

Course Syllabus

Course Number & Title: 911 Biblical Introduction

Semester: Fall 2026

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Course Description:

Historical and literary backgrounds of the biblical message; contemporary ancient religious traditions; principles for establishing the canon of the Old and New Testaments; the apocrypha; survey of the history of biblical criticism with evaluation of higher criticism; transmission of the biblical text. 2 hrs.

Student Learning Objectives:

1. The Student will **evaluate** and **explain** the similarities of the Bible as ancient literature to the literature and ancient milieu of its time of production; importantly, the student will **critically analyze** why the Bible is radically different from its surrounding cultural contexts.
2. The Student will **master** the key topographical regions and place names of the Promised Land, along with the importance of its global situation in order to **visualize** the movements and event locations of God's people. **Familiarity** with the principles, general methods, and major contributions of Near Eastern archaeology in confirming the biblical record and its timeline will **buttress the student's confidence** in teaching the authenticity of God's word.
3. The Student will be able to **explain** the history and essence of the main models of higher criticism of the Bible in order to **critique** and **refute** these approaches to the Bible's composition.
4. By learning proper criteria for biblical canonicity, the student will **evaluate** competing theories of canonicity and will be able to **defend** the Reformed Protestant teaching against the inclusion of early or recent religious writings to God's settled canon.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. The student will be able to relate the general Near Eastern geography and chronology that shaped Bible history, as well as a sampling of human artifacts that have been and still could be dug out of the earth of this region.
2. The student will broaden his Christian apologetic by growing in his understanding of
 - a. the distinctiveness of the Bible among other Ancient Near Eastern literatures,
 - b. how speculative higher criticism is out of touch with recent discoveries of trade and treaty documents from the realm of the Bible, and
 - c. reasons behind the careful preservation of the Scriptures through the ages.
3. The student will find a new appreciation for the accuracy and reliability of the original texts behind a majority of our modern Bible versions.

Course Requirements

1. Required Texts

- a. Frank E. Gabelein, ed. *Expositor's Bible Commentary: Introductory Articles*, Vol. 1, (1979 ed.)
- b. Gleason Archer. *Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Part I
- c. Everett Harrison. *Introduction to the New Testament*, Parts I-IV, OR Similar text & reading

2. Recommended Texts

Paul Wright. *Holman QuickSource Bible Atlas*

Assignment Descriptions

- 1) Weekly Reading and Reporting. Students will read all of the assigned articles following the reading schedule below. One assigned student will produce a two-page (minimum) outline of the reading(s) for the scheduled day. The essay outline will be reproduced for the rest of the class for discussion and student review. PowerPoint displays are encouraged.
The following week, the class will begin with a quiz over the previous week's reading.
All readings must be completed by December 8.

- 2) A five-page paper due by the last class.

Be sure to follow the "WRS Style Guide" and term paper Grading guidelines ("WRS Standard Rubric") found under "Student Handbook and Resources" of the "Student Center" online menu:
<https://www.wrs.edu/student-center/student-handbook-and-resources>

Possible research topics are:

- Compare/contrast Near Eastern accounts with the biblical account of the creation or of the flood
- Compare/contrast Hammurabi's Law Code with that of Moses
- Develop some of the methods of archaeology; or summarize a listing of some of its major contributions
- Define and critique a higher critical method
- Enlarge on the proposition that the Apocrypha is sub-canonical
- Review the impact of the Bible on cultures through the ages OR the importance of having the Bible in an accessible language/dialect.
- Your choice...

Grading

Readings = 25% Outlines = 15 % Quizzes = 30% Paper = 15% Final Exam = 10%
Attendance = 5%

Class Schedule

Fall 2026

9/1	Introduction: Oral Preview	
9/8	Geography of Palestine. <i>EBC</i> :83-102 by Houston	Lensch
9/15	Chronology of the OT. <i>EBC I</i> :359-373	Lensch
9/22	NO CLASS: Presbytery Travel	
9/29	Chronology of the NT. <i>EBC I</i> :593-613	
10/6	OT Archaeological Highlights. <i>EBC I</i> :309-338 by Wiseman Reference Archer I, chpt 13	
10/13	NT Archaeological Highlights. <i>EBC I</i> :645-672 by Yamauchi	
10/20	(Overflow Session, if needed)	
10/27	Contemporary OT cultures. <i>EBC I</i> :339-358 by Livingston	
11/3	Background of NT times. <i>EBC</i> :483-500 by Rupprecht Reference Harrison, parts I and II	
11/10	Historical/Literary Criticism of OT. <i>EBC</i> : 232-252 by Harrison Reference Archer, part I, chpts. 6-12	
11/17	Historical/Literary Criticism of NT. <i>EBC</i> :437-458 by Guthrie	
11/24	Canon of the OT. <i>EBC</i> :385-394 by Fisher Reference Archer, Introduction 1 & 2 and part I, chpt 5, and Bruce, chap. 1 of <i>The Canon of Scripture</i>	
12/1	Canon of the NT. <i>EBC</i> :631-644 by Walls Reference Harrison, part IV, and Bruce, chaps. 21-23 of <i>The Canon of Scripture</i>	
12/8	Bible Transmission and Translation. <i>EBC</i> :39-60 by Bruce	
	Term Paper Due	
12/15	Final Exam over study questions and quizzes	

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