Course Syllabus

School of Theology & Christian Ministry

BIB 2040 Reading Scripture Faithfully

3 Units

Fall 2025

Meeting days/times: TR 8:00 am – 9:15 am

Meeting location: Smee 100

Final Exam: Thursday, 12/18, 7:30 am – 10:00 am

Instructor title and name:	Dr Stephanie Smith Matthews
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Office location and hours:	Smee 211 & online Mon & Wed 10:30-12:00 am and Mon-Thurs by appointment

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description

An exploration of the methods and approaches for engaging the Bible faithfully in relationship to Christian faith and practice; its nature, context, and origins; and its reception in global contexts, with attention to justice, gender, race, and class.

The course description above divides easily into three parts: (1) Scripture and Christian faith; (2) The nature, origin, and context of Scripture; and (3) the global contexts and that Scripture engages today toward just ends. Yet this division is misleading, for each cannot be separated from the next. These are intersecting paths, concentric circles, or, perhaps, layers of a cake, each supporting the next. In all three layers of faithful reading, methods of exegesis ("leading out" the message of Scripture) aid us in reading texts faithfully.

Program and Course Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcome (PLO) #1: "Interpret scripture evidencing biblical literacy" will be assessed in this class through the Contextual Bible Interpretation and final in-class discussion evaluation.

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to …

1. Interpret Scripture evidencing biblical literacy (PLO #1)

2. Describe the nature of Scripture in light of its origins and faithful witness to the Triune God;

3. Interpret biblical texts in harmony with historic Christian faith and worship;

4. Implement methods of traditional biblical interpretation; and

5. Develop faithful readings of Scripture in light of diverse contemporary contexts in service of God's redemptive justice.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Students are responsible for having the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class.

All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

1. Michael Gorman,*Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Rev. Ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2009), ISBN 0801046408.
2. Samuel M. Powell, *A Teacher's Guide to Understanding the Scriptures*(Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2012), ISBN 0834128845.
3. Justo L. González, *Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes*(Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), ISBN 0687014522.
4. Additional resources available via the course Canvas page

Recommended Study Bibles

1. *The People's Bible*(NRSV w/Apocrypha), Eds.: Deyoung, Gafney, *et al* (Fortress, 2008); ISBN 0806656255
    - Select this Bible if you're interested in encountering a diversity of cultural perspectives and contributions from many persons of color. The approach is generally protestant and academic. Some of its datings and historical decisions are not explained in detail, but are within the scholarly mainstream.
2. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (NRSV w/Apocrypha), Ed.: Harrelson (Abingdon, 2003), ISBN 0687278325
    - Select this Bible if your primary interest is the theological and literary aspects of the texts. The book introductions will also include historical information, but its primary goal is elaborating the significant messages for the church.
3. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NRSV w/Apocrypha), Eds.: Coogan, Brettler, *et al*(4th; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); ISBN 0195289609
    - Select this Bible for a greater focus on the historical-critical aspects of the text. Introductions to books often include a variety of scholarly perspectives on items of debate (authorship, dating, integrity).

Assessment and Grading

Grades will be based on the following:

Grade Scale Based on Percentages

A	B	C	D	F
A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F Less than 59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Assignment distribution by percentage:

- 35% Reading check-ins
- 10% Essay 1 – textual analysis
- 15% Essay 2 – summary of scholarship
- 15% Essay 3 – contextual analysis
- 15% Final Contextual Bible interpretation
- 10% CBI Presentation

Descriptions of each assignment group may be found under “Assignments at a Glance” at the end of this syllabus and in Canvas.

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the Class Schedules site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In Reading Scripture Faithfully, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include discussions of the different views on the inspiration of Scripture and its diverse interpretation by and within diverse communities. If you encounter a topic

that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of biblical studies, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In Reading Scripture Faithfully, students may choose biblical passages that may cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics may include reading in the Bible about violent imagery and threats of violence. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include reassigning or proactively assigning peer review assignments, leaving class while the topic is discussed, or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of biblical studies and their interpretation, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the Office of Spiritual Life and Formation.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See Academic Policies

Links to an external site.

for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

You are allowed, but not required, to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to revise writing and generate ideas for select assignments, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor. In this course we will discuss the implications of use of AI in relation to biblical interpretation.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the school urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. Thus, terms like "man" or "mankind" or the pronoun "he," should not be used to refer to all humans. Instead "people," "humanity," "humans," and "he or she" better acknowledge women as full persons.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or

stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/Title-IX.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

PLNU Course Modality Definitions

- Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction is fully online.
    - Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.
    - Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.
- Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.
- In-Person Courses: These are courses that meet in person with the instructor and students in a physical classroom setting. With approval by the area dean, this may include up to 25% of qualified class interactions through a Learning Management System (such as Canvas).

In some courses, a portion of the credit hour content will be delivered asynchronously and attendance will be determined by submitting the assignments by the posted due dates. See Academic Policies

Links to an external site.

in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog.

Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

A day of attendance in asynchronous content is determined as contributing a substantive note, assignment, discussion, or submission by the posted due date. Failure to meet these standards will result in an absence for that day. Instructors will determine how many asynchronous attendance days are required each week.

Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see Loma Writing Center webpage or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- Appointment Calendar
- Links to an external site.
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- Website
- Email: writingcenter@pointloma.edu

Assignments At-A-Glance

Note: Specific assignment information for weekly homework, instruction sheets and rubrics, and all due dates will be posted in Canvas.

Reading check-ups (35%): All readings are required. Please bring your Bible to class. It is important to keep up with the readings on a session by session basis or the information will quickly become overwhelming. Reading check-ups could come in the form of quizzes (online or in-class), or a worksheet to be completed and brought to class discussion.

Contextual Bible interpretation: Contextual biblical interpretation is a method of determining how to apply a biblical passage to a specific life setting in a way that is compassionate, specific, and relevant. Each of you will select a passage of Scripture in consultation with the professor. The **final contextual Bible interpretation (15%)** will involve a written synthesis (10-12 page paper) of three previous assignments: Due Dec 14 to be submitted online by the final exam period (7:30 – 10:00 am). Early submissions are welcomed.

Essay one - Textual analysis (10%): 2 page literary analysis of your chosen text. Through a close and careful reading, you will identify elements such as genre of the passage, characterization, tone, and literary context.

Essay two - Contextual analysis (15%): 3 page contextual analysis. You will articulate BOTH your own context (from a self-inventory which will be provided) AND the context of the audience (real or imagined) of your final interpretation, and identify the type of message your audience needs to hear from you through your passage. *Students may choose to substitute a video or other creative presentation for this essay.

Essay three - Summary of scholarship (15%): 4 page summary paper of existing scholarly interpretations of your chosen test. AT LEAST two interpreters must provide commentary on the original audience(s) of the passage, and at least two will address theological and ethical issues. You are strongly encouraged to consult the library staff for help identifying and incorporating the necessary resources for this essay.

Guidelines and rubrics for each essay will be posted to Canvas. Students will learn to use the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) citation style. The eBook containing the citation guide, SBL Handbook of Style, is available on the library website. The SBL style is based on the Chicago style. You may consult the citation guide for Chicago style at http://libguides.pointloma.edu/CitationHelpLinks to an external site.. Once you have navigated to the Chicago style page, click on “notes and bibliography."

CBI presentation (10%): Each student will prepare a presentation of their Contextual Bible interpretation. Students may prepare either:

1. a professional report presenting to the class the most helpful findings from each of the three

sub-sections of the essay (textual analysis, scholarship, contextual application), OR

2. a creative application of the CBI (Bible study, devotional, ministry application, artwork, etc.)

The rubric for the oral presentation will be posted to canvas. (Some students will present at a later day, but all should be ready on the first presentation day.

Lomabooks Instructions for Students:

This course is part of our course material delivery program, **LomaBooks***. The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas.*

You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed

components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your materials.

For more information about **LomaBooks,** *please go: HERE*