passages, short essay questions. Except in cases of extreme emergency, no make-up exams are allowed. Further details in class.
* Students registered with **RCPD** should speak with the instructor immediately if they wish for their exams to be administered in one of the on-campus RCPD facilities.

### Evaluation:

Your final grade is based on the following percentages:

* Talking Points: 10%
* Film Essay: 10%
* Midterm Exams: 50% (2 exams, 25% each)
* Final Exam (Comprehensive): 30%

### academic integrity:

All the work that you submit for this course falls under the umbrella of **Academic Integrity**. Therefore, you must provide citations for ideas, quotes, and paraphrases that you include in your papers and exams. Neglecting to cite sources is plagiarism and may result in a failing grade. If at any time during the semester you have a question about citing a source, please ask me. Web-based materials should be used with great caution and documented when employed in written work. See me if you have questions.