CHRI 1301

Introduction to the Bible

Course Description

A survey of the Bible designed to introduce the student to the Old and New Testaments, their main themes, and backgrounds.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Articulate the basic story of the Bible, including the history of Israel, the life of Jesus, and the first generations of the church.
2. Describe the Bible's various literary/theological genres and the different interpretive approaches required by each genre through the study of representative passages.
3. Identify critical figures and events in the Bible.
4. Describe some aspects of the historical context within which the biblical story takes place, e.g., the Jewish and Greco-Roman context of the Gospels.
5. Summarize the basics of the Bible's formation, i.e., some details about authorship (when known) and its composition languages.

Relation to Core Curriculum Mission and Outcomes

HCU's Liberal Arts Core Curriculum will guide students to more fully know and make known God, His creation in its complexity, humans as His image-bearers, and His plans to redeem and renew the world for His glory. The Core Curriculum will foster curiosity, inspire creativity, develop habits of inquiry, integrate knowledge coherently, promote the formation of virtue, and cultivate intellectual humility and charity.

CHRI 1301, *Introduction to the Bible*, will guide students to know God through an exploration of His self-revelation throughout history and most fully in the person of Christ, a self-revelation mediated by the divinely given Scriptures; to know creation not necessarily in terms of "scientific literacy" but as the handiwork of God subject to His purposes, created through and for His Son, Jesus Christ; to know humans as His image-bearers by studying the life and teaching of Christ, who is the Image of God (Colossians 1:15), who created humans in His very image

(Colossians 3:15), revealing that to be most fully human means to be conformed to the likeness of Christ; to contemplate His redemption and renewal of creation by studying God's creative and salvific acts throughout history and most climactically in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, exaltation, and return of His Son, Jesus.

The Bible is not always easy to understand, and yet it sometimes speaks with a discomforting clarity. As such, reading the Bible is like approaching Aslan – good but not safe; or Lothlórien – perilous and fair. The text mediates both a revelation of God, a terrible good, and a revelation of the self, revealing both our grave stumbles and the glorious end for which we were created and redeemed. Thus, studying the Bible requires both deep engagement and intellectual and spiritual humility. The course and its instructors will foster and model intellectual rigor and intellectual and spiritual charity by requiring a focused engagement on the biblical text while recognizing both our own epistemological limits and our utter dependence on God for all things, including our comprehension of His own self-revelation and our place within His divine drama.

Course Distinctives

Several distinctives inform our CHRI 1301 curriculum design:

- **The Scriptures:** Many classes include the study of the Bible as a supplementary exercise, but in a Core Curriculum whose goal is to foster the knowledge of God and His creation, CHRI 1301 is the only class wholly devoted to the study of the Scriptures. The design and execution of this study is accomplished with the conviction that the Scriptures are divinely inspired and given to God's people for instruction, wisdom, and the revelation of God's self and His salvific actions throughout history and climactically in the person of Christ.
- **Moral Vision:** We believe the scriptures serve as a mirror, both showing us to ourselves in all our faults and yet reflecting the Image of the One who created us, thereby providing a vision of our future selves. In this reflection, we see both the moral *telos* to which we aspire, namely, Christ-likeness, who was obedient to the Father, and the creational *telos*, namely, Christ-likeness, who is the Image of God *according to which* we were made and *into which* we will mature by the power of the Spirit given to us. Study of this literature and the God they reveal thus ideally fosters gratitude for His mercy, moral clarity regarding God's demand upon our lives, and humility without *humiliation*, knowing that yes, we have fallen short of God's vision for human conduct and dominion, but that God plans to exalt those who are in Christ.
- **Intellectual Humility and Growth:** Studying the Bible entails the study of ancient texts produced in and by peoples geographically, culturally, temporally, and linguistically different from us. Such study requires
    - humility, recognizing both that our assumptions were not necessarily theirs and that their assumptions and claims are not "ignorant" or benighted for their otherness;
    - and intellectual fortitude and perseverance, recognizing that the depth of the Scriptures and the distinct "cultural encyclopedia" governing the convictions and expressions of texts ancient and foreign requires slow, patient reading and study.
    - Such study also ideally grows the mind and the heart, exercising cognitive and spiritual muscles often underused by learning new skills (reading and writing) and undergoing self-examination when confronted with the Bible's message about our high calling and our great need. Skills developed in this class (reading, writing, and patient, clear thinking) are also transferable to other areas of life and study. Intellectual impatience is the mind-killer, and with the deterioration of the mind comes the weakening of the moral will. But skills learned and practiced in this class will not only aid the study of other subjects, but also may aid excelling in the everyday tasks of whatever the student's occupational pursuit in that the curriculum will test and strengthen basic skills pertaining to reading and writing.