Religious Studies 101: Introduction to the Biblical Tradition
Rhodes College/Department of Religious Studies
Fall 2004

Instructor:
Patrick Gray
Clough Hall 203
Office Hours: MW 8:00-9:00; TTh 9:30-11:00; and by appointment
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Time/Place:
Section 07: TTh 8:00-9:15/Clough 300
Section 09: TTh 12:30-1:45/Palmer 211

Course Description:
This course is the first in the “Life: Then and Now” program, a four-course sequence of Bible and
Bible-related courses by which students may fulfill the college’s basic humanities requirement.
The primary aim is to introduce students to the academic study of the Bible. This includes the
study of the various historical, cultural, and social contexts in which it was written as well as a
consideration of the different methods for interpreting it. A few basic questions will guide our
reading in the course: What is the author trying to say? How is he or she trying to say it? And
what understandings of God and the world does one encounter in the Hebrew Bible and New
Testament? In trying to answer these questions, we not only want to examine the specific themes
and arguments finding expression in these writings; we also want to cultivate skills and strategies
for interpreting these and other texts.

Required Texts:

Course Requirements:
Class Participation and Writing Exercises: Participating in class presupposes attendance and
preparation. You are allowed three absences; after that, your grade will be lowered one-half of a
letter for each subsequent absence. You must read all assigned texts. Class discussions will
be based on the assigned readings and writing exercises. Over the course of the term, students will
hand in ten written responses to some aspect of the reading for a given week. Completion of these
short written exercises (approx. one to two type-written pages) will facilitate class discussion.
Guidelines will be distributed ahead of time. Late papers will not be accepted. However, students
may drop the lowest score. Together with class participation, these written responses will
constitute 30% of your final grade.

Quizzes: There will be ten short quizzes given over the course of the term. The dates for these
quizzes will not be announced ahead of time and may not be made up. Students may drop the
lowest score. Quizzes will constitute 20% of your final grade.

Mid-term Examination: The mid-term exam will include both objective and essay sections. The
mid-term exam will constitute 25% of your final grade.

Final Examination: This will be an in-class exam during the week of finals and will include both
objective and essay sections. The final examination will constitute 25% of your final grade.

**All work for this course should be completed in conformity with the College Honor Code.**
Course Schedule:
Aug 26  Course introduction
Aug 31  Prolegomena
     Reading: “Translation of the Bible into English” (NOAB, 466-471)
     Writing Exercise #1 due at class time
Sept 2  Modern and Pre-modern Approaches to the Study of the Bible
     Reading: “The Interpretation of the Bible” (NOAB, 488-497); “Introduction to
     the Pentateuch” (NOAB, 3-7)
     Writing Exercise #2 due at class time
Sept 7  “In the Beginning . . .”
     Reading: Genesis 1-11 (NOAB, 9-27)
Sept 9  Genesis: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
     Reading: Genesis 12-35 (NOAB, 27-60); Kierkegaard, Fear and
     Trembling, 44-48
     Writing Exercise #3 due at class time
Sept 14 “Let My People Go”
     Reading: Exodus 1-15 (NOAB, 82-105); “Cultural Contexts” (NOAB, 509-510)
Sept 16 Law and Covenant
     Reading: Exodus 19-23; 32 (NOAB, 109-116; 128-130); Deuteronomy 1-4; 31; 34
     (NOAB, 240-251; 298-300; 307-308)
Sept 21 Entering and Settling the Land
     Reading: “Cultural Contexts” (NOAB, 510-511); Joshua 1-8 (NOAB, 314-328); Judges
     1-21 (NOAB, 353-390)
     Writing Exercise #4 due at class time
Sept 23 The Rise of the Monarchy: Saul and David
     Reading: “Cultural Contexts” (NOAB, 511-512); 1 Samuel 8-20 (NOAB, 398-399; 409-433); 2
     Samuel 1-7; 11-18 (NOAB, 446-458; 460-474)
Sept 28 The End of the United Kingdom
     Reading: “Cultural Contexts” (NOAB, 512-514); 1 Kings 1-4; 10-21 (NOAB, 487-497; 508-530); 2
     Kings 17-25 (NOAB, 560-575)
Sept 30 The Prophets: The Nature of Prophecy in Ancient Israel
     Reading: “Introduction to the Prophetic Books” (NOAB, 969-973); Hosea 1-3; 11-14
     (NOAB, 1278-1282; 1290-1294); Amos (NOAB, 1302-1317); Isaiah 5-11
     (NOAB, 974-977; 984-995)
     Writing Exercise #5 due at class time
Oct 5  The Prophets: Responses to Crisis
     Reading: Jeremiah 1; 7-9; 26; 31 (NOAB, 1073-1076; 1088-1094; 1119-1121; 1126-1130); Isaiah
     40-55 (NOAB, 1030-1056)
Oct 7  Wisdom Literature: Proverbs and Ecclesiastes
     Reading: Proverbs 1-9 (NOAB, 904-915); Ecclesiastes (NOAB, 944-958)
     Writing Exercise #6 due at class time
Oct 12 Wisdom Literature: Job
     Reading: Job 1-14; 38-42 (NOAB, 726-742, 768-774)
     Review for exam
Oct 14  Mid-term exam
Oct 19  Fall Break—No Class
Oct 21 Israel and the Nations
     Ezra 1; 9-10 (NOAB, 671-673; 683-687); Ruth (NOAB, 391-397); Jonah
     (NOAB, 1321-1324)
     Writing Exercise #7 due at class time
Oct 26  The Apocrypha
     Reading: “Introduction to the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books” (NOAB, 3-10); 1
     Maccabees 1-4 (NOAB, 201-214); Prologue of Sirach (NOAB, 101-102); and either Susanna (NOAB, 194-197) or Bel
     and the Dragon (NOAB, 198-200)
Oct 28  The Historical and Cultural Context of Early Christianity
     Reading: “The NT Interprets the Jewish Scriptures” (NOAB, 474-478) “The
Roman Period” (NOAB, 519-525)

Nov 2  Introducing Jesus and the Gospels
       Reading: “Introduction to the Gospels” (NOAB, 3-6); Mark (NOAB, 56-92);
       Johnson, The Real Jesus, 1-27

Nov 4  Matthew’s Gospel
       Reading: Matthew (NOAB, 7-55)
       Writing Exercise #8 due at class time

Nov 9  Luke’s Gospel
       Reading: Luke (NOAB, 93-145)

       Reading: Acts (NOAB, 183-239)

Nov 16 Paul: 1 Corinthians and Philemon
       Reading: “Letters/Epistles in the NT” (NOAB, 240-241); 1 Corinthians
       (NOAB, 267-292); Philemon (NOAB, 366-368)

Nov 18 Paul: Romans and Galatians
       Reading: Romans (NOAB, 242-266); Galatians (NOAB, 309-319)
       Writing Exercise #9 due at class time

Nov 23 No Class

Nov 25 Thanksgiving--No Class

Nov 30 The Letter to the Hebrews
       Reading: Hebrews (NOAB, 369-385)
       Writing Exercise #10 due at class time

Dec 2  Johannine Christianity
       Reading: Gospel of John (NOAB, 146-182); 1 John (NOAB, 406-412)

Dec 7  Revelation
       Reading: Revelation (NOAB, 420-449)
       Course Evaluation

Dec 9  Reading Day

Final Exam: Time and Date to be announced