Course Syllabus

	Department/School Name: School of Theology and Christian Ministry **Course Number and Name:** BIB 4053 Biblical Historiography: Old Testament Historical Books and the Book of Acts **Number of Units: 3**
Fall 2025	

Meeting days: Mon, Wed	**Instructor title and name:** Dr Stephanie Smith Matthews (Dr Smith Matthews)
Meeting times: 1:30 - 2:45 pm	**Phone:** 619-849-2950
Meeting location: Smee, Wesleyan Seminar	**Email:** smatthew@pointloma.edu
Final Exam: Fri, Dec 19, 1:30 - 4:00 pm	**Office location and hours:** Mon & Wed 10:30 - noon (Smee 211, video, or movement). Email for additional times.

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 intertestamental approach to canonical historiographical texts focusing on selective representatives among these diverse narrative accounts. Students engage in exegetical and theological studies of Old Testament historical narrative materials (Joshua through 2 Kings) and the New Testament Acts of the Apostles. The course will invest special attention to the ways historical accounts convey theological claims about God and God's formation of a people.

Course Learning Outcomes

The professor brings to this class the following intentions for personal and corporate learning. They establish an initial framework for the development of individual and group learning goals. The class sessions, readings, and assignments should enable the student to:

1. Describe a historical book of the Old Testament and/or Book of Acts in its historical and canonical context
2. Articulate the ways in which biblical narratives are told and how the shaping of theological and religious narratives shapes their impact
3. Demonstrate how an individual biblical narrative fits into the whole of the Christian canon.
4. Tell your own theological narrative

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resource

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.

- Thompson, Richard P. *NBBC, Acts: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition.* ISBN 9780834132399.
- Olson, Dennis T. *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, V.I* . ISBN 9781426735790.

Assessment and Grading

Readings (or viewings) & Weekly Homework: The Bible is the primary text for this course. *Please have your Bible at hand for our class sessions*. All readings are required. *A significant part of the*

*student's grade comes from **weekly** homework and/or quizzes over the assigned reading material (see below).* These will usually be due on **Mondays**. Students completing 11 assignments may drop their lowest score; students completing 12 may drop the two lowest scores. Class preparation for Thursdays is required and will inform our class discussions. (*CLO #1-3)*

Biblical Narrative Example Essay: Compose a 4-5 page (double spaced) essay on one narrative (pericope) from the OT historical books or Book of Acts. Your essay will answer these central questions:

- "How does this person's story reflect the values/theological themes found elsewhere in the Bible (outside the historical books/Book of Acts?"
- "What can we (and scholars!) say about the *way* this narrative is told? How does it fit within the larger narrative(s) of the historical books/Book of Acts?"
- "What elements of this narrative can we apply to a specific situation in life today? What remains relevant?"
- "What questions about this story and its interpretation remain for you after your study of it?"

The strongest essays will given evidence of biblical literacy providing substantive biblical citations. (*CLO #3*)

Biblical Scholarship Class Presentation & Discussion Leadership: Each student will be assigned one historical book on which to become a specialist. You will use Bible commentaries form the Ryan Library to supplement your textbooks. You will present your findings to the class and facilitate class discussion on the book and what we know of its:

- historical & cultural background
- literary formation
- key themes
- applications

Students will submit a bibliography (with at least 5 scholarly sources) prior to their presentation. An instruction sheet and rubric will be provided. (*CLO #1)*

Group Work: Students will regularly engage in small groups to facilitate discussion and processing of course material. Occasionally you will be asked to submit a short assignment which you will begin (and often finish) in class. (*CLO #1-4*)

Final project: As the culmination to the semester, there will be a final project due (submitted online) during our final exam period. You will have a choice of format (paper, video, visual presentation, artwork etc.) A complete instruction sheet and rubric will be provided. Briefly, you will be asked to demonstrate your understanding of biblical historiography AND tell a theological narrative of your own. (*CLO #2-4)*

Weight of assignments:

- 35% Readings and Weekly Homework
- 15% Historical Narrative Essay
- 15% Biblical Book Class Presentation & Discussion Leadership
- 10% Group Work
- 25% Final Project

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	

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 Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam 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 BIB4053, 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 interpersonal violence, warfare, food deprivation, reflections on the theological nature of suffering, biblical claims to land in what is now called Israel and Palestine, and reflections on the relationship between political structures and God. 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 BIB4053, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include descriptions in the Bible of

interpersonal violence and warfare tactics, including food deprivation. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus. 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 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 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 you 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.

State Authorization⊛

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow distance education outside California.

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 to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, 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 ethical implications of using AI for 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.

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.

Use of Technology

In order to be successful in the online environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the *Technology and System Requirements* information.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

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

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*