

Bible as Literature

2026-2027

English 11 or English 12 credit

Josh Edmiston (Mr. E)
Room C-8

Email: joshua.edmiston@aps.edu

Phone: (505) 897-0110, ext. 40125

Classroom Code: m2plzky

Remind: @a7gk79

[Website](#)

Materials (see more info below):

- your school-distributed Chromebook
- spiral composition notebook, at least 100 pages (this will become your close-reading journal, the backbone of our daily work)
- a binder or folder for notes and handouts
- **optional:** a Bible from home, if you have one: any translation, any tradition. You do not need to buy anything for this class; all of our readings are provided in class or available free online.
- any other items you need to excel as a student: food and beverage, etc.

Description and Objectives

The Library That Shaped Our Language

In Bible as Literature, we will read, analyze, and discuss one of the most influential collections of texts ever assembled. Indeed, the Bible is not a single book but a library: dozens of works composed over more than a thousand years, in multiple languages, spanning nearly every genre literature has to offer: epic narrative, poetry, biography, law, letters, prophecy, and visions of the end of the world. We will read its major works the way an English class reads anything: closely, curiously, and with an eye for how the text works.

Why does an English class study the Bible? Because you already speak it. Phrases like scapegoat, the writing on the wall, a drop in the bucket, and the promised land came out of this library and into your mouth. Its stories and cadences run underneath Shakespeare and Steinbeck, Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, films, songs, and everyday speech. Studying the Bible as literature means decoding a piece of source code that has been running beneath English-language culture for four hundred years and gaining the tools to read any complex, foundational text.

Over the course of the year, we'll build critical reading and writing skills through close reading, Socratic seminar, creative and analytical writing, rhetorical analysis, and a sustained research project tracing biblical influence into the wider world. This course fulfills English 11 or English 12 credit and is aligned to the Common Core State Standards for grades 11–12 in reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

One thing this course is not: a faith-based class. We will study these texts academically, asking how they work as literature and how different traditions have read them, never whether anyone should believe them. Students of every faith and of no faith at all are equally welcome here, and our classroom practices are built to keep it that way (see "Our Classroom Covenant" below).

Course Outline

The following provides a general idea as to how our course will begin and end, including some main ideas we will approach throughout. The devil, as always, is in the details, though, so these items are all subject to change.

Most units will center on close reading of major selections from one section of the Bible, paired with connection texts, e.g., poetry, fiction, film, speeches, and music that echo what we're reading.

Please be advised that students will be reading and discussing a variety of important issues in literature and the world today. This may involve mature content at times. All content will be presented in a respectful, academic manner.

Unit 0: How to Read This Idioms, Translations, and the Literary Toolkit	How the Bible got into your vocabulary; reading as literary analysts; translation and canon; our classroom covenant
Unit I: In the Beginning Narrative Art in Genesis	Creation, Eden, Cain and Abel, the Flood, Babel, Abraham, Jacob, and the Joseph novella (with connections to Gilgamesh, Milton, and Steinbeck)
Unit II: Let My People Go Epic and Law in Exodus	Moses and the liberation epic; the Ten Commandments as literature; echoes in the spirituals and the Civil Rights movement
Unit III: The Architecture of a Song Hebrew Poetry	Psalms and the Song of Songs; how poetry works without rhyme or meter
Unit IV: The Examined Life Wisdom Literature	Job and Ecclesiastes; suffering, meaning, and some of the oldest existential questions on record
Unit V: The Fire and the Word The Prophets	Isaiah, Amos, and the strange, almost-satirical tale of Jonah

Unit VI: Four Tellings The Gospels	One story, four authors: point of view, audience, and purpose; parables; the Sermon on the Mount as rhetoric
Unit VII: Visions of the End Apocalyptic Literature	Revelation as a genre study in imagery, and its long afterlife in art and film
Unit VIII: The Long Echo Legacy and Independent Inquiry	A sustained research project tracing a biblical text, figure, or motif through later literature, film, music, or rhetoric

Common Core State Standards / Content Standards

All instruction/curriculum is rooted in the Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language standards of the Common Core.

Reading

Students read and understand a variety of materials.

Literature

Students read and interpret a variety of literature to develop an understanding of people, societies, and the self.

Informational Texts

Students read and interpret a wide range of reference materials and other informational documents that may contain technical information.

Writing

Students write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Logic

Students employ critical thinking and abstract reasoning to make and assess inferences, conclusions, and predictions.

Language

Students write and speak using correct grammar, syntax, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Research

Students utilize research processes to produce a variety of products.

Media

Students create and evaluate a variety of media for particular purposes.

Communication

Students communicate effectively through listening and speaking.

Additional Expected Outcomes

- increase your confidence in your reading and writing skills
- take an increasingly active role in your education

- become more involved in the literary community

Content

Because English is a class predominantly centered around critical thinking and analysis, some content and topics we cover might be uncomfortable or controversial. The topics are intended to be a way into expanding the horizons of how we see the world. They are never intended to be disconcerting for the mere sake of disconcertion. If you feel a particular reading or assignment is inappropriate, parent(s) / guardian(s) may contact me so that an alternative assignment can be provided.

Our Classroom Covenant

Because of this course's subject matter, we will operate under a shared agreement that we'll finalize together in our first weeks:

- This is an academic literature course. We study what these texts say and how they work, not whether anyone should believe them or disbelieve them.
- We can always describe: "the text says..." and "Catholics / Protestants / Jews / Latter-day Saints have traditionally read this as..." are welcome and valuable contributions.
- We should never prescribe: The phrase "you should believe..." in either direction, for or against any faith, has no place here.
- Students of every religious background, and students with none, belong in this room equally. Different traditions even disagree about which books belong in the Bible, and that's not a problem for this class; it's part of what we study.

Parents and guardians: questions about the course's approach are always welcome — please reach out anytime.

Classroom Procedures & Policies

Timeliness

Please strive to arrive on time. Attendance after the final bell rings will be counted as tardy.

Cell phones

See the Cibola Cell Phone Policy—aka: phones should be off and away during the school day (except during lunch) unless they're being used for instructional purposes.

Staying Up-to-date

This syllabus is a contract between us. Please recognize that you are responsible for the policies on these pages—just as much as I am. However, I do reserve the right to change our schedule and/or assignments based on our class needs, but I will always let you know in advance. Don't worry: 99% of the time, this will benefit you (changing due dates, etc.).

Google Classroom

Our class code is listed at the top of this syllabus. Everyone has been added to the appropriate section and you should check it daily or at least turn on notifications. I'll use Classroom for almost everything.

Remind

A text-based reminder service that both students and parents can join. Codes are listed at the top of this Syllabus. Should you have any questions about how Remind functions, please visit [their site](#).

Weekly Lesson Plans

I (try to) maintain weekly lesson plans online in the form of an outline. This allows students to see what we did on a particular day, access links to assignments via Classroom, and find other useful information. They might use this if they miss a day, enabling them to see what we did and then get a head start before they come back to school. Parents can feel free to access it as well.

Attendance and Make-up Work

Obviously, it's crucial that you come to as many class sessions and spend as much time in class as possible. It's difficult to make-up an hour of reading—much less discussion—unless you have ready access to the text at home. Moreover, every single day, we will do something relevant, meaningful, edifying, or otherwise significant to the overall goal of the course. Please, avoid missing class as much as you can.

Make-up Work:

Make-up work can be shared for all absences; however, it is the student's responsibility to check Classroom or contact me regarding what was missed. Contact me for make-up work before or after school, during lunch ... not in the middle of class. Make-up work should be completed in a timely fashion, usually as specified in the handbook unless prior arrangements have been made with me.

Accommodations and Modifications

If you are experiencing any difficulty in class or have a desire for an alternate assignment that you feel meets your individual needs better, or if you have any ideas for curriculum you'd like to see covered in this class, please let me know as I will certainly take your input into account.

Grading and Assignments

Our class will involve a wide array of assignments, some small and others large, some more rigorous and others more freeform.

Semester Grade Determination:

Course grade: 90%

Final exam: 10%

Grading scale:

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = 59% or below

The following is a very general guideline for the types of work that we will complete throughout the school year. Grades will be updated on Synergy on a weekly basis.

Close-Reading Journal (~25% of course points)	Start-of-class reading and sharing (daily) Close-reading journal entries (most class sessions) Written responses/exit tickets
Minor Assignments (~30% of course points)	Socratic seminars (preparation and written reflection) Discussion activities and classwork

	Quizzes (as-needed basis)
Major Assignments (~45% of course points)	Unit marquee pieces, including: a creative "Writing in the Gaps" narrative (fall), analytical essays, a rhetorical analysis essay (spring), and the legacy research project (spring)
Finals (10% of semester grade)	Part I: Cumulative Assessment (multiple choice) Part II: (Creative) Written Response

Homework and classwork: While the vast majority of work for Bible as Literature will be completed in class, writing, analysis, viewing, and discussion are always improved by practice.

Academic Integrity Statement

Students are responsible for demonstrating that their written work is the product of their own efforts. To ensure this, students must provide evidence of their writing process through rough drafts, outlines, and other relevant documentation. This requirement is designed to affirm that the work submitted is original and not generated by artificial intelligence or other external sources.

It is not the responsibility of the instructor to prove or identify work that does not appear to be the student's own effort. The onus is on the student to transparently show their writing progression and originality. Failure to provide such evidence may result in academic penalties as outlined in the school's academic integrity policy.