

DAVID Anderson

COURSE #280 THE BIBLE AS CONTROVERSYFALL 1999

ANCIENT SCRIPTURAL DOCUMENTS HAVE ERUPTED INTO MODERN CONTROVERSIES, RANGING FROM QUESTIONS OVER BIBLICAL FUNDAMENTALISM TO THE CONTROVERSIAL VIEWS ESPOUSED BY THE JESUS SEMINAR. THIS COURSE WILL EXAMINE THE NOTION OF CONTROVERSY BOTH 'WITHIN' & 'ABOUT' THE BIBLE AND ITS TEXTS. QUESTIONS OF CONTROVERSY CONCERNING THE CREATION STORIES, THE MONARCHY OF ISRAEL, THE MOVEMENT OF JESUS THE JEW, THE GOSPEL OF PAUL, THE BOOK OF REVELATION, HISTORICAL & CONTEMPORARY USE & ABUSE OF THE BIBLE WILL BE EXAMINED IN DETAIL

GOAL:

To draw students into the world of biblical history, probing the texts that history has produced, being attentive to the thematic of controversy that permeates almost every portion and passage. Special focus will be given the controversies that have erupted in modern times concerning the formation and interpretation of these Judaeo-Christian documents. The scrolls themselves carry essential freight that bespeaks controversy with regards to people & events past, present & future. Effort will be made to survey various layers of controversy within & about the books of scripture, all-the-while highlighting the truth, beauty and depth of vision & fire they contain

Objectives:

- 1) To expose the biblical world in a way that allows the element of controversy to emerge for the sake of appreciating the complex character & nature of the material both as a whole as well as in its component parts
- 2) To sift a multitude of controversial texts, events, characters, messages, interpretations of and approaches toward scripture which excite and alarm both believers & non-believers
- 3) To foster critical use of the biblical material on the basis of contemporary biblical scholarship, utilizing available historical, scientific, linguistic & theological tools which enable examination and consideration of variant points of view with regards to the textual issues
- 4) To contextualize the controversial character of scripture within the scope of conflict that defines the human condition & which ranges through the bulk of human literature, religious & secular
- 5) To enhance knowledge of and appreciation for the spiritual value of the biblical content so long in its formulation and preservation, treasured yesterday and today by diverse individuals and religious communities dependent upon these texts for birthing and bearing faith forward

Requirements:

- 1) presence and participation in all scheduled classes for this course
- 2) completion of all assignments/projects as given throughout the course
- 3) satisfactory completion of all examinations during the semester

Recommendations:

- 1) notebook for recording information during class presentations and assigned readings
- 2) research and reading of extra materials relevant to the course
- 3) attentive and participative class presence to foster learning attitude and aptitude

Grading:

20% class presence & participation  
20% course paper

40% mid-course examinations  
20% final exam

[Paper: 5 page report on any scriptural book/event/character relevant to the theme of controversy:  
3 page subject summary/1 page reason for selection/1 page contemporary correlation]