

Scripture in History, Literature, Thought, and Culture

(A Comparative Exam in the Committee on Historical Studies)

General description:

The exam is designed to test competence in the study of the reception of scripture in history, literature, thought, and culture. Students taking this exam will be required to show mastery of traditional areas in reception history, such as the history of exegesis and hermeneutical theories. They will also be asked to branch out into less traditional areas of enquiry, such as the history of the book; historiography; thematic studies of biblical texts, ideas, or motifs across time or religious culture; scripture in society, politics, ethics, popular culture, material culture (e.g., art and architecture), mass media, etc.

General requirements:

To foster a broad and innovative approach to scripture and scriptural traditions, the examination requires preparation on two levels (general and specific), with three supporting bibliographies. In Part I, each student must read and master a set corpus of general studies which have been chosen to exemplify the diversity of possible approaches to scripture in history, literature, thought, and culture. Part II requires each student to specialize in at least two areas from a comparative perspective (broadly defined). The comparison can be construed across time, across religion or culture, or across discipline (examples are given below). Part III requires the development of a list of primary sources to support Part II.

Students will develop the specializations and reading lists in Parts II-III together with a committee of two faculty members (including at least one of the core faculty listed below). They are also encouraged to participate in the biannual colloquium on Scripture in History, Literature, Thought, and Culture, to be taught by the core faculty.

Core faculty:

Michael Fishbane, Clark Gilpin, Hans-Josef Klauck, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Margaret M. Mitchell, James T. Robinson, Susan Schreiner, Jeffrey Stackert

Other faculty members with related research and teaching interests:

Catherine Brekus, David Martinez, Michael Murrin, Willemien Otten, Lucy Pick, Richard Rosengarten, William Schweiker, Michael Sells, Christian Wedemeyer

READING LISTS:

General reference works, introductions, collected studies:

Encyclopedia of Islam; Encyclopedia Judaica; Encyclopedia of the Qur'an.

M. Fishbane. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford, 1985.

R. Grant and D. Tracy. *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*. Fortress, 1984.

- R. Greer and J. Kugel. *Early Biblical Interpretation*. Westminster, 1988.
- G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. Cambridge, 1963-70.
- J. McAuliffe, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*. Cambridge, 2006.
- J. Rogerson, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible*. Oxford, 2001.
- M. Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (Beginnings to the Middle Ages), 1:1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996.
- M. Saebo, ed., *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (The Middle Ages), 1:2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2000.
- D. Steinmetz, ed., *The Bible in the Sixteenth Century*. Duke University Press, 1990.
- B. Walfish et al, eds., *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
- J. Whitman, ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*. Brill, 2003.

Useful text-in-translation websites:

- KJV: <http://etext.virginia.edu/kjv.browse.html>
- NRSV: <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm>
- JPS (1917): <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm>
- Church Fathers: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>
- Qur'an (Yusuf Ali translation): <http://www.sacred-texts.com/isl/quran/index.htm>
- Hadith (Muslim): <http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/>
- Hadith (Bukhari): <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/>

Relevant book series:

- Patristic: <http://www.routledge religion.com/books/series/The+Early+Church+Fathers>
- Medieval: <http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/mip/comment.htm>
- Commentaria: <http://www.brill.nl/default.aspx?partid=10&pid=23547>
- Blackwell Bible Commentaries: <http://www.bbibcomm.net/index.html>

Part I: Exemplary and Foundational Studies

John Barton. *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Revised and enlarged. Westminster/John Knox, 1996.

John Barton. *The Nature of Biblical Criticism*. Westminster/John Knox, 2007.

Heinrich Bornkamm. *Luther and the Old Testament*. Fortress Press, 1969.

- G. Böwering. *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: the Qur'ānic Hermeneutics of the Sūfī Sahl At-Tustarī (d. 283/896)*. de Gruyter, 1980.
- Gerald Bruns. *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern*. Yale University Press, 1995.
- Jeremy Cohen. *"Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text*. Cornell University Press, 1989.
- Gilbert Dahan. *L'exégèse chrétienne de la Bible en Occident médiéval, XIIe-XIVe siècle*. Paris, 1999.
- David Dawson. *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*. University of California, 1992.
- Henri De Lubac. *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*. Eerdmans, 1998-2000.
- Kathy Eden. *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception*. Yale University Press, 1997.
- Michael Fishbane. *The Exegetical Imagination*. Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Michael Fishbane. *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*. Oxford, 2005.
- Reuven Firestone. *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*. State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Daniel Frank. *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004.
- Hans Frei. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*. Yale University Press, 1974.
- Karlfried Froehlich. *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*. Fortress, 1985.
- Paul Gutjahr. *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777-1880*. Stanford University Press, 1999.
- R. Grant. *The Letter and the Spirit*. London, 1957, reprint Wipf & Stock in progress.
- P. Hanson. *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture*. Westminster, 2002.
- P. Harrison. *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Modern Science*. Cambridge, 1998.

N. Hatch & M. Noll, eds. *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*. Oxford, 1982.

C. Hill. *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*. Penguin, 1993.

M. Hirshman. *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation*. State University of New York Press, 1996.

Moshe Idel. *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*. Trans. Menachem Kalles. State University of New York, 1989.

Hans-Josef Klauck. *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis*. Baylor University Press, 2006.

H-J. Klauck. *The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction*. Baylor, 2008.

James Kugel. *In Potiphar's House*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

James Kugel. *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era*. Harvard University Press, 1999.

Robert Lamberton. *Homer the Theologian*. University of California, 1989.

Jacob Lassner. *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Post-Biblical Judaism and Medieval Islam*. University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Eric Lawee. *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance towards Tradition*. SUNY Press, 2002.

H. Lazarus-Yafeh. *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*. Princeton, 1992.

Ann Matter. *The Voice of my Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*. The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990.

Jane McAuliffe. *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*. Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Margaret M. Mitchell. *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation*. Mohr Siebeck and Westminster/John Knox, 2002.

James S. Preus. *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther*. Harvard University Press, 1969.

James T. Robinson. *Samuel Ibn Tibbon's Commentary on Ecclesiastes, The Book of the Soul of Man*. Mohr Siebeck, 2007.

Susan Schreiner. *Where Shall Wisdom be Found? Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives*. The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

J. Sheehan. *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*. Princeton, 2007.

Beryl Smalley. *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. Notre Dame Press, 1964.

David Steinmetz. *Calvin in Context*. Oxford University Press, 1995.

D. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 37 (1980/1), 27-38; repr. *Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. D. McKim. Wipf & Stock, 1999.

David Stern. *Parables in Midrash*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

Peter Struck. *The Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of their Texts*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

F. Talmage, "Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism," in *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible to the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green. New York: Crossroad, 1986, pp. 313-355.

Deny Turner. *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs*. Cistercian Studies, 1995.

F. Young. *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*. Cambridge, 2005.

Part II: Comparative Studies – Broadly Defined

The comparative part of the exam requires at least two subjects of specialization. These subjects can be chosen and compared in a variety of ways: across time within a single tradition (e.g., patristic and medieval Christian exegesis); across tradition (e.g., patristic vs. rabbinic, rabbinic and Islamic, medieval Islamic, Christian and Jewish); the study of a single theme across time or religion (e.g., conceptions of the messiah throughout history, apocalypse and apocalypticism, interpretations of or appropriations of a scriptural text or personage); comparative hermeneutical theories (e.g., the four-fold method of medieval Christianity; debates about figurative exegesis in Islam; the four, five or seven methods of medieval Judaism; varieties of mystical or allegorical exegesis). Other potential topics and subfields include: forms of public media, public rhetoric, sermons and homiletical traditions, liturgy, polemics and disputations, scripture and war, scripture and science, ideas about canon, textual authority and representation, scripture in literature, scripture and literary criticism, scripture and ethics or theology. This listing is but a small non-exhaustive sample of topics that could be pursued. The students are encouraged to build on their existing strengths and abilities, to pursue special interests, and to develop original perspectives.

Part III: Comparative Studies, Primary Sources

Together with faculty advisors, the students are required to build a list of primary texts that will support the specialization in Part II.

APPENDIX: A selection of relevant course offerings since 2003

HEO 43900: Luther and the Old Testament (Schreiner, Spring 2003)

This course analyzes the exegesis of that book Luther loved the most; the "Old Testament." We will be examining his commentary on Genesis, particularly the stories of Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Abraham and Isaac. We will also be reading his commentary on Isaiah, selected Psalms, and sections from 2nd Samuel. These texts will provide us with central themes in Luther's thought: justification by faith, the nature of prophecy, the trials of faith, the deceptions of idolatry, and the hiddenness of God. Equally important, we will be studying Luther's texts in the context of the history of exegesis, examining his exegetical method and his unique contribution to the view of the ancient Israelites as the model for faith in the present.

HIJD 45500: Medieval Commentaries on Ecclesiastes (Robinson, Spring 2004)

A study of the medieval Jewish exegesis of Ecclesiastes. Focus will be on the commentary by Samuel Ibn Tibbon (c. 1165-1232), but his work will be considered in relation to earlier commentaries and to the tradition of philosophical exegesis that he inspired. Besides Ibn Tibbon, the commentaries by Isaac Ibn Ghiyath, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Abu-l-Barakat al-Baghdadi, Isaac Ibn Latif, Joseph Ibn Kaspi, and Gersonides will be discussed.

HIJD 51000: Proseminar In Midrash (Fishbane, Spring 2004)

BIBL 44500: Philo of Alexandria (Martinez, Fall 2004)

In this course we will read the Greek text of Philo's *de opificio mundi*, with other brief excerpts here and there in the Philonic corpus. Our aim will be to use this treatise to elucidate the character of one of the most prolific theological writers of the first century. We will seek to understand Philo as a Greek author and the nature and origins of his style, Philo as a proponent of middle Platonism, and Philo as a Jew in the context of Alexandrian Judaism. We will also examine his use of the allegorical method as an exegetical tool, and its implications for early Christian approaches to the biblical text.

BIBL 53500: Seminar on Early Christian Biblical Interpretation (Mitchell, Fall 2004)

This course will provide a focused opportunity to engage and test recent scholarly works (by Frances Young, David Dawson, Elizabeth Clark and others) that are calling for a reconsideration of the traditional map of patristic exegesis as divided between Alexandrine allegorists and Antiochene literalists. We shall engage this question through a close reading in Greek of the debate between Origen of Alexandria and Eustathius of Antioch on 1 Samuel 28 (the woman of Endor raising Samuel from the dead to speak to

Saul) in which, surprisingly, it was Origen who called for a “literal” reading, and Eustathius who contested him over it.

HIJD 49000: Studies in Midrash: Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (Fishbane, Fall 2004)

A close examination of this Tannaitic commentary on the Book of Exodus, giving special attention to modes of exegesis, hermeneutical principles, forms of discourse, and theology. Comparison with contemporary and later midrashic sources may be made, as pertinent.

HIJD 41900: The Jewish Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Robinson, Winter 2005)

This course will examine the methods of exegesis and hermeneutical theories developed by the Jews from the ninth to the fifteenth century. The various approaches, from the early achievements of Saadia Gaon to the laconic literalism of Abraham Ibn Ezra to the long exegetical essays by Isaac Abarbanel, will be studied in relation to concurrent trends in Islam and Christianity. The use of Bible in sermons, poetry, polemics, philosophy, and Kabbalah will also be considered. There is no language requirement, but there will be an extra session for students who possess reading knowledge of Hebrew.

BIBL 53301, ECL Seminar: Apollonius of Tyana and Early Christian Literature (Klauck/Mitchell, Spring 2005)

Apollonius of Tyana, a neo-Pythagorean teacher and miracle worker executed in the reign of Domitian, was invoked as a parallel to Jesus already in antiquity by critics of Christianity, such as Celsus (second century) and Hierocles (third to fourth centuries). Modern scholars continue to ask about the possible relationships between the man and the literary figure of Apollonius and Jesus of Nazareth and early Christian authors. This seminar will involve a close reading of portions of the letters attributed to Apollonius, and the famous *Vita Apollonii* by Philostratus, alongside some provocative parallels in Gospel texts, as well as an investigation of Eusebius of Caesarea’s reading of the *Vita Apollonii* in his apologetic reply to Hierocles’ claim that Jesus was no different from Apollonius—a miracle-worker beloved of the gods, but surely not more.

BIBL 39900: Song of Songs I (Fishbane, Fall 2005)

A close textual analysis of the Song of Songs, emphasizing style and imagery. Use will be made of modern commentaries and medieval Jewish exegesis on the “plain sense.”

BIBL 40000: Song of Songs II: Midrash (Fishbane, Fall 2005)

A close analysis of Midrash Rabba to the Song of Songs, along with other minor midrashim. Focus on forms of discourse, exegesis and theology.

BIBL 40100: Song of Songs III: Medieval Commentaries (Fishbane, Spring 2006)

HIJD 46500: Studies in Midrash: Genesis Rabba (Fishbane, Fall 2006)

This course will study the rabbinic midrash to the Book of Genesis, focusing on its various exegetical forms and methods, literary structures and theology, and the modes of

transmission and tradition exemplified in the text. Comparison will be made to earlier and related rabbinic sources.

BIBL 43700: Revelation and the Elizabeth Day McCormick Apocalypse (Klauck, Fall 2006)

For many Christian readers, Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, remains “a book with seven seals” (cf. Rev 5:1). Others are inclined to take it in a most literal way and use it to unlock the secrets of history and the end times. A more sober perspective is established if we firmly place it within its generic (i.e. prophetic, apocalyptic and epistolary) tradition and take a closer look at the author and his addressees. The letters to the seven churches in Rev 2-3 are of central importance for this project. We will at the same time take a closer look at the Elizabeth Day McCormick Apocalypse, an illuminated Greek manuscript of Revelation and one of the show pieces of the Goodspeed Collection held in the Regenstein Library. In this respect our class will be part of the digitization process of this manuscript that is going on in the library.

HIJD 625-43401: Science and Scripture: Jewish Phil. Exegesis in Middle Ages (Robinson, Winter 2007)

In medieval Europe, Jewish exegetes developed a four-fold approach to Scripture, designated by the acronym PaRDeS: Peshat (the literal approach), Remez (the philosophical), Derash (the Rabbinic-homiletical), and Sod (the mystical-Kabbalistic). The subject of this course is the second sense – the philosophical-scientific method of exegesis. The goal is to examine the way that medieval Jewish philosophers interpreted and reinterpreted key and problematic biblical texts in light of contemporary philosophical and scientific opinions. Turning the standard approach to the history of philosophy on its head, biblical texts – rather than systematic philosophical summas – will provide the framework for philosophical, theological, and scientific discussion.

BIBL 603 53302: ECL Seminar: Orphic Literature and Early Christianity (Martinez/Faraone, Spring 2007)

BIBL 54000: Gnostic Writings from Nag Hammadi (Klauck, Spring 2007)

Most of the Coptic writings, which were found near Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945, are defined as “Gnostic” documents by modern scholarship, though this very category has come under heavy fire of late. We will try to develop basic definitions and insights by working closely on the texts that are all available now in English, French, and German translations. In some cases we can even rely on thorough modern commentaries. We will not focus on the well known texts like the “Gospel of Thomas” and so on, but on the lesser known writings mainly from apocalyptic, wisdom-related and epistolary genres. The Nag Hammadi Library in English will be our “Bible” in this class and should be read by all participants in its entirety.

HIJD 43200: Forms and Features of Midrash Literature (Fishbane, Spring 2007)

A careful critical evaluation of important secondary literature on literary features of Midrash, with close examination of the primary sources cited therein and an estimation of their use and pertinence for the arguments advanced. The goal is to assess the state of the

field in the literary and poetic study of Midrash, and to outline new areas for research. Students will be expected to write a 4-5 page weekly critique of the major book being evaluated, and to prepare the primary sources. There is no language requirement. Primary sources will be distributed in translation. Advanced students welcome as well.

HIJD 43900: Medieval Jewish Mysticism: Introduction to the Book of Zohar (Fishbane, Spring 2007)

An introduction to the classic text of medieval Jewish (Spanish) Kabbalah. The major focus will be on its symbolic universe, exegetical features, literary qualities, spiritual values, and theological insights. Selections to be studied will all be in English translation. No prior background required.

IBL 53500: Early Christian Biblical Interpretation (Mitchell, Winter 2008)

This year the early Christian Biblical Interpretation seminar will focus on the topic: "In Search of the Literal Sense." Recent theoretical treatments of patristic exegesis problematizing the dichotomy between Alexandrine allegory and Antiochene literalism have done so mostly from the side of the allegorical. In this seminar we shall turn the tables and study how appeals to the "literal" sense of biblical statements are rhetorically constructed and defended, and to what functions they are put, in writings of Tertullian, Origen, Eustathius, John Chrysostom, and others. We may also make some comparative forays into the *sensus litteralis* in contemporary Christianity in America.

HIJD 49700: Readings in Abraham Ibn Ezra (Robinson, Winter 2008)

Close readings of select texts from the diverse corpus of Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164), Hebrew poet, linguist, biblical exegete, translator, Neoplatonic philosopher, mathematician, astronomer and astrologer. The emphasis will be on his biblical commentaries, but the commentaries will be read together with his philosophical, linguistic and astrological writings.

BIBL 47400: Clement of Alexandria (Martinez, Winter 2008)

A careful reading of the Greek text of parts of Clement's *Protrepticus* (Exhortation to the Greeks) with some forays into his fragmentary *Stromateis*. We will focus on Clement as a Greek stylist, his debt to the Greek Literary and Middle Platonic traditions, and his place within the development of Alexandrian Christian thought (especially with regard to what is called the "Catechetical School"). We will also give close consideration to his doctrine of the *logos*, his apologetic method, and his theory and usage of allegory.

BIBL 49800: Origen (Martinez, Spring 2008)

It is difficult to conceive of doing justice to the vast scope of Origen's work in one quarter, but we will do our best to sample generous selections from the Greek text of his exegetical, homiletic, and doctrinal writing, including some of the larger Greek fragments of the *de principiis* as well as material from *contra Celsum* and perhaps the section of the Dialogue with Heracleides preserved among the Tura papyri. We will of course focus on Origen as the greatest exponent of the allegorical method of biblical interpretation and its Platonic underpinnings. We will also consider carefully the style of his Greek and his

position as a Christian apologist.

BIBL 54200: Apocryphal Apocalypses, Letters and Songs (Klauck, Spring 2008)

The least known works among the so called *New Testament Apocrypha* are the apocalypses and letters. Both the apocalypses (e.g., the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Ascension of Isaiah*) and the letters (*Correspondence between Seneca and Paul* and *Third Corinthians*) contain very interesting texts. By close reading of these and other documents we will try to place them within early Christian history and evaluate their contribution to our knowledge of development in early Christian thought. If time allows, we will also have a look at the little known *Odes of Solomon*.

HCHR 41400: Medieval Biblical Exegesis (Pick, Spring 2008)

Reading and interpreting the Bible was at the heart of medieval religious experience and the fount of medieval theological reflection. This course examines the theories, methodologies, goals and practices of medieval biblical exegesis from its patristic origins to the time of the friars. We will consider the contexts in which exegesis was practiced (monasteries, cathedral schools, universities). We will also look at some of the varied places where the fruits of exegetical work can be found, in polemic, in liturgy, and in artistic creation as well as in traditional biblical commentaries and treatises. In order to focus our discussion, we will concentrate on exegesis of the Song of Songs and the Book of Revelations/the Apocalypse.

BIBL 43800: Narrative in Deuteronomy (Stackert, Fall 2008)

This course is an exegetical study of selected narrative texts from the book of Deuteronomy (in Hebrew). We will focus on the setting of Deuteronomy within the larger pentateuchal plot and the purpose of its authors against their source texts.

BIBL 44201: Law in Deuteronomy (Stackert, Winter 2009)

This course is an exegetical study of selected legal texts from the book of Deuteronomy (in Hebrew). We will focus on Deuteronomy's distinctive legal perspectives vis-à-vis its sources as well as its method of revision in relation to the Covenant Collection in Exodus 20-23.

BIBL 34601: Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Stackert, Winter 2009)

This course examines the idea, practice and literature of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible and contextualizes these issues by comparing biblical prophecy with its ancient Near Eastern analogues. Students will read and analyze biblical and extra-biblical prophetic texts as well as other texts related to prophecy in order to understand the purposes of ancient Near Eastern prophecy as well as the practices of the prophets themselves (such as analogical ritual performance, divination, and magic). The issues of the preservation of prophetic literature as well as the cessation of prophecy in ancient Israel will also be explored.