

BSCM2300 BIBLICAL BACKGROUNDS
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Disclaimer: This syllabus is intended to give the student a general idea of the content, format, and textbooks used for this class. The professor will submit a full syllabus at the beginning of the class which will contain a course schedule and the instructor's information.

Course Description

Biblical Backgrounds is designed to familiarize the student with the geographical, archaeological, historical, and cultural background of the Old and New Testament periods. Special attention is given to the intertestamental period. In addition, the Roman and Jewish backgrounds are discussed as the backdrop for understanding the Old and New Testaments.

Course Objectives

This course will emphasize the ministerial competency of Biblical Exposition. It will also strengthen the Life Skills of reading, writing, computer skills, and critical thinking.

At the end of the semester, the student will be able to:

1. Be familiar with the geography of the Old and New Testament times;
2. Understand the historical background of the biblical times, particularly the intertestamental period;
3. Gain a general knowledge of the social background of the biblical times;
4. Understand the religions, cults, and philosophies prevalent during the biblical times;
5. Have a general understanding of the chronology of the biblical times; and
6. Discern the importance of understanding the background information in order to interpret the Scriptures properly.

Course Textbooks

Brisco, Thomas, ed. *Holman Bible Atlas: A Complete Guide to the Expansive Geography of Biblical History*. Nashville: Holman Reference, 1998.

Smith, Marsha A. Ellis, ed. *Holman Book of Biblical Charts, Maps, and Reconstructions*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1993.

The remaining required resources can be purchased directly or downloaded from Biblical Backgrounds, Inc. at their website: <http://www.bibback.com/> and then click on the "BB Productions" link.

Monson, James M. *Regions on the Run: Introductory Map Studies in the Land of the Bible*. Rockford, IL: Biblical Backgrounds, Inc., 1998.

Monson, James M. *Regional Study Maps (7 Map Set)*. Rockford, IL: Biblical Backgrounds, Inc.

Lancaster, Steven P. and James M. Monson. *Regional Study Guide: Introductory Map Studies in the Land of the Bible*.

Free download from <http://www.bibback.com/MDownloads.html> .

Lancaster, Steven P. and James M. Monson. *Supplement to the Regional Study Guide*.

Free download from <http://www.bibback.com/MDownloads.html> .

Course Methodology

The principal means of instruction will be through lecture and discussion. Audiovisual presentations will be utilized to supplement the classroom lectures and discussion. The primary means of student assessment will be through individual reading assignments and projects.

Course Evaluation

25% — Class participation (including Discussion Boards) and reading log from course textbook

60% — Class assignments (average of maps, timeline, and selected readings)

15% — Final Exam

Course Requirements

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION. Since we are not meeting in a traditional classroom setting, your participation (by completing these assignments) is extremely important. A significant percentage of your grade will come from your participation. Your participation grade will be determined by your participation in the Blackboard Discussion Boards, your completed Reading Log for the Textbook, and your time spent online with the various assignments and course documents.

2. TEXTBOOK. Read the assigned chapters in the textbook (*Holman Bible Atlas*) and turn in a completed reading log on --- (by 2 pm eastern time; 1 pm central). Submit the assignment through the Assignments section.

3. INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS. Complete the following assignments and be prepared to discuss your results on the Discussion Board on the due date. Part of the grade for the written assignments will be based upon proper grammar, writing style, and format of the paper.

a. MAPS OF PALESTINE. Complete the maps according to the instructions on the assignment sheet.

b. REGIONS ON THE RUN. Using *Regions on the Run*, the *Regional Study Maps* (7 map set), the *Regional Study Guide*, and the *Supplement to the Regional Study Guide*, complete the map and reading assignments by the due date listed below.

i. Each map will count as two grades in the Class Assignments portion of the final grade calculation.

ii. You will also receive a grade for the reading assignments associated with each map.

iii. The dates listed below are the dates that each map should be completed.

c. ASSYRIANS OR BABYLONIANS. Prepare a 2 - 3 page (typed, double-spaced) summary of a dictionary (e.g., Anchor Bible Dictionary, Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary) or encyclopedia (e.g., International Standard Bible Encyclopedia) article on the Neo-Assyrian Empire (9th and 8th C. BC) or the Neo-Babylonian Empire (7th and 6th C BC). If you do not have access to a “good” Bible dictionary or encyclopedia, you may use an Internet source (Use a scholarly source, not merely one that’s convenient. If you choose a non-scholarly internet source, you will receive a grade of 0 for the assignment. Do not use Wikipedia for any Biblical Backgrounds assignment!). All class members who choose the Assyrians will post several facts on the appropriate Discussion Board Thread, per the instructions of the professor. Those who choose the Babylonians will do the same. All students will read both Discussion Board Threads. **This assignment is due on ---.** The assignment will be submitted via the Assignments section, no later than 2 pm eastern time (or 1 pm central time).

d. JOSEPHUS. Read the assigned passages from Josephus. **This assignment is due on ---.** Submit the completed log through the Assignments section, no later than 2 pm eastern time (or 1 pm central time).

e. APOCRYPHA & PSEUDEPIGRAPHA. Read the assigned books/sections of books from the Apocrypha & Pseudepigrapha. **This assignment is due on ---.** Submit the completed log through the Assignments section, no later than 2 pm eastern time (or 1 pm central time).

f. TIMELINE. Construct a timeline of the history of Israel (people, places, events, dates) from Abraham to the Roman destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. **This assignment is due on ---.**

g. JEWISH HOLY DAYS/FESTIVALS. Prepare a 2 - 3 page (typed, double-spaced) paper on one of the following celebrations/ festivals/holy days: (1) *Purim*, (2) Pesah/Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, (3) 9th of *Ab/Av*, (4) *Shavuot*/Pentecost/Weeks, (5) *Rosh HaShanah*/Feast of Trumpets/Jewish New Year, (6) *Yom Kippur*/Day of Atonement, (7) *Sukkot*/Booths/Tabernacles/Shelters, or (8) *H[anukkah]*/Dedication/Lights. Use a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia (as listed above under Assyrians/Babylonians: Course Requirement 3g) or a scholarly Internet source (the same requirements and penalties will apply for this assignment). The class members who choose *Purim* will post several facts on the appropriate Discussion Board. Those who choose the 9th of *Ab* will do the same, etc. All students will read all 7 Discussion Board Threads. **This assignment is due on ---.** Submit the assignment through the Assignments section, no later than 2 pm eastern time (or 1 pm central time).

4. FINAL EXAM. Take home exam. This exam will be a synthesis of all of the material presented in class, posted on Blackboard, your textbook readings, and class assignments (maps, readings, and essays). **The final exam is due via the Assignments section no later than 2 pm eastern time (1 pm central time) on the final day of class, ---.**

The question(s) and requirements for the final exam will be posted in the Assignments section.

5. In preparing the written assignments for this course, students are required to follow the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian, published by the University of Chicago Press.

6. A NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM: All written assignments must be your own work. If you use an author's exact words, you must put his/her words in quotation marks and footnote the source. If you paraphrase, you must footnote the source. Any information that you include in your paper that you did not previously know must be footnoted because the information came from someone else. If you do not footnote someone else's information, you are plagiarizing that person's work.

- a. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and the penalties will include:
 - i. A failing grade in the course, and/or
 - ii. Possible dismissal from seminary.

Netiquette Statement on Appropriate Online Behavior

Each student is expected to demonstrate appropriate Christian behavior when working online on the Discussion Board. The student is expected to interact with other students in a fashion that will promote learning and respect for the opinions of others in the course. A spirit of Christian charity will be expected at all times in the online environment.

Course Schedule

The following topics will serve as the outline for the Discussion Board questions, guide your assigned reading, and lead you as you follow the PowerPoint presentations (chapters from *Holman Bible Atlas* are in parentheses):

- ! Geography of Palestine (1-3)
- ! Biblical History
 - . The Importance of History
 - < Relationships in History
 - < Sources: Primary and Secondary
 - . Primeval History (4)
 - . Patriarchal Period (5)
 - . The Exodus (6-7)
 - . Conquest of Canaan/Period of the Judges (8)
 - . Davidic/Solomonic Kingdom (9)
 - . Divided Kingdom (10)
 - . The Neo-Assyrian Period (11)
 - . The Neo-Babylonian Period (11-12)
 - . The Persian Period (13)
 - . The Greek Period (14)
 - . The Hasmonean/Maccabean Period (14)
 - . The Roman Period (15)
 - < Herod the Great (16)
 - < The Roman Emperors (17, 19, 20)
- ! The Roman Background: Society and Culture
 - . The Moral Climate

- . Attitudes toward Christians
- . The People of Rome
- . Developments
- . “The Fullness of Time”
- ! The Jewish Background (17, 18, 20)
- . Beliefs and Practices
- . The Exilic and Post-Exilic Periods
- < Life in the Exile
- < Life after the Return from the Exile
- < Religious Life in the Post-Exilic Period
- . The Second Temple
- . Intertestamental Judaism
- < Social Life
- < Economic Life
- < Religious Life
- C Priests and Levites
- C Sanhedrin
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- C Synagogue
- C Jewish Religious Sects
- ✧ Pharisees
- ✧ Sadducees
- ✧ Zealots
- ✧ Herodians
- ✧ Essenes
- < Jewish Writings and Literary Products
- C Septuagint
- C Dead Sea Scrolls
- C Apocrypha
- C Pseudepigrapha
- < Holy Days/Festivals
- C Sabbath
- C New Moon Celebrations
- C *Rosh HaShanah* (New Year/Trumpets)
- C *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement)
- C *Sukkot* (Tabernacles/Booths/Shelters)
- C *Pesah* (Passover; also combined with Festival of Unleavened Bread)
- C *Shavuot* (Pentecost/Weeks)
- C *Purim*
- C *H[anukkah* (Lights/Dedication)
- C 9th of *Ab/Av* (Destruction of Solomon's Temple & Herod's Temple)
- < Messianism

Selected Bibliography

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Hallo, William W., and William Kelly Simpson. *The Ancient Near East: A History*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

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Shanks, Hershel, James C. Vanderkam, P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., and James A. Sanders. *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Forty Years*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1992.

Whiston, William, trans. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987.

[Additional resources are listed at the course site on NOBTS-Blackboard.](#)