BIB4045-1 SP26 - Topics in Theological Interpretations of Scripture

	Department/School Name School of Theology & Christian Ministry **Course Number and Name** BIB4045-1 - Topics in Theological Interpretations of Scripture Topic: The Bible and Neurodiversity **Number of Units** 3
Spring 2026	

Meeting days: Tue & Thurs	**Instructor title and name:** Dr Stephanie Smith Matthews
Meeting times: 11:00 am - 12:15 pm	**Phone:** 619-849-2950
Meeting location: Evans 122	**Email:** smatthew@pointloma.edu
Final Exam: Thursday, May 7, 10:30 am -1:00 pm	**Office location and hours:** ● email or ask to confirm appointment ● Smee 211, Gchat, or caf lane ● M/W 8:00 am - noon, 1:30-2:30 pm ● T/R 9:00-11:00 am

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

A study of Christian Scripture that engages a selected theological theme(s) or mode of interpretation in relation to Christian faith and practice.

Topic for Spring 2026: Reading the Bible with neurodiverse minds and with neurodiversity in mind. Students will read Scripture together, informed by:

- a Wesleyan theological framework,
- lived experiences of neurodiversity,
- academic biblical scholarship

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. Interpret biblical passages with exegetical skill and in conversation with peer-reviewed biblical scholarship.

2. Integrate interdiscinplinary scholarship and lived experiences into conversations regarding the reading and interpretation of the Bible.

3. Facilitate study of the Bible and application of its themes with a neurodiverse population in mind.

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.

- Kenny, Amy. *My Body is Not a Prayer Request*. ISBN 9781587435454
- Levine. *Was Yosef on the Spectrum?* ISBN 9789655243574
  - Note: this book may be found under the Canvas tab "Lomabooks Digital Course Materials"
- Macaskill, Grant. *Austim and the Church*. ISBN 9781481311250
- A Bible of student's choice (print, or audio with headphones) for use in class.

Assessment and Grading

This class will be graded on a points system. Some assignments will be completed by all students. For the rest of their points, students will choose from a menu of options. This means there will be more points available than are required. Each student will consult with the professor during the first two weeks of class in order to confirm a clear path toward completion of assignments.

All assingments, due dates, instructions, and rubrics will be posted to the **Modules** tab on Canvas.

Points correspond to Grade Letter as follows:

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	

Required of all students:

1. **Readings (or viewings) and Reflections:** A significant number of points (50) are available through completing the class preparation posted to Canvas and completing the reflection prompt for each class. Students seeking an "A" will average 1 submission per week.
2. **In-Class Participation & Group Work**: Class preparation for each class will inform our class discussions and Bible readings. Students will regularly engage in small groups to facilitate discussion and processing of course material. Occasionally you will be asked as a group to submit a short assignment which you will begin (and often finish) in class. Each class attended earns 0.5 points. Active participation in each class grants an additional 0.5 points.
3. **Final Exam:** (10 point version and 15 point versions available)

Options to gain additional points:

1. **Chapter summary and discussion prompts** (10 points each, may complete up to two). Using your preferred method, read and summarize one chapter of our textbook for those who either have not read, or have read but not fully learned the material. Provide an artifact (handout, activity, brief video, etc.) to share with the class. Submit your artifact to Canvas for grading purposes.
2. **Bible study tool creation** (10 points each, may complete up to two). There are two options. A) Create and help us practice a method of Bible study that integrates specific learning we have had in the course about neurodivergent experiences, or B) Create a bible study with a specifc Bible passage that you believe is relevant to experiences of and/or discussions on neurodivergence. Submit your plan to Canvas for grading purposes.
3. **Flex option** (5-10 points each) In consulation with the professor, the student may create an additional assignment to demonstrate one or more of the Course Learning Outcomes. This is an opportunity for students to integrate skills from other majors or minors, as well as from ministry and other personal experience. Students will gain professor approval (confirmed via email) for the assignment.

Total available points by category:

- 50 Readings and Reflections (25 points must come from this category)
- 30 In-Class Attendance & Group Work (See PLNU's attendance policy; 15 points must come from this category)
- 20 Chapter summary and discussion prompts (worth 10 points each)
- 20 Bible study tool creation (worth 10 points each)
- 20 Final Exam (Required, students may select a 15 or 20 point version)

Said in a different way,

To **receive credit** for the course, students will earn 60 or more points:

- Complete & submit at least 8 **Reading and Reflections** (16+ points)
- **Attend** at least 80% of class meetings (12+ points) (note: some students may have EAC attendance accommodations)
- **Participate** in in-class Bible reading, discussion, and/or activities (12+ points)
- Attend the **Final Exam** period, prepared for the final assignment with a passing grade (8+ points)
- Earn an additional 12 points through **any combination of assignments**
    - Note: if the student does not complete a Bible Study tool assignment, they will demonstrate this learning outcome on the Final Exam

To **receive an "A" letter grade** for the course, students will earn 93 or more points:

- Complete & submit the **Reading and Reflections** at least once a week (25+ points)
- **Attend** at least 90% of class meetings (13.5+points) (note: some students may have EAC attendance accommodations)
- **Participate** in in-class Bible reading, discussion, and/or activities (13.5+ points)

- Attend the **Final Exam** period, prepared for the final assignment with a passing grade (8+ points)
- Complete at least one **chapter summary or Bible Study tool** (10+ points)
- Earn an additional 23 points through **any combination of assignments**
    - Note: if the student does not complete a Bible Study tool assignment, they will demonstrate this learning outcome on the Final Exam

Extra Credit: Students wishing to receive extra credit may submit a 3-4 page essay or 6-8 minute video reflection on attendance of one of the Wiley lectures. Interested students should contact the instructor for the rubric. Students may earn up to 2 course points to add to the overall grade.

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 Topics in Theological Interpretations of Scripture, 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 the nature of divine communication, injustices among God's people, discussions of God's judgment and forgiveness, and the impact of historical and other academic means of studying biblical texts. 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 Topics in Theological Interpretations of Scripture, we will cover a variety of topics in the Bible, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include life and death (of various forms), warfare, community belonging, and abuse of power, including by those in

religious leadership. 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 online (distance education) outside of 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. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure 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

During this course, students will be strongly encouraged to assess the implications of the use of AI technologies for biblical interpretation.

You are allowed to use the university-provided Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., Gemini, Grammarly) in this course. Any work that utilizes AI-based tools must be clearly identified as such, including the specific tool(s) used. Please use the following sources to guide your citations when using AI.

MLA Style Center: Citing Generative AI

Links to an external site.

APA Style: How to Cite ChatGPT

Links to an external site.

Chicago Manual of Style: Citing Content Developed or Generated by AI

Links to an external site.

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.

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.

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.

PLNU Course Modality Definitions

1. Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction is fully online.

   a. Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.

   b. Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.

2. Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.

3. 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.

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*