Course description
William Blake called the Bible “the great code of art.” Nowhere was this statement truer than in the famous Italian centers of art, Rome, Florence, and Venice. But the biblical culture of Venice was special because of her rich contacts with the East: with Islam, with the Greek culture of the Eastern Mediterranean, and with the Holy Land itself. The great cathedral of Venice, Saint Mark’s, is named for the city’s patron, who wrote the oldest and most venerable of the Christian gospels. The Bible provided the artists of Venice with a rich fund of subjects for painting and sculpture. This course proposes to give students an outline of the contents and structure of the Bible similar to what most people in Venice would have had during the period when its greatest art was produced. The aim is for students to be able to look at a work of Venetian art and “read” not only its biblical subject but also its biblical thinking, especially the subterranean connections between episodes. We will also consider how extra-biblical subjects—e.g., saints’ legends and episodes from the apocrypha—are themselves extensions of biblical reading. Meeting times will be about equally divided between classroom discussion and field trips to sites around Venice. Among the more important of these are Saint Mark’s cathedral, the Doge Palace, the Basilica dei Frari, the Scuola di San Rocco (with its amazing Tintorettos), the Basilica di Santi Giovanni e Paolo, the Basilica della Salute (with Titian’s biblical paintings in the sacristry), and the Accademia gallery, with its great hall containing Veronese’s gigantic and exuberant “Feast in the House of Levi” and Titian’s large but intimate “Pietà,” with its subtle biblical meanings adopted to personal expression. The course’s final class will conclude in this room, in front of these contrasting visions of the meaning of life, seen through the lens of the Bible.

Required readings

Recommended Readings
Grading
The following percentages are approximate weightings for determining final grades:

Class attendance: 20%
Class participation: 20%
Test: 20%
Memorization of six verses from the psalms: 10%
Essay (3000 words): 30%

Course Requirements
All requirements must be fulfilled. If possible, please notify the instructor in advance of an absence. You are expected to do the assigned readings before each class and to come to class with an index card of points for discussion. The memorization exercise may be repeated if you didn’t get a perfect score the first time.

The final paper is due August 3rd. An extension to August 4th may be granted, but only with permission from the instructor prior to the paper due date.

Accessibility
If you have an accessibility issue, please contact Harvard’s Accessibility Services accessibility@dcemail.harvard.edu or 617-998-9640. Accommodation will be made according to the instructions from the Accessibility Services.

Academic Integrity
You are responsible for reviewing the Summer School policies on Student Responsibilities—http://www.summer.harvard.edu/policies/student-responsibilities—and also the Harvard Guide to Using Sources, prepared by the Harvard College Writing Program: http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu. To summarize: You must not present under your name any work that was not done by you. You must give your sources for unusual facts and original thoughts that are not your own. You must not cite others’ work verbatim without quotation marks around the cited passages and proper citation of your source. Any collaborative work you do on an assignment must be approved by the instructor. Also, you must not present work for this course which you have already presented in another course.

The Harvard College Honor Code (required on Harvard College Syllabuses):

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.
Seminars

Week 1
Class 1 (9:30am start):
Introduction: The Bible, The Gospels, Saint Mark and Venice
A Walk to Saint Mark’s Square: the Facade of the Cathedral

Class 2 (9:30am start):
Primitive Times (Adam to Noah)
Saint Mark’s Cathedral: Byzantine Art

Week 2
Class 3:
The Time of Faith (Genesis: Abraham to Joseph)
Accademia Gallery: Introduction. Development of Venetian Painting. The Vivarini, the Bellini, Cima, etc.

Class 4:
The Time of Law (Moses to Samson)
Tintoretto and the Scuola di San Rocco

Week 3
Class 5 (9:30am start):
The Time of the Kingdom(Saul, David, Solomon)
Tintoretto and the Doge’s Palace

Class 6:
The Two Kingdoms(Kings Hezekiah and Ahab. Queen Jezebel. Jehu. The prophets Elijah and Elisha)
Titian, the New Testament, and the Basilica della Salute

Week 4
Class 7 (9:30am start):
Wisdom(Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs)
Memorization exercise (six continuous verses from Psalms)
Alvise Vivarini and Christ: Basilica di Santi Giovanni et Paolo

Class 8:
The Time of the Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel)
Giovanni Bellini and Titian: Basilica dei Frari

Week 5
Class 9:
Jesus and Mary in the Gospels
Titian, “Presentation of the Virgin”: Accademia
Class 10:
The Time of Christian Faith (Acts, Romans, Hebrews)
The Cult of the Virgin: Santa Maria dei Miracoli

Week 6

Class 11 (9:30am start):
The Church at the End of the World (Revelation)
La Chiesa del Santissima Redentore: Art and Redemption

Class 12:
The Bible and Personal Expression: Titian and Veronese in the Accademia

Paper Due August 3.

Schedule of Bible Readings by Chapter for Each Class

1. Genesis 1-4
2. Genesis 5-10
3. Genesis 40-50
4. Exodus 1-10
   Leviticus 7
   Numbers 20-25
   Deuteronomy 31:24-30
   Joshua 1-8
   Judges 2, 4-7
   Ruth (entire book)
5. First Samuel 1-6, 31
   Second Samuel 1-2, 16-18, 24
   First Kings 1, 3, 6, 21-22
6. Second Kings 1-2, 25
   Esther (entire)
7. Job 1-2, 38-42
   Psalms: 1, 14, 23, 60, 104, 148, 150
   Proverbs 7-10, 18, 31
   Ecclesiastes (entire)
   The Song of Solomon (entire)
8. Isaiah 1-7, 66
   Jeremiah 1-3, 37-40, 50-52
   Lamentations (entire)
   Ezekiel 1, 2, 6, 10, 37, 40
   Daniel 1-7
   Hosea 1, 10, 14
   Joel 3
   Amos 5-9
   Jonah (entire)
   Micah 4
   Nahum (entire)
   Habakkuk 3
   Zephaniah 1
   Haggai (opening)
   Zechariah 6, 8, 11, 14
   Malachai 3, 4
9. First Samuel 1-2, 16-18, 24
   Second Samuel 1-2, 16-18, 24
   First Kings 1, 3, 6, 21-22
   Esther (entire)
   Hosea 1, 10, 14
   Joel 3
   Amos 5-9
   Jonah (entire)
   Micah 4
   Nahum (entire)
   Habakkuk 3
   Zephaniah 1
   Haggai (opening)
   Zechariah 6, 8, 11, 14
   Malachai 3, 4
10. Matthew 1-8, 21-23, 25-27
    Mark 1, 12, 14, 15, 16
    Luke 1-4, 21-24
    John 1-3, 10-15, 19, 21
    Acts 1, 2, 7-10
    Romans 1, 4-6, 10
    First Corinthians 13, 15
    Galatians 3, 5
    Ephesians 2
    Philippians 3
    Hebrews 1-2, 8-11
    First John 5
11. Revelation (entire)