



THTH8305 - The Bible and Contemporary Issues
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Theological & Historical Studies Division
Apr 22–24, 2024

Mon 1-9pm; Tues 8am-4pm; Wed 8am-4pm CST

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

This course focuses upon how best to communicate the message of the Bible in order to address contemporary apologetic issues. Issues addressed include oral and written communication forms, apologetic methodology, biblical authority, textual authenticity, science and the Bible, and other similar issues. Students will also study how best to communicate biblical truth and the Christian worldview via contemporary media. Special attention will be given to implementing these communication forms in pastoral ministry.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- describe the formation of the Old and New Testament canon and account for other extra-biblical, religious literature of the period.
- answer major philosophical, methodological, textual, ethical, and scientific challenges to the authority of the Bible.
- discuss the views of radical skeptics regarding the uniqueness of Jesus and the reliability of the New Testament.

Textbooks

Cowan, Steven B., and Terry L. Wilder, ed. *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of the Bible*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013.

Lynch, Matthew J. *Flood and Fury: Old Testament Violence and the Shalom of God*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2023.

McDonald, Lee Martin. *Formation of the Bible: The Story of the Church's Canon*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2012.

Course Teaching Methodology

The course will involve the following methodologies: professor-facilitated student presentations, class discussions, a book review, chapter summaries, and post-course curriculum development. Students will be learners and also facilitate the learning of their peers.

Course Requirements

- Pre-Seminar Assignment 1: Chapter summaries of *Formation of the Bible*
- Pre-Seminar Assignment 2: Chapter summaries of *In Defense of the Bible*
- Pre-Seminar Assignment 3: Book review of *Flood and Fury*
- In-Seminar Assignment: Lead Presentation & Discussion
- Post-Seminar Assignment: Submit a 4-lesson curriculum

If you are taking this course as a NOLA2U Live student, please note the following attendance policies:

1. The course on the New Orleans campus will be connected synchronously via Web conferencing with Internet students. These courses will require weekly attendance at the stated class meeting times.
2. Students are only allowed to miss the amount of class time specified in the NOBTS attendance policy as stated in this syllabus.
3. Technical issues will not be considered a valid reason for missing a class session.

Evaluation of Grade

The student's grade will be computed as follows:

- 20% - Pre-Seminar Assignment 1: Chapter summaries of *Formation of the Bible*
- 20% - Pre-Seminar Assignment 2: Chapter summaries of *In Defense of the Bible*
- 20% - Pre-Seminar Assignment 3: Book review of *Flood and Fury*
- 20% - In-Seminar Assignment: Lead Presentation & Discussion
- 20% - Post-Seminar Assignment: Submit a 4-lesson curriculum

Attendance Policy

Traditional and NOLA2U Classes: Students are expected to attend and participate in the class sessions. Any student missing more than nine hours may receive an automatic grade of "F" for the course. Three tardies will count as one absence.

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu or My.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. Canvas@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System (Faculty/Students/Staff) Canvas.NOBTS.edu.
3. [Video Conferencing Help Desk](#) - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Video Conferencing NOBTS classrooms (On and Off-Campus)
4. TelephoneHelpDesk@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS On-Campus Phone system.
5. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests in the Flex classrooms and for general technical questions/support requests. If you are not sure who to contact, use this email address!
6. [504.816.8180](tel:504.816.8180) - Call for any technical questions/support requests. (Currently available Mon-Thurs 7:00am-9:00pm & Fri 7:00-7:00pm Central Time)
7. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Help for Writing Papers at "The Write Stuff"

NOBTS maintains a Writing Center designed to improve English writing at the graduate level. Students can receive writing guides, tips, and valuable information to help in becoming a better writer. A copy of the approved NOBTS Style Guide can be found in the course Canvas shell, or can be located online at the Writing Center's page on the seminary website at:

<https://www.nobts.edu/resources/pdf/writing/StyleGuide.pdf>

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Course Schedule and Assignments

1. Students will read *Formation of the Bible* and submit one-page, single-spaced summaries—concluding with two discussion questions—for each of these chapters: Introduction & Chapters 1–8. **Due: April 1.**

2. Students will read *In Defense of the Bible* and submit one-page, single-spaced summaries—concluding with two discussion questions—for each of these chapters: 1–17. **Due: April 8.**

3. Students will read *Flood and Fury* and submit a book review of 1500–1800 words. **Due: April 15.**

Book Review Instructions for *Flood and Fury*

For a helpful overview of critical book reviews, see this [paper](#) from the UNC Writing Center.

Summary (500–600 words)

Begin with a one or two-sentence biography of the author. Next, summarize and explain the author’s thesis and supporting arguments. This section might also include a description of the book’s contents and definitions of key terms.

Critique (1,000–1,200 words)

The critique should address many of the following:

- critique of the author’s thesis, assumptions, supporting arguments, method, sources, logic, and style;
- specific examples of strengths and weaknesses (such as any relevant areas not addressed) of the book;
- discussion of the book’s usefulness for the intended audience, how the book contributes to its field, and other books which explore the issue;
- a closing sentence either recommending the book or not and explaining why.

Cite page numbers parenthetically. Footnote only outside sources. Use quotations sparingly. Avoid first-person language (I, me, my). No title page is required; instead, students should provide their name, the date, and word count for each section at the top of the first page. Please format in single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font.

Book Review Grading Rubric

	10	9	8	7	5
Content	proper length robust explanation and critique of thesis all details accurate	proper length acceptable explanation and critique of thesis minimal inaccuracies	improper length provides some explanation and critique of thesis some inaccuracies	improper length provides little explanation and critique of thesis many inaccuracies	improper length neither explains nor critiques the thesis no accurate details
Organization	addresses topic directly highly organized structure	addresses topic directly organized structure	addresses topic somewhat organized structure	somewhat addresses topic highly unorganized structure	wanders significantly no organized structure
Logical Support	superior examples of the topic	examples of the topic	acceptable support of the topic	minimal support of the topic	no logical support of the topic
Communication	exceptionally clear meaning to the reader	clear meaning to the reader	somewhat clear meaning to the reader	unclear meaning to the reader	incoherent for the reader
Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling	no visible or significant errors	errors do not disturb the reading process	errors sometimes disturb the reading process	errors often disturb the reading process	errors make reading difficult

In-Seminar Assignments:

1. Students will develop and deliver a 30-minute presentation (including a PowerPoint presentation and fill-in-the-blank handout for listeners) and lead a 45-minute discussion on one of these topics from the pre-seminar readings (**Sign up for a topic via [this Google Docs link](#) by April 15**; the presentation will be made and discussion will be led during the seminar):

- 1) Scripture and OT Canon (McDonald, chs. 1–4)
- 2) NT Canon, Manuscripts, and Councils (McDonald, chs. 5–8)
- 3) Philosophical & Methodological Challenges to the Bible (Cowan & Wilder, chs. 1–4)
- 4) The Reliability of OT and NT Texts (Cowan & Wilder, chs. 5–6)
- 5) Forgeries & Pagan Myths (Cowan & Wilder, ch. 7–8)
- 6) Historical Challenges to the Bible (Cowan & Wilder, chs. 9–11)
- 7) Old Testament Violence (Lynch, *Flood and Fury*)
- 8) Does the Bible Condone Sexism & Slavery? (Cowan & Wilder, ch. 13)
- 9) Scientific & Theological Challenges to the Bible (Cowan & Wilder, chs. 14–15)
- 10) A Final Word about the Word (Cowan & Wilder, chs. 16–17)

Monday, 1:00-1:30 PM	Introductions & Syllabus
Monday, 1:30-2:20	Bible Translation
Monday, 2:30-3:45	Presentation 1
Monday, 4:00-5:15	Presentation 2
Monday, 5:30-6:45	Presentation 3
Monday, 7:00-9:00	Dinner (all meals on our own)
Tuesday, 8:00-8:15 AM	Prayer Requests/Class Admin
Tuesday, 8:15-9:30	Presentation 4
Tuesday, 9:45-11:00	Presentation 5
Tuesday, 11:00-1:00	Lunch
Tuesday, 1:00-2:15 PM	Presentation 6
Tuesday, 2:30-3:45	Presentation 7
Tuesday, 4:00 PM	Dinner
Wednesday, 8:00-8:15 AM	Prayer Requests/Class Admin
Wednesday, 8:15-9:30	Presentation 8
Wednesday, 9:45-11:00	Presentation 9
Wednesday, 11:00-1:00	Lunch
Wednesday, 1:00-2:15 PM	Presentation 10
Wednesday, 2:30-3:45 PM	Discussion of Post-Seminar Assignment & Conclusion

2. Students will read all pre-seminar material and complete all pre-seminar assignments prior to the first day of class. Also, they will participate in seminar discussions.

Post-Seminar Assignment (Due Date: May 29, 2024)

Students will develop a 4-part series of lessons on the Bible and contemporary issues, based on material covered in this course. The series of lessons should be planned for successive Sunday nights or Wednesday nights at your church or place of ministry. **Each of the four lessons** should be comprised of:

- a. a teaching manuscript with 30–45 minutes of material (3,000–4,500 words); include footnotes to document important claims or quotations
- b. a PowerPoint presentation
- c. a fill-in-the-blank handout for listeners

Selected Bibliography

- Beckwith, Roger T. *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: and its Background in Early Judaism*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008.
- Blomberg, Craig. *Can We Still Believe the Bible?: An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014.
- _____. *The Historical Reliability of the New Testament: Countering the Challenges to Evangelical Christian Beliefs*. B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics. Edited by Robert B. Stewart. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Canon of Scripture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1988.
- Carr, David. *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Dockery, David S., and Yarnell, Malcolm B. III. *Special Revelation and Scripture*. TPG. Brentwood: B&H Academic, forthcoming 2024.
- Ehrman, Bart. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Komyszewski, J. Ed, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace. *Reinventing Jesus: How Contemporary Skeptics Miss the Real Jesus and Misperceive Popular Culture*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006.
- Law, Timothy Michael. *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Lim, Timothy H. *The Formation of the Jewish Canon*. In *The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library*. Edited by John J. Collins. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.
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- _____. *Before There Was a Bible: Authorities in Early Christianity*. London: T&T Clark, 2023.
- Meade, John D., and Peter J. Gurry. *Scribes and Scripture: The Amazing Story of How We Got the Bible*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2022.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Plantinga, Alvin. *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Stewart, Robert B., ed. *The Reliability of the New Testament: Bart Ehrman and Daniel Wallace in Dialogue*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011.
- Trimm, Charlie. *The Destruction of the Canaanites: God, Genocide, and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022.
- Wegner, Paul D. *The Journey from Texts to Translation: The Origin and Development of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999.