***Bible as Literature*** Michael.Otero@acboe.net

CLASS INFORMATION & GENERAL SYLLABUS

Prattville High School—Mr. Michael D. Otero

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

The Bible as Literature course is meant to teach the student about the Bible as a form of literature and to showcase its historical impact. This is a survey course, meaning students will receive a general overview of the Bible that highlights its poetic and literary aspects while exploring its effect on culture and civilization. The first semester will focus on the Old Testament, while the second semester will focus on the New Testament.

TEXTS & MATERIALS

* ***Bible in History and Literature* DVD/CD:** This disc is provided free of charge by the National Council on Bible in Public School Curriculum. These discs will be given to the students in class, but the student must have a laptop or computer that can play DVDs to use them (a PC with a CD-ROM).
* ***Bible:***The student must have a hardcopy Bible. While the course material primarily refers to the King James Version of the Bible, the student may use whichever Bible he or she prefers. You have the freedom to choose which Bible you want to bring, but consider a few points:
  + Study Bibles are great for cross references and notes, but those notes can distract from simple reading and personal interpretation unfiltered by the notes’ author’s opinions.
  + Small Bibles are nice for portability, but bigger Bibles have larger font that make them easier to read, often leaving margin space for note taking. Find the right balance for you.
  + If the King James Version is too difficult or not your preference, you may wish to get a two-translation version that has the KJV on one side and your modern version of choice (like the NIV or ESV) on the other side for comparison while being able to keep up with the course material.
  + If you plan on taking a heavy amount of personal notes, you may wish to purchase a Note Taker’s Bible or one with wide margins. Some people hate marking their Bibles or prefer Study Bibles that don’t have margin space, so they take notes in a notebook or binder.
  + Certain heavily paraphrased dynamic equivalency versions such as *The Message* and *New Living Translation* have their uses for variety and devotion, but they may make it difficult in keeping up with being “on the same page” with the rest of the class.
  + If you do not have a Bible, one will be given to you; please speak up.

***Optional Recommendations***

* A Bible app or software program
  + There are dozens of choices for Bible apps and computer software, so pick the one you like.
  + I like simple and free, so I like the Pocket Sword iPhone app and the BlueLetterBible.org website for study material.
* Old School, Hardcopy Book References:
  + Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance (KJV)
  + Treasury of Scripture Knowledge
  + A Bible Handbook or one-volume commentary (Usher, Hailey, Matthew Henry, MacDonald’s *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, etc.)

***Classroom Materials***: These should be brought daily.

* 1” Three-Ring Binder
* 300 Sheets of College-Ruled or Wide-Ruled Notebook Paper (Reinforced is better)
* Several Black and/or Dark Blue Pens
* Several #2 Pencils (wooden for testing and mechanical if preferred)
* Highlighters and/or Colored Pens/Pencils (Multiple Colors for annotating and revision/editing)
* Bible Highlighter - Recommendation: Sanford Bible Dry Highlighter(s)
* Bible Pen - Recommendation: Pigma Micron Black 005, but some people like the larger tips and variety of colors
* Assorted Page-Markers/Flags and/or Sticky Notes (3x3” and 2x1.5”)

***Teacher Wish List:*** Help things run smoothly: Hand Sanitizer, Tissues, Paper Towels, Copy Paper, Notebook Paper, Black/Dark Blue Pens, Pencils, KJV Bibles, Bible Dry Highlighters, Pigma Micron Pens – Black 005, Gift Cards (Amazon or Office Depot) for classroom supplies, etc.

**OVERVIEW**

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Please read, sign, and return the attached document entitled “Mr. Otero’s Classroom Expectations Contract.” Classroom policies will follow the expectations listed below, the Prattville High School’s Student Code of Conduct & Handbook, and Autauga County Schools’ policies. Anything not addressed directly by those sources will be left to the teacher’s discretion.

GRADING POLICY

Your grade will be determined by weighted averages in the following categories:

**Assessments:** Writing, Tests, and Projects  **65%**

**Assignments:** Classwork, Homework, and Quizzes **35%**

The midterm is worth 20% of the first semester grade. The final exam is worth 20% of the second semester grade. There will be no extra credit; turn in all assignments on time and put forth a sincere effort.

MAKE-UP WORK

ACBoE’s Code of Conduct: **Make-Up Work (Excused Absences)**

If a student is absent for any excused reason… the student shall be allowed to make up schoolwork and/or examinations missed during said absence or absences… For seventh through twelfth grade students, the student shall be responsible for contacting the teacher or teachers immediately upon return to school to arrange a reasonable length of time, not to exceed **two (2) weeks**, to make up work and/or examinations. Teachers shall not be required to re-teach lessons, but students shall be given reasonable opportunity to learn lessons missed due to excused absences.

Students must email the teacher a request for missing work while they are out or upon arrival back to class. If a student is removed from class due to an immediate, in-class disciplinary action, he or she will receive a zero on the current assignment(s). Students may not make up assignments missed due to ejection from class.

LATE WORK

Take-home assignments are due at the beginning of class. If you turn in a late assignment, your maximum grade will be reduced by -20%. After three school days, it will no longer be worth any credit. If a student is not prepared for a classroom discussion, such as a Socratic Seminar or Literature Circle, he or she will be excluded from the activity. As an alternative, the student may write an essay response, due the next day, at -20%.

TARDY POLICY

Students will be marked tardy if they are not in class, in their assigned seats, and silently working on the bellringer when the tardy bell rings. The ACBoE’s Code of Conduct defines tardiness as a minor offense: **Excessive tardiness – repeated failure of student to be seated in his/her desk when tardy bell rings.** At a student’s third tardy, he or she will be referred to an administrator.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students will not be allowed to use their electronic devices (including phones) when we are doing Bible reading, classroom discussions, and note taking. However, they will be allowed to use them when working on assignments that require them.

PLAGIARISM

The students will be educated on avoiding plagiarism. Students who engage in plagiarism – whether intentionally or unintentionally – will receive a zero for the first instance of plagiarism. The plagiarizers may make up this assignment (possibly an alternative one) with a -40% grade penalty. Any additional instances of plagiarism will receive a zero, and those assignments will not be able to be made up for credit.

MATURITY AND NATURE OF THIS COURSE

It is completely legal for public schools in the United States to teach the Bible in a secular matter as long as religion is neither being promoted or attacked. Prattville High School has offered its students this elective as long as the curriculum provided by the National Council on Bible in Public School Curriculum is strictly adhered to. This class will not proselytize or provide religious instruction. While it will be taught in a secular manner, we cannot divorce ourselves from the fact that the Bible itself is a spiritual book and brings with it the potential for spiritual questions and discussions. It is recommended that if a student has such questions that go beyond what is appropriate for our course of study that he or she should seek guidance from his or her parents and clergy – in addition to any personal searching. This course is an elective and not required. If the Bible as Literature curriculum is unacceptable to the student or parent, it is recommended that the student and parent discuss this with the teacher and our guidance counselors.

Students and parents should be aware of the challenging nature of the coursework. As a college preparatory English elective, students will be challenged in order to prepare them to successfully do college level work. Students are expected to rise to the occasion and will be supported along the way. Students will be expected to read readings outside of class at times, take appropriate notes (annotation), answer assigned questions, write on assigned prompts/questions, and be prepared for class discussion by specific dates. Class discussion in college is extremely important. Therefore, each student is expected to keep up with all reading assignments and to contribute to class discussion as much as possible.

The Bible is a controversial book which requires a careful approach. We will be engaging with historical realities and current events containing ideas from multiple political, religious, economic, and philosophical perspectives. Students and parents are asked to fill out and sign the form at the bottom of the attached expectations with this being understood: **critical thinking sometimes requires dealing with challenging and offensive ideas.** Please contact the teacher if there are any questions or concerns about the class, appropriateness of coursework, and the syllabus. The texts selected come from published and locally approved high school textbooks and curriculum. However, if there are concerns about the materials and assignments, parents are encouraged to discuss them with the teacher.

**Mr. Otero’s Classroom Expectations Contract**

1. **I will *respect* others by…**
   * 1. …being mindful of my volume, attitude, words, and actions.
     2. …not mocking classmates, using profanity, or discussing inappropriate topics in class.
     3. …not talking when the teacher or a designated student is speaking.
     4. …raising my hand and waiting to be called upon before I speak.
     5. …not distracting my peers through horseplay, annoying habits, and being a nuisance.
     6. …coming to class on time.
2. **I will remain *focused* by…**
   * 1. …being both physically and mentally present.
     2. …practicing good digital citizenship and proper classroom etiquette. My cellphone and electronic devices will be in my bag or pocket at all times unless I currently have permission to use them for academic purposes.
     3. …concentrating my attention on the current assignment and using any downtime wisely.
3. **I will seek *improvement* as a reader, writer, and thinker by…**
   * 1. …doing all of the assignments I am asked to do. If I become annoyed, bored, or overwhelmed by an assignment or my teacher, I will muster up the self-discipline to put forth my best effort, not give up, not complain, and to finish everything I am asked to do.
     2. …abiding by the school system’s Code of Conduct and following the instructions and directives of its teachers and administrators.
     3. …seeking help before, during, and after school hours from my teachers, parents, and peers.
     4. …learning on my own using all the tools and opportunities at my disposal because I understand both *personal responsibility* and the value of *my education*.
     5. …being a student of integrity; I will not engage in any form of cheating or plagiarism.
     6. …avoiding procrastination.
     7. …reading, writing, and thinking every day because I know they will make me stronger.
4. **I will come to class *prepared* by having…**
   * 1. …done all of my readings and assignments.
     2. …a teachable spirit (attitude).
     3. …all of my required materials: Pencils, Pens, Highlighters, Notebooks, Binder, Textbook, Novels, Sticky Notes, Completed Assignments, etc.
5. **I will practice good *stewardship* by…**
   * 1. …considerately using all school books, materials, and technology assets as if I paid for them myself.
     2. …taking part in cleaning our classroom and avoiding making messes.
     3. …not eating or drinking in the classroom.

By my signing this, I agree to comply, or have my student comply, with these expectations. I know failure to follow any and all of the above rules can, and will, result in the following disciplinary actions: ejection from the classroom, detention, in-school-suspension, suspension, phone calls home, parent-teacher conferences, etc.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_