THE BIBLE & FOLKLORE (Flr 199 / 36289)

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Office: PLC 458, 346-1496

MW 2:00-3:20, Lokey 117
Off.Hrs.: M&W 3:30-5; & by appt.

This course will bring together readings of the Bible in the Judeo-Christian tradition in connection with apt mythological, folkloristic, and traditional contexts, concepts, and meanings. We will read sections of the Bible that have continuing presence in Western culture and literature, exploring how these are shaped by oral traditions and how they carry ongoing symbolic and narrative meaning. In addition to reading key narrative, lyrical, prophetic, and epistolary sections of the King James English bible, we will take a folkloristic approach in studying these accounts—contextualizing them both in relation to modes of oral creation and dissemination, and in connection with parallels to and adaptations of biblical stories in other cultural forms and traditions.


WORK: Exams (50%); ReadingJournal (25%); Participation: Passage Presentation, Discussion, & Paper (25%)

WK 1 (3/28): The Judeo-Christian Bible & a Folkloristic Study of Mythology, Narrative, & Verbal Art

M: Introduction: The Books; the Course; the Bible, the 1611 K. James translation, & the Study of Folklore


Terms: Abrams: Periods of English Literature—Jacobean Age; Renaissance; book; folklore; myth; Dundes: folklore; myth; legend; oral folklore; written folklore


M: Mythic Stories & Variation in Number—Origins & the Flood myth: Bible, “Genesis,” 1-22; Dundes, 21-24; Read Notes to “O.T” & Genesis (pp.321ff.); during the term read “Notes” for ALL biblical books

W: Mythic Origins & Variation in Number—the Creation & Fall myths: Dundes, 24-26; Bible, “Genesis,” 1-5

Terms: Abrams: myth; narrative; setting; character; plot; Dundes: multiple existence; variation


Terms: Abrams: narratology; author; plot—protagonist/antagonist; allusion; paradox; symbol; legend; variant

WK 4 (4/18): Legends, Variation, & Patterned Narratives: Historical Memory in Oral & Written Modes


W: ***EXAM***

Terms: Abrams: narratology; folktale; convention; narrative pt. of view; Dundes: variation in name & sequence; variation: multiple existence; type-set with variants; polygenesis/monogenesis

M: Dundes, 63-65; Bible, “Psalms,” 14 & 53; 70, 40, & 90; 18 & “Samuel II,” 22.

W: Bible: “Psalms” 2, 8, 9, 13, 23, 42, 98, 150

Terms: Abrams: verse; oral poetry; lyric; antithesis/parallelism; figurative lang.; apostrophe; rhetorical question

WK 6 (5/2): Lyric Expression, Oral Poetry, & Formulaic Language: Songs, Prophecies, & Proverbs

M: Bible: “Song of Solomon,” Ch.1-8


Terms: fig. lang.—metaphor/simile; allegory; parable; allegorical interpretation; jeremiad; satire; proverb; didactic literature; concrete language; imagery

WK 7 (5/9): Heroic Narrative Patterns (I): David & Goliath / David & Jonathan / David & Saul,

M: Dundes: 65-70; Bible: “I Samuel,” 16-20 & 31

W: Bible: “I Samuel,” 24-31; “II Samuel,” 1

Terms: Abrams: narrative; narratology; plot—protagonist (hero/ine)/antagonist (villain); motif & theme; dirge

WK 8 (5/16): Heroic Narrative Patterns (II): Jael & Sisera, Judith & Holofernes


W: Dundes: 70-73; Bible: “Exodus,” 1-15

Terms: Abrams: plot—protagonist/antagonist; motif & theme—topos; stock situation; symbol

WK 9 (5/23): Heroic Narrative Patterns (III): Moses, Egypt, and the Promised Land

M: Dundes: 96-103; Bible: “Deuteronomy,” 31-34

W: Bible: John, 6; Dundes: 103-107

Terms: Abrams: protagonist/antagonist; motif & theme—topos; symbol; stock situation; archetypal criticism

WK 10 (5/30): Heroic Narrative Patterns (IV): Jesus & Moses—Echoing Traditions & Typology

M: HOLIDAY

W: Dundes: 114-118

*****FINAL EXAM DUE*****

Terms: Abrams: interpretation, typological & allegorical