INTRODUCTION

The Level I religion course introduces first-year students to the dialogue between the Biblical traditions and the cultures and communities related to them. Students study the Biblical storyline, major Biblical texts and their interaction with, for example, theology, religious practice, ethics, and social values, while considering methods and fields in the study of religion in a liberal arts setting. An additional prospectus describes the theme of each section. For details see below.

121 A: RIPLEY, 800-855, MWF
THE BIBLE AND SALVATION. Like the Philippian jailer in Acts 16 who cries out for salvation while his life literally crumbles around him, people for millennia have turned to the God of scripture for hope in the midst of brokenness. From images of personal healing to cosmic renewal, the Bible employs a surprising variety of metaphors to speak of God’s care and faithfulness toward God’s creation and covenant peoples. Employing literary, historical, and cultural approaches to reading, in this course we will explore the rich diversity of biblical images of salvation. We will also delve into ways theologians have utilized these biblical motifs to address specific cultures and contexts, with an eye toward identifying metaphors of salvation appropriate to our contemporary situations and mindful of modern challenges and concerns.

121 B: WILSON, 905-1000, MWF
SUFFERING AND REDEMPTION: AMERICAN FILMS, AMERICAN VALUES. How does evil fit into a good world? Is the world even good? Why do the innocent suffer? How is it possible that humans can be vicious? What would it take to redeem the world from its darkness? This section of Religion 121 will address these and related questions in conversations with biblical traditions and a series of thoughtful American films. We will read the biblical core of 121 in relation to selected American film classics. These films, rich expressions of enduring American values, are important for a liberal arts education. This section requires that students be free to view films on most Wednesday evenings during the semester in anticipation of Thursday discussions.

121 C: RIPLEY, 905-1000, MWF
For a description of this section, see the description for Section A.

121 D: SANTURRI, 1045-1140, MWF
IS THE BIBLE IMMORAL? Some atheists and agnostics say, yes, it is, but, interestingly enough, so do some Christians. The reason given is that the Bible seems to commend or depict without obvious criticism actions, policies and attitudes that many would regard today as immoral
(e.g., genocide, child sacrifice, slavery, holy war, gender discrimination, heterosexism, ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, masochism, destructive self-denial, or harmfully restrictive views of marriage, divorce and sexuality). But how can the Bible be “immoral” if, as the Christian tradition insists, scripture is supposed to serve as a source of moral wisdom (e.g., with the Ten Commandments or Jesus’ command to love the neighbor or the Sermon on the Mount)? In this section we address (among other things) the Bible as moral problem.

121 E: BECKMAN, 1045-1140, MWF
WOMEN AND/IN THE BIBLE. We will study the Bible and the way in which women are portrayed in and have responded to it. You will know your way around the Bible by the time we are through, knowing when, why, where, how and from which perspective biblical texts were written. You will strive for biblical literacy. We will know the classic “proof texts” for and against women. In addition, we will look at the use of these selections in religious traditions to shape attitudes toward and treatment of women, focusing especially on women in different social locations; as harlots and manipulators; as victims of violence through rape, torture, silencing, marginalizing, and exclusion; and as active religious leaders as mothers, queens, judges, and ministers.

121 F: SANTURRI, 1150-1245, MWF
For a description of this section, see the description for Section D.

121 G: JOTHEN, 1150-1245, MWF
GENDER IMAGININGS. Debates about the Bible’s role in defining “male” and “female” as well as the marital, sexual and social roles that flow out of gender are a lively part of contemporary culture. This section will think about the Bible in relationship to such debates. In particular, two questions will inform our conversations: 1) How is gender presented within the biblical world? 2) How does the Bible shape how we “imagine” gender? In order to ask these questions, we will examine a variety of ways contemporary thinkers understand gender within the biblical canon, ideas about the moral and social authority of the Bible and how the Bible is employed within contemporary debates about gender.

121 H: BARBOUR, 1255-150, MWF
JOURNEYS AND THE BIBLE: TRAVEL AND TRANSFORMATION. This section focuses on geographical movements in the Bible, for instance, exodus, exile, diaspora, and the journeys of Jesus and Paul, and their relationships to religious meaning. “Journey” is also a metaphor for inward change and spiritual development, and we will also look at the ways the Bible depicts such changes. The course also examines recent literary narratives that depict travel and transformation.
121 I: WILSON, 1255-150, MWF
For a description of this section, see the description for Section B.

121 J: BARBOUR, 200-255, MWF
For a description of this section, see the description for Section H.

121 K: JOTHEN, 1255-150, MWF
For a description of this section, see the description for Section G.

121 L: BATEZA, 935-1100 T, 930-1050 TH
BELONGING AS BLESSING AND CHALLENGE. Throughout the Bible we find stories of conflict and hope within families, communities, and nations. Lines are drawn and identities defined as individuals and groups interpret their relationship with God and with one another. In this section we will discuss how kinship, ethnicity, and friendship function within key Biblical narratives. How are various identities defined and contested? Are the boundaries fixed or porous? Making use of historical, literary, and theological methods we will examine the benefits and burdens of belonging. While looking at the Bible we will also examine our own context and questions about identity, racism, political power, and social solidarity.

121 M: BOOTH, 800-925 T, 800-920 TH
(Open to Environmental Conversations Students only.)
THE BIBLE AND THE IDEA OF NATURE. In this section we are studying whether the Bible has anything to say about the modern politics of environmentalism. Some argue the Bible offers timeless spiritual lessons unrelated to specific political concerns like environmentalism. But others argue the Bible testifies to God’s loving care for creation, and consequently lays down a religious obligation for modern people to protect the environment. What does the Bible say about the natural world? Using the imagery of gardens and wilderness as a way of thinking about the natural world, we are trying to determine what Biblical authors thought about nature. And we are trying to understand how modern people employ the Bible in arguments about the environment.

121 N: ERICKSON, 1145-110 T, 1245-205 TH
THE BIBLE IN THE AGE OF FERGUSON: The shooting of an unarmed 18 year-old black man, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, MO, August 9th, 2014, by white police officer Darren Wilson re-sparked nationwide conversations about race in the U.S. Questions about systemic racial injustice, policing, white privilege, and culture entered the public in ways both old and new, from protests invoking “Hands up, Don’t shoot” to the Black Lives Matter movement. This section of 121 takes these current conversations about race and racial injustice as a starting point. We will work through contemporary cultural biblical studies and engage
contemporary critical race theory along the way. Alongside biblical texts, we’ll read poets like Claudia Rankine and her prophetic lyric *Citizen*, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*, womanist scholarship like Kelly Brown Douglas' *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, and theologian James Cone’s most recent work, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*.

**121 O: BATEZA, 1145-110 T, 1245-205 TH**

For a description of this section, see the description for Section L.

**121 P: BENJAMIN, 120-245 T, 215-335 TH**

**TORAH, MIDRASH, GOSPEL: THE BIBLE BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.** Both Judaism and Christianity have claimed the Hebrew Bible (or “Old Testament”) as the foundational text of their traditions. Throughout the centuries, both traditions have developed distinctive reading strategies for making sense of the diverse and complicated texts they regard as scripture. This course takes a thematic approach to topics in the Hebrew Bible that were important and sometimes divisive for its later readers, including the authors of the New Testament. These themes include law, prophecy, kingship, and the Temple in Jerusalem. For each of these topics, we will study important passages from the Hebrew scriptures and then examine related passages from rabbinic midrash (a form of biblical interpretation that has played a significant role in the development of Judaism) and the New Testament. Through attentive and active participation in this course, students will attain a basic familiarity with biblical texts, themes, and genres and understand some of the tools with which scholars approach them. In addition, this course seeks to help students become adept at the interpretation of texts and the practice of close reading, skills useful not only in biblical or religious studies but in all academic fields.

**121 Q: BECKMAN, 200-255 MWF**

For a description of this section, see the description for Section E.