

## **I/C 2642: TEACHING AND LEARNING THE BIBLE WITH ADULTS**

**Spring 2012**

**Tuesdays / GH102 / 12:30 pm – 3:20 pm**

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**Appointments scheduled via email**

**Class web site:**

**<http://www2.luthersem.edu/mhess/web/IC2642.html>**

This course focuses on discovering and practicing multiple ways of teaching and learning the Bible as a means of interpreting and confessing the Word of God in a variety of contexts. The goal is to prepare leaders to meet the pressing challenge of inviting others into deep yet critically sustaining relationship with the Bible as the Book of Faith. The method employed in the course will be intentionally inter-disciplinary, drawing on diverse practices of pedagogy and theological interpretation. Students will reflect on how their own experiences and the experiences of Christian communities shape the teaching and learning of Scripture for the sake of the world.

Full course, meets the I/C core requirement.

### **The essential questions this course takes up:**

What do we understand ourselves to be doing when we teach and learn the Bible with adults?  
What do we mean by or seek to achieve when we teach and learn the Bible with adults?

What does it mean to teach and learn the Bible with adults? How does engaging the Bible in learning community lead us to interpreting and confessing the Word of God? When we are choosing texts, when we are choosing methods of pedagogy, what explicit, implicit and null implications are there for interpreting and confessing? What resources and strategies exist for supporting these processes? What challenges and conflicts arise in doing so?

### **Ideas and concepts central to understanding:**

Christian leaders and communities are called and shaped by a living God who initiates relationships with people of all ages in a world of many cultures. The Bible as Word of God is at the heart of that call and fundamentally shapes those relationships. Leading learning with the Bible requires interpreting and confessing the Word, both personally (in one's own life) and communally in a congregation (or other shared setting).

### **Ideas and concepts that are important to know and to do:**

- know what a Christian learning community is (and can be)
- articulate a clear statement of your history with Scripture and how it shapes and nourishes your faith and your teaching/learning with the Bible
- articulate a clear statement of your community/tradition's history with Scripture and how it shapes and nurtures your corporate faith and teaching/learning with the Bible
- what is important about teaching and learning with the Bible? Why would you do it? Why would/should a community care about it?
- articulate a clear vision for providing leadership in learning and teaching the Bible – both at home and in community

- know how a biblical imagination shapes and challenges our encounter with the world, and broadens and deepens our understanding of what teaching and learning Scripture is
- know how to ask good and meaningful questions that catalyze learning
- know what your tradition's theological relationship to engagement with culture is, and how to teach and learn within and beyond it in relation to Scripture
- listen carefully to a community and assess the Bible learning challenges present in that community
- know something about leading change and how to support and nurture change
- know how to move a community from expert-centered teaching to lay-centered learning
- understand something of the complexity of teaching and learning the Bible in a world of many faiths, and many traditions within those faiths, which reverence different sacred texts and in different ways
- understand something of the insights gained from inter-cultural and inter-religious conversation

**Ideas and concepts that are worth being familiar with:**

- a variety of forms of biblical interpretation
- a variety of denominational/doctrinal commitments to biblical engagement
- information about brain function, psychological and social development in adults in relation to learning
- information about pedagogy and curriculum design for adult learning
- information about the sacred texts of other traditions (particularly the Tanakh of Judaism, and the Koran of Islam) and how different faiths relate to their sacred texts

**REQUIRED READING**

Books

- *Daniel* (NRSV, and other translations as interest is focused)
- *Conversations with Scripture: The Book of Daniel*, E. Desueza, J. Jones (Abingdon, 2011)
- *Daniel*, C. L. Seow (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003)
- *Learning to listen, Learning to teach*, Jane Vella (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002)

One book chosen from the following list:

- *The Bible Made Impossible*, C. Smith (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2011)
- *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, B. Ekblad (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005)
- *Soul Stories*, A. Wimberly (Abingdon Press, 2005)
- *Reading Other-wise*, G. West (SBL, 2007)
- *Democratizing Biblical Studies*, by E. Schussler-Fiorenza (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009).

And then whatever artifact assignments come within a given week.

## **February 7 / Introductions and orientation**

### **February 14 / Opening up *Daniel***

Read the entire book of Daniel.

Read Jane Vella's *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*.

Desueza/Jones, pp. 1-27

Seow, pp. 1-18

1. Vella principles
2. Daniel as a whole (now that you've read it, what do you want to know that you don't know about the book, what puzzles you about the book, what do you want to deliberate over?) |
3. Introduce using an artifact

### **February 21 / The "Daniel Diet"**

Read Chapter One of Daniel very closely.

Desueza/Jones, pp. 27-40 (1-27) [131-144]

Seow, pp. 19-30

Artifact/case study:

"The Daniel Diet" – places to start include:

- <http://www.danielsdiet.com/>
- [http://www.danielsdiet.com/daniels\\_diet.htm](http://www.danielsdiet.com/daniels_diet.htm)
- <http://www.wisdomforhealth.net/web/>

### **February 28 / Clay feet**

Read Chapter Two of Daniel very closely

Desueza/Jones, pp. 41-54 [131-144]

Seow, pp. 31-49

Select/starting reading the book of your choice

Artifact/case study:

The interpretations of Daniel in Wikipedia with a concentration on Daniel 2 ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel\\_2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_2))

### **March 6 / The fiery furnace**

Read Chapter Three of Daniel very closely

Desueza/Jones, pp. 54-62 [131-144]

Seow, pp. 50-60

Select/starting reading the book of your choice

Artifact/case study:

[“Letter from Birmingham Jail”](#) – Martin Luther King, Jr.

[“The Fourth Man in the Fire”](#) – Johnny Cash

### **March 13 / Nebuchadnezzar**

Read Chapter Four of Daniel very closely

Desueza/Jones, pp. 63-70 (70-83) [131-144]

Seow, pp. 61-73

Reading in the book of your choice

Artifact/case study:

American exceptionalism juxtaposed to Nebuchadnezzar’s boasting

A few places for a beginning:

- “What is American exceptionalism?” [<http://iantyrrell.wordpress.com/papers-and-comments/>]
- National Review article <http://www.nationalreview.com/nrd/article/?q=M2FhMTg4Njk0NTQwMmFIMmYzZDg2YzgyYjdmYjhhMzU=>
- “Matthews: Rejection of Obama Is Loss of American Exceptionalism & Assimilation” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gwx5GGGVul>

### **[March 19-20: Reading Days (no class)]**

### **March 27 / Handwriting on the wall**

Read Chapter Five of Daniel very closely

Desueza/Jones, pp. 70-75 (63-70, 75-83) [131-144]

Seow, pp. 74-84

Reading in the book of your choice

Artifact/case study:

Belshazzar in Popular Culture (over in the imagination of singers, poets, composers, etc.).

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belshazzar> provides a place to start.

### **April 3 / Trapped by the rules**

Read Chapter Six of Daniel very closely

Desueza/Jones, pp. 75-83 (63-75) [131-144]

Seow, pp. 85-96

Reading in the book of your choice

Artifact/case study:

The/A “Satanic Sandwich” – Google the phrase to get started.

“Where’s God when I’m scared?” *VeggieTale* of Daniel in the Lions’ den (YouTube trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETIK1k7RCgE>)

## **[Easter Break: April 5 – 9]**

### **April 10 / Following the allusions in art and music**

Read Chapter Seven of Daniel very closely  
Desueza/Jones, pp. 85-98 (98-106) [131-144]  
Seow, pp. 97-114  
Should be nearing the end of your reading the book of your choice

Artifact/case study: TBD

### **April 17 / Apocalyptic**

Read Chapter Eight of Daniel very closely  
Desueza/Jones, pp. 98-106 (85-98) [131-144]  
Seow, pp. 115-133  
Conclude reading the book of your choice

Artifact/case study: TBD

### **April 24 / Prayer, litany, lamentation**

Read Chapter Nine of Daniel very closely  
Desueza/Jones, pp. 107-119 (119-130) [131-144]  
Seow, pp. 134-151

Artifact/case study: TBD

### **May 1 / Persecution**

Read Chapters Ten - Twelve of Daniel very closely  
Desueza/Jones, pp. 119-130 (107-119) [131-144]  
Seow, pp. 152-196

Artifact/case study: TBD

### **May 8 / Closure**

Closing rituals for the course, and final evaluation.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

(1) Write a short essay that articulates where you are in relation to Scripture. You will do a free write of this essay in the first week of the class, to be handed in at the end of the class, and then you will revisit it at the end of the course, and at that point your revised version will be made public and shared on May 8th. The final version should be no more than three pages.

(2) Prepare and present the assigned case/artifact for a given week. Make sure that you are attending to the various elements listed in the rubric for presentations.

(3) Prepare and enact being the “drawing out” person facilitating the class’ discussion of an assigned case/artifact.

(4) Participate in the class discussions fully, and bring insights from your choice book to the class.

(5) Write a final paper that is a critical review of the book that you chose to read, and which explores how this book shapes how you would do the things we did in this class in a congregation or other context where Christians gather. What did you find useful and would you want to keep? What would you modify? What would you drop altogether or disagree with?