Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:
Believe it or not, the Christian Bible is still a foundational text of the Western tradition. Although not as central as it once was, it still informs many Westerners’ view of reality. It still informs many people’s self-identity, and how they interact with other people. But there has never been agreement on how to interpret this book, which has led to many social and political conflicts, some of which have been quite violent. For example, the Bible has been used to support both royal absolutism and republicanism, which led to the Reformation wars in Europe, slavery and abolitionism, which erupted into the American Civil War, capitalism and socialism, which informs the class struggles in Latin America, and modern identity politics, which has led to the “culture wars” in the US today. How can this be? Are people reading the same book? It is the purpose of this class to discover what goes into one’s interpretation of the Bible and how it impacts how people live, which will take us some distance toward better understanding how people can read the same book, and yet come away with such different understandings of it.

This class will progress through three sections. The first section will introduce you to the history of Biblical interpretation, and introduce you to some basic modern principles of Biblical interpretation. The second will then investigate how the Bible has been interpreted to support certain positions regarding politics, class, race, and gender, both in global and American contexts, and will focus in particular on how those in the United States have read and lived out the Bible through history. Topics will include slavery, roles of women, politics, class relations, end-time beliefs, and ecology. The final section will then investigate some basic approaches to the interpretation of the Bible, so as to make clear what is really involved in one’s interpretation of the Bible and why they can differ so much.

By the end of the class, you should be able to:
- Give a brief account on how the Bible has been interpreted differently throughout time;
- List some of the methods and assumptions used to interpret the Bible from evangelical, catholic, and critical approaches;
- State how the Bible has been used to support both sides in the battles over cultural issues such as slavery, gender roles, economics, politics, and ecology, both in the US and abroad;
- And finally, give an account of what goes into how one interprets the Bible.
Course Requirements: There are four components to one’s final grade, worth a total of 400 points.

- **There will be a series of three exams, including a final exam, worth a total of 200 points.** Given the nature of this topic, each subsequent exam will build upon the previous one. So, the second and final exams are comprehensive. The first exam, worth 50 points, will evaluate your knowledge of the basics and history of biblical interpretation through recall and explanation of basic concepts. The second exam, worth 50 points, will focus upon evaluating your knowledge of biblical interpretation and culture through the explanation of basic concepts and their application to new interpretive texts. The final exam, worth 100 points, will focus upon evaluating your understanding of hermeneutical principles by applying basic concepts to new interpretive texts and justifying or defending this application.

- In order to help you better understand some of the tougher readings that we will cover this semester, so as to help you do a better job of participating in class, you will be required to complete a total of five (5) reader’s guides, which will be worth a total of 50 points. You will find these guides posted on the “My Course” website under “Course Documents.” Each late reader’s guide will be accepted up to one (1) week past the due date, for any reason, with a one (1) point penalty for each course day late.

- **There will be one reflection/research paper, worth 100 points.** In this paper, you will answer one question: “What is biblical interpretation to you?” This will involve you answering the following subsidiary questions: What is the Bible? What is/are the most important questions that we as a society are facing today? Is the Bible still an important text in answering modern social problems today? If so, how should the Bible be used to address these questions and why? Which texts do you find to be the most important in the Bible for shaping your view of reality and for addressing our modern social problems? Which interpretive methods do you find to be the most important in understanding the Bible? Let me make this clear. This is not to be a paper that merely states your undefended opinion. This is to be a reflection paper that states your reasoned position on these questions, and uses the concepts and examples learned in this class to demonstrate and defend your position. This paper is to be 7-9 pages in length, double-spaced, and requires the use of five sources not employed in this class, but only two may come from the internet. You are to use a 10 or 12 point, standard academic font, standard margins, and proper grammar and spelling. You are to use Chicago style (i.e., footnotes) for your documentation. You will be evaluated on how well you address the previous issues, how well you use evidence and examples to support your claims, your documentation style, how well the paper is constructed, and how well you follow the above mandates. A grading rubric for this paper can be found on the course website, under “Course Documents/Rubrics.” We will discuss this paper in more detail in class on Thursday, March 2, and the paper itself is due on Tuesday, April 18.

- **Journals and class participation will be worth 50 points.** You will be required to write a one-page reflection essay per week in your journal. The topic will be given to you each week on our course website, under “Discussions.” You will need to obtain a simple spiral notebook of 50 to 100 pages to complete this assignment. This journal will be constructed in a special way, which I will inform you of the first day of class. I will collect it twice in the semester. Both the completion and quality of your journal will not only aid me in assigning your participation score, it will also aid you in the writing of your reflection paper.
Half the participation points will be awarded at mid-term, half at the end of the course. Class participation involves completing your journals properly and on time, asking questions in class, making comments, getting involved in debate (all of which demonstrate that you have done the day’s reading), and dialoguing with students who have differing theologies. *Both the quantity and quality of the participation will be assessed.* The metric for awarding points can be found on the “My Course” web site for this class, under “Metrics.” I will also accept written questions, turned in to me by the end of the day, as evidence of class participation.

Any *indulgence* you receive in class for participation can be converted into bonus points and added to your final point total.

**Course Grading and Attendance Policies:**

Since this course is based upon student interaction, course attendance is expected. *After the equivalent of one week of absences, excused or unexcused, a student’s grade may be reduced by 5 points for each additional absence.* The equivalent of two weeks of absences may result in failure of the course or being asked to withdraw. *Four tardies equal one absence.* If you are chronically ill or have extensive school sponsored activities that cause you to miss more than three classes, talk to me and we will work out an agreement. Documentation for excused absences is required.

An “excused” absence is relevant, only if you miss an exam, presentation, or paper due date, due to a school approved reason. If you are absent for an approved reason, then I will allow you to make-up the work with no penalty, provided it is completed within a reasonable amount of time. Otherwise, it is at my discretion as to whether you will be allowed to make it up. If I allow it to be made-up, I may impose a half-letter grade reduction for each course day late.

This course will use the following grading scale: A is 92-100%; AB is 89-91.99; B is 82-88.99; BC is 79-81.99; C is 70-78.99; D is 60-69.99; F is 59.99 and lower.

**Miscellaneous:**

Appropriate sanctions may be applied to those students in violation of Carroll’s Academic Integrity Policy, including lowering a grade for an assignment, failure of an assignment or course, and even suspension or expulsion from the university. Please see the university catalog and the Student Handbook, section III, pp. 44-52, for college policies and procedures on student academic integrity. *Ignorance of the policies is not an excuse.*

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, or any student considering obtaining documentation, should make an appointment with Ms. Martha Bledsoe, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, no later than the first week of class. She may be reached by calling (262) 524-7335 or by e-mailing her at mbledsoe@carrollu.edu.

The Instructor and the College reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as the curriculum and/or program require.
**Required Texts:**  


**Recommended Text:**  

You may use your own translation if you wish, but if you do not own a Bible, I would suggest purchasing the above Bible, which should be available in the bookstore, or *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: Revised Standard Version (RSV).*

**Reading Schedule**

Scripture readings are denoted by the book of the Bible and chapters to be read. Introductory readings in our course text, *Jesus through the Centuries*, are denoted by “Pelikan” and chapter numbers. Readings in our other course text, *Who is Jesus? An Introduction to Christology*, are denoted by “Rausch” and chapter numbers. Other readings can be found on the class reserve page of the library webpage.” Quizzes, reader’s guides, presentations, and papers are noted in bold text on the date that they are due.

1. Tu, 1/24  
   Introduction to the Course  
   Demographic Survey  
   What is the Bible? Why Study It?

**SECTION 1: Basics and History of Biblical Interpretation**

2. Th, 1/26  
   What is Interpretation?  
   *Fee and Stuart, 1*

3. Tu, 1/31  
   Old Testament Narrative  
   *Fee and Stuart, 5*  
   Genesis 1-3

4. Th, 2/2  
   The Gospels  
   *Fee and Stuart, 7*  
   Matt 1-2 and Luke 1-2

5. Tu, 2/7  
   New Testament Epistles  
   *Fee and Stuart, 3 and 4*  
   Romans 1-8

6. Th, 2/9  
   The Bible and the Ancient World  
   *Companion, 1*

7. Tu, 2/14  
   The Bible and the Middle Ages  
   *Companion, 2 and 3*  
   Augustine, 3-7, 11-14, 27-36 / RG 1  
   Origen, Para. 1-23

8. Th, 2/16  
   Origen, Augustine, and the Quadriga  
   *Augustine, 3-7, 11-14, 27-36 / RG 1*  
   Origen, Para. 1-23

9. Tu, 2/21  
   The Bible and the Reformation  
   *Companion, 4, and 5*

10. Th, 2/23  
    Luther, Calvin, and the Literal Sense  
    *Luther, Calvin, 3-19 / RG 2*
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2/28</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>The Bible and the Modern World Video: “God in America,” vol. 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Exam 1, Paper Discussion</td>
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<td>3/7</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Bible and Gender</td>
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<td>3/9</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Gnostic Interpretation of Genesis</td>
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<td>3/14</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Spring Break (Class Dismissed)</td>
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<td>3/16</td>
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<td>3/7</td>
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<td>Bible and Economics</td>
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<td>3/9</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Calvinism and Capitalism</td>
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<td>3/14</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Spring Break (Class Dismissed)</td>
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<td>3/16</td>
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<td>3/28</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Bible, Politics, and Nationalism</td>
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<td>3/30</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Video: “With God on our Side”</td>
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<td>4/4</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Bible and Ecology</td>
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<td>4/11</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>LA Interpretation of Scripture</td>
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<td>4/13</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>African Interpretation of Scripture</td>
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<td>4/18</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>The Text, Interpretation, and Intent</td>
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<td>4/20</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>The New Hermeneutic</td>
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<td>4/25</td>
<td>Tu</td>
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<td>4/27</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Hermeneutics and Summary</td>
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<td>5/2</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Final Exam Prep</td>
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<td>5/5</td>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Final Exam @ 8AM (Here)</td>
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**SECTION 2: Biblical Interpretation and Political Identity**

- Bible and Gender
- Gnostic Interpretation of Genesis

**SECTION 3: Biblical Interpretation and Hermeneutics**

- The Text, Interpretation, and Intent
- The New Hermeneutic
- Bible and Postmodernism
- Hermeneutics and Summary
- Final Exam Prep
- Final Exam @ 8AM (Here)