

## Biblical Theology BIB 410

Point Loma Nazarene University  
Spring 2018  
Tues. and Thurs. 9:30-10:45am

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Office Hours: Posted on door

“The concept of biblical theology is a *contested* concept, and this is likely to remain so.”<sup>1</sup>

“The true test of a first-rate mind is the ability to hold two contradictory ideas at the same time.”  
-F. Scott Fitzgerald

### Course Description (PLNU Catalog)

A study of the major theological themes of the Christian scriptures in relation to Christian faith and practice.

### Course Synopsis and Purpose

The aim of this course is to acquaint the student with the importance, development, and content of the field of study known as “Biblical Theology,” as well as with the distinct theological voices of the biblical writings that provide the “raw material” for thinking theologically with biblical texts. Since the Enlightenment, the relationship between the biblical writings and theology has been problematic and studied in a variety of ways. Thus, accomplishment of the course’s aim will involve some study of the problems inherent in the notion of biblical theology, the development of the scholarly study of this topic, and specific engagement with the theological voices of the different biblical writings and their relationship to one another and to the concept of a biblical theology. Additionally, the course will examine newer developments such as feminist and liberationist approaches to the Bible that seem to challenge conventional notions of biblical theology.

Cognitive development will be encouraged through textbook readings, classroom discussions/lectures, outside projects, and periodic examinations. Social development will be encouraged through small group discussions and exercises as well as through the relating of biblical concepts to contemporary social issues. Spiritual development will be encouraged through a dialogue with the dynamic faith of the Christian Scripture, a faith that grew out of the community of believers and continues to challenge and shape that community in contemporary settings.

### 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

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<sup>1</sup> James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 605; italics original.

and group learning goals. The class sessions, readings, and assignments should enable the student to:

1. explore the **difficulties** involved in the notion of “Biblical Theology” and the relationships among the theological voices of the different biblical writings.
2. be exposed to and be able to explain the **major approaches to biblical theology** that have emerged in the history of the field.
3. to begin to **practice the theological interpretation** of biblical texts by encountering the **specific theological voices of the biblical writings** and considering their **tensions and connections with one another**.
4. appreciate **newer challenges to traditional notions** of biblical theology and their significance for understanding the Bible and theology
5. wrestle with the possibilities and problems of the **relationship between the Old and New Testaments** within a unified “pan-biblical” theology.
6. consider the **personal, ecclesial, and pastoral function** of the theological voices of the biblical writings and the concept of biblical theology.

### Course Texts

1. Timothy M. Green, *“The God Plot” : Living with Holy Imagination*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2014.
2. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997.
3. A Bible of the student’s choice (preferred: NRSV; do not use KJV or a free translation [e.g., *Living Bible, Message*, etc.] )

### Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation and Attendance:** In this abbreviated journey through the study of biblical theology, attendance is a necessity. *If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (more than **THREE [3] classes**), the faculty member can file a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (more than **FIVE [5] classes**), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material. The grade assigned to class attendance and participation (5%) will be assessed on the basis of faithful*

attendance (see numbers above) and active contributions to class discussions that evidence completion of the assigned reading.

2. Readings: 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. Exam and quiz questions may be drawn from any assigned reading, even those not explicitly covered in class.

3. Quizzes: In order to make the most of our shared reading materials, several quizzes (estimate 10) will be given in class over the assigned reading for that day's session (see course schedule for dates).

4. Celebrations of Learning: There will be three such celebrations (often called, erroneously, "examinations"). One will be the final exam for the course. See course schedule for dates.

5. Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts: In order to facilitate direct theological engagement with biblical texts, the student will write several theological analyses of biblical passages assigned in class (estimate 6). Specific biblical texts and due dates appear on the syllabus course schedule. *For each assignment, the student should follow the instructions for this assignment included at the end of this syllabus.*

6. Book Review of Timothy M. Green, *The God Plot* (5-7 pages): The student will read *The God Plot* book and submit a critical book review/response paper that engages the work as an attempt at biblical theology. The paper should be **6-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins** on all sides. The paper is due at the start of class on **Tues. Feb. 27, 2018**. The style and format are flexible but the paper *should follow the discussion questions given on the instruction sheet at the back of this syllabus.*

## Course Policies

1. Grading: The student's grade will be based on a combination of class participation, reading, assignments, and exams as follows:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>			
Class Attendance and Participation	5%			
Reading Quizzes	15%			
3 "Celebrations of Learning" (a.k.a. exams)	30%			
Theological Engagements with Bib. Texts	25%			
Book Review of <i>The God Plot</i>	25%			
<u>*Grading Scale:</u>	94-100 A	84-86 B	74-76 C	64-66 D
	90-93 A-	80-83 B-	70-73 C-60-63 D-	
	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	50s F

\*Grading Procedures: Points will be converted to letter grades that represent the following:

- A= Reserved for outstanding work of exceptionally high quality that reflects a creative appropriation of course materials and practices
- B= Work that meets all of the stated course requirements and reflects a firm grasp of course materials and practices
- C= Work that shows a basic grasp of the course materials and practices
- D= Work that shows serious deficiencies but meets the minimal requirements of the course
- F= Work that fails to meet the minimal requirements of the course. No credit given

2. Attendance: In this abbreviated journey through the study of biblical theology, attendance is a necessity. *If the student is absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (more than THREE [3] classes), the faculty member can file a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (more than FIVE [5] classes), the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material. The grade assigned to class attendance and participation (5%) will be assessed on the basis of faithful attendance (see numbers above) and active contributions to class discussions that evidence completion of the assigned reading.*

3. Late Work Policy: In order not to be considered “late,” all assignments must be submitted **in person, in hard copy, in class** on the day listed as the due date. *NO assignment may be submitted electronically (by email, etc.) for full credit.* If the student “forgets” an assignment, he or she may submit it after class (either electronically or in hard copy) for no more than half credit. *Any assignment submitted electronically (whether late or on-time) will receive no more than half credit.* No assignment will be accepted for credit of any kind more than one week after the original due date. (note: any extra credit assignments must be submitted on-time and cannot be submitted late for any credit)

4. Inclusivity: 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. This course will strive to practice sensitivity toward and foster respect for issues of inclusivity in matters of language and conduct. Each student should seek to enrich this inclusive atmosphere in both their class contributions and personal interactions.

5. Academic Honesty: 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](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

6. Academic Accommodations: If you have a diagnosed disability, please contact PLNU's Disability Resource Center (DRC) within the first two weeks of class to demonstrate need and to register for accommodation by phone at 619-849-2486 or by e-mail at [DRC@pointloma.edu](mailto:DRC@pointloma.edu). See [Disability Resource Center](#) for additional information.

## Tentative Course Schedule

### **Unit One: Starting Points**

#### **1. Thurs. Jan. 11**

Starting Points: Introduction to the Course

\*distribute Scobie article for next class

#### **2. Tues. Jan. 16**

What is "Biblical Theology?" (part 1)

Reading: 1) Begin reading C. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, pp. 9-32 (copied)—to be completed by next class

2) SKIM Brueggemann, *Theology*, pp.1-20, 27-38

#### **3. Thurs. Jan. 18**

What is "Biblical Theology?" (part 2)

Reading: 1) C. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God*, pp.9-32 (copied)

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Scobie pp. 9-32**

### **Unit Two: What "Biblical Theology" Has Been: Representative Examples**

#### **4. Tues. Jan. 23**

Biblical Theology as Event (G. E. Wright and the Biblical Theology Movement)

Reading: 1) Brueggemann, *Theology*, pp. 20-27, 42-49

#### **5. Thurs. Jan. 25**

Biblical Theology as Tradition and Canon (Gerhard von Rad and Brevard Childs)

Reading: 1) Perdue, Morgan, Sommer, *Biblical Theology: Introducing the Conversation*, pp. 77-91 and 109-114 (copied)

2) SKIM Brueggemann, *Theology*, pp. 31-42 and 89-93

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Perdue, Morgan, Sommer pp. 77-91 and 109-114**

**6. Tues. Jan. 30**

- A) Transition: Engaging Biblical Texts Theologically  
 B) Approaching “Biblical Theology”: Synthesis, Diversity, Contemporary Engagement (Pt. 1)

Reading: 1) John Barton, “Unity and Diversity in the Biblical Canon” in *The Unity of Scripture and the Diversity of the Canon* (ed. J. Barton and M. Wolter; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 11-26 (copied)

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Barton article assigned for today**

**\*DUE: Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts: Exodus 14:1-31 (see instruction sheet in syllabus)**

**7. Thurs. Feb. 1**

- A) Approaching “Biblical Theology”: Synthesis, Diversity, Contemporary Engagement (Pt. 2—finish from last class)

Reading: 1) (\*finish from last class): John Barton, “Unity and Diversity in the Biblical Canon” in *The Unity of Scripture and the Diversity of the Canon* (ed. J. Barton and M. Wolter; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 11-26 (copied)

***Unit Three: Biblical Theology through the Synthesis(es) of Scripture***

**8. Tues. Feb. 6**

The God Plot (pt. 1)

Reading: 1) Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 7-53

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 7-53**

**9. Thurs. Feb. 8**

The God Plot (pt. 2)

Reading: 1) Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 54-122 (read as much as possible today and finish for next class)

**\*DUE: Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts: Joshua 24 (see instruction sheet in syllabus)**

**10. Tues. Feb. 13**

The God Plot (pt. 3)

Reading: 1) Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 54-122 (finish what you didn’t read of this from last class)

**\*Thurs. Feb. 15 Special Session**

*We will attend the Wiley Lecture together as a class. Meet in Crill Performance Hall at 9:30am. Look for the class sign-in sheet on the table in the foyer.*

**11. Tues. Feb. 20**

The God Plot (pt. 4)

Reading: 1) Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 123-155

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 123-155**

**12. Thurs. Feb. 22**

The God Plot (pt. 5)

Reading: 1) Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 156-206

**\*DUE: Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts: Philippians 2:1-11 (see instruction sheet in syllabus)**

**13. Tues. Feb. 27**

The God Plot (pt. 6)

Reading: 1) Green, *The God Plot*, pp. 207-238

**\*DUE: Book Review Paper on Green, *The God Plot***

**14. Thurs. Mar. 1**

**CELEBRATION OF LEARNING #1 (mid-term)**

**\*Tues. Mar. 6 & Thurs. Mar. 8: NO CLASS (Spring Break)**

***Unit Four: Biblical Theology through the Diversity of Scripture***

**15. Tues. Mar. 13**

A) Approaching the Diversity of Scripture

B) Overall Introduction to Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* and “Core Testimony” (part 1)

Reading: 1) Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch. 3

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch. 3**

**16. Thurs. Mar. 15**

Israel’s Core Testimony (part 2)

Reading: 1) Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch. 4

**\*DUE: Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts: Isaiah 43:1-7 (see instruction sheet in syllabus)**

**17. Tues. Mar. 20**

Israel’s Core Testimony (part 3)

Reading: 1) Brueggemann, *Theology*, pp. 224-228 and ch. 7 (recommended only Brueggemann pp. 261-266)

**18. Thurs. Mar. 22**

Israel’s Countertestimony (part 1)

Reading: Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch.8

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch. 8**

**19. Tues. Mar. 27**

Israel's Countertestimony (part 2)

Reading: Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch.9

**\*DUE: Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts: John 1:1-18 (be sure to see Brueggemann pp. 344-345 & see instruction sheet in syllabus)**

**\*\*Give out Take-Home Celebration of Learning #2**

**\*Thurs. Mar. 29: NO CLASS (Easter Break)**

**20. Tues. Apr. 3**

Israel's Countertestimony (part 3)

Reading: Brueggemann, *Theology*, ch.11 and ch.12

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Brueggemann, *Theology*, chs. 11-12**

***Unit Five: Biblical Theology through Contemporary Social, Cultural, and Political Engagement***

**21. Thurs. Apr. 5**

A) Overall Introduction

B) Engagement with Social-Economic Justice (part 1)

Reading: 1) Brueggemann, *Theology*, pp. 735-742

**\*DUE: Turn in Take-Home Celebration of Learning #2**

**22. Tues. Apr. 10**

Engagement with Social-Economic Justice (part 2): Case Studies

Reading: 1) D. Markl, "Social Justice in the Bible" (copied)

2) W. Houston, "The Story of Jesus: Justice in Practice," pp. 92-103 in *Justice: The Biblical Challenge* (copied)

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over both assigned readings**

**23. Thurs. Apr. 12**

Engagement with Environmental Ethics/Creation Care

Reading: 1) D. Horrell, "Approaches to Reading the Bible in Relation to Environmental Issues" and "Human Dominion Over Creation?" (copied)

2) V. Balabanski, "An Earth Bible Reading of the Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6.9-13," pp. 151-161 in N. Habel, *Readings from the Perspective of the Earth* (copied)

**24. Tues. Apr. 17**

Engagement with Gender and Sexuality (part 1)

Reading: 1) P. Tribble, "Feminist Hermeneutics and Biblical Studies," pp. 455-464 (copied)



- 2) M. Schlimm, “Male and Female God Created Them: Gender in the Old Testament,” pp. 84-103 in Schlimm, *This Strange and Sacred Scripture* (copied)

**25. Thurs. Apr. 19**

Engagement with Gender and Sexuality (part 2)

Reading: 1) P. Tribble, “The Daughter of Jephthah: An Inhuman Sacrifice,” ch. 4 (pp. 93-118) in Tribble, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (copied)

**\*Reading Quiz (in class) over Tribble chapter**

**26. Tues. Apr. 24**

Engagement with Race and Ethnicity

Reading: 1) V. Wimbush, “The Bible and African-Americans: An Outline of an Interpretive History,” pp. 81-97 in Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod: African-American Biblical Interpretation* (copied)

**27. Thurs. Apr. 26**

Engagement with Refugees, Asylum, Race, and Ethnicity

Reading: 1) Excerpts from F. S. Houston, *You Shall Love the Stranger as Yourself: The Bible, Refugees, and Asylum* (pp. 1-5 [“Introduction”] and pp 149-162 [“Welcoming the Stranger”]) (copied)

- 2) Dalila Nayap-Pot, “Life in the Midst of Death: Naomi, Ruth, and the Plight of Indigenous Women,” pp. 266-276 in Scholz, *Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader* (copied)

<p><b>*Final Celebration of Learning:</b> The final celebration of learning will be a take-home essay exam that covers only “Unit Five: Biblical Theology through Contemporary Social, Cultural, and Political Engagement.” It is due by <b>5pm on Tuesday May 1, 2018.</b></p>
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## Instructions for Theological Engagement with Biblical Texts

**\*Instructions:** *For each assigned biblical passage, complete the following steps. Type your responses in essay form, double-spaced. Each theological engagement assignment should be **3 to 4 pages in length** and reflect detailed reading of the passages and careful thought on your own in interaction with the assigned readings for that day.*

1. Give a summary of the contents of the biblical passage. Show that you have seen the details of the content but don't let this part of the paper become too long.
2. Explain the location of this passage within the larger context of the Protestant canon and its story as a whole (what precedes and follows the passage and its book and how do they fit into the larger story that the Protestant canon is telling as a whole?).
3. What does your passage say about each of the following questions?
  - a. *Who is God?*  
(i.e., what is God like? What does God do? What's God's character? etc.)
  - b. *Who are we as God's people?*  
(i.e., who are God's people according to this text? What does it mean to be a member of God's people? What is the nature/character of God's people?)
  - c. *How should we live in the world in light of who God is and who we are as God's people?*  
(i.e., what is the call on the lives of God's people for actual, concrete living in the world? Ethics? Do? Not do? How should God's people "be" in the world? etc.)

**Instructions for  
Book Review of Timothy M. Green, “The God Plot”: Living with Holy Imagination**

\*\*The paper should be **6-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins** on all sides. The paper is due at the start of class on the date listed on the course schedule. The style and format are flexible but be sure to *cite the page numbers* when you quote from or reference the book under consideration (or any other source for that matter!). The paper should address at least the following issues:

1. Summarize what Green is *trying to show overall* in this book AND the main (major) points he uses to do it. (what is the main argument and how does the book support it?). [don't let this section get too long]

2. Now to get more specific: Explain how the “Prophetic Style” texts and the “Priestly Style” texts each portray the central “dilemma” of God’s people and the “resolution” to that dilemma.

\*THEN, explain how the “prophetic” and “priestly” portrayals of the dilemma and resolution are similar **and** different from one another.

3. In your view, what are the strongest points of the book and WHY do you find them to be strong?

4. In your view, what are the weakest points (problems, difficulties, etc.) with Green’s approach to doing “biblical theology” through this kind of unifying synthesis of the entire Protestant canon? In other words, what are the *shortcomings* of this way of describing “biblical theology” or the content of the Bible?

(HINT: think especially about what texts or topics get left out in this kind of approach and how the inclusion of these would change the argument, conclusion, etc.).

