

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH GRADUATE COURSES
SUMMER 2022

English 503 A01 A Literary and Historical Introduction to the Bible – Syllabus
1.5 units
Dr. Christopher Douglas

This graduate seminar introduces students to two key methodological approaches to the study of the Bible: literary and historical. Our approach to the Bible as literature will be guided by Robert Alter's two books on the literary qualities of Biblical narrative and Biblical poetry. Our approach to the historical study of the Bible will be guided by current scholarship that sees the Bible as a form of cultural memory. The latter includes three rather surprising books. Mark Smith argues that the Hebrew Bible is a form of "memory work" in which traces of ancient Israel's "primordial polytheism" were overwritten by priestly monotheism. Paula Fredriksen and Bart Ehrman, meanwhile, argue that the earliest historical information about Jesus – that he was an apocalyptic prophet expecting the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God – became transformed as the decades wore on and the gospels were written. Taken together, this scholarship understands scripture as the site of memory work and surprising theological innovation – an understanding that sometimes stands in intriguing tension with the literary approach to the Bible. The course goal is to enable better literary criticism about religiously-interested texts by understanding how Biblical literature works and by becoming conversant with advanced literary and historical scholarship on the Bible. You don't have to be religious to take this course, and you don't need to be non-religious either: we welcome diverse perspectives in this critical introduction.

Learning Objectives:

- ⊙ Introduce graduate students to the characters, plots, themes and theologies of the Bible – no prior Biblical literacy will be assumed.
- ⊙ Enable students to understand the Bible's literary forms such as poetic parallelism and ellipsis as well as the Bible's various genres such as prophecy, apocalypse, wisdom or psalms, and to think about how attention to Biblical form can help inform literary studies.
- ⊙ Introduce students to historical scholarship about the Bible's cultural contexts, layers of composition, and editing, which likewise can help nuance Humanities scholarship across numerous fields.

ENGLISH 503 A02 *Introduction to Manuscript Studies and Archival Methods*
1.5 units
Dr. Adrienne Williams Boyarin

This is a hands-on introduction to codicology and paleography, the history of the book (pre-print and pre-digital), archival research methods, and editing. Students will work exclusively with UVic's medieval and early modern manuscript collections. Skill training is collaborative and practice-based. This course teaches must-have skills for those who want to do advanced work in medieval or early modern studies in particular, but it will also be attractive and useful for those interested in book history and archival studies more broadly, or for any student who wants a unique experience working with old books. No prior training or specialist knowledge is necessary. Through previous versions of the course (for undergraduates and graduates), I have developed assignments with Special Collections staff and archivists that contribute needed resources to the library (through cataloguing, describing, and research notes), and with *Fragmentarium*, an online "Laboratory for Medieval Manuscript Fragments" run by the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). Because course projects relies on original primary-source research and resource creation, the course will offer the opportunity to produce online publications for Special Collections

and/or peer-reviewed online publications for *Fragmentarium*. (N.B. The 2016 version of this course produced 4 MA Essays, 11 Special Collections publications, and 2 peer-reviewed articles in the journal *Florilegium* that included the co-authored work of four students.)

Tentative Text List: Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*; Clemens and Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*; Capelli, *Dizionario di abbreviature latine ed italiane*.

Assignments: skill-testing quizzes (15%); transcription exercises (20%); manuscript description exercise (10%); in-class presentation (10%); project proposal (5%); term project (40%).