
Curriculum for a Secondary Level Course on the Bible

The Background:

Legislation passed in 2008 supported the adoption of state curriculum standards for teaching about the Bible at the high school level. The Department of Education division of curriculum and instruction called together a committee of practitioners and experts to develop this curriculum. The attached curriculum document is the product of that committee.

The committee consisted of the following:

Marilyn Taylor, Memphis City Schools
Steve Prince, Knox County Schools
Todd Wigginton, Metro Nashville Schools
Gloria Moore, Hamilton County Schools
Etta Crittenden, Tennessee Department of Education
Brenda Ables, Tennessee Department of Education
Dr. Kent Richards, Emory University

Input from the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas was also utilized in the course development.

The Master Plan Connection:

This item supports the following SBE *Master Plan* by providing a rigorous, relevant curriculum for all students.

The Recommendation:

The Department recommends adoption of the attached curriculum guidelines as a state approved curriculum for teaching about the Bible at the high school level on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.

TENNESSEE BIBLE CURRICULUM GUIDE
February 2009

Grades 9 - 12

The course may be taught over one or two semesters. A number of concessions must be made and careful planning is needed if the entire Bible is to be taught in a single semester.

Text

Each student may use the biblical translation of his/her choice as a text. In addition, the teacher should make available, through actual publications or handouts, translations that represent the various configurations of books found in the diverse religious traditions.

Course Purpose

The purpose of this course is to enable students to acquire an understanding and appreciation of the Bible's major ideas, historical/geographical contexts, and literary forms. The course will include the study of the Bible in its historical, sociological, and cultural contexts, and its impact on later cultures, societies, and religions.

The success of any assignment depends upon how teachers prepare, present, and anticipate issues that will emerge in the classroom. As with any other humanities, literary, or historical topic the Bible must be understood in terms of its value for the student. Teachers should remember that enthusiasm for the subject contributes to the success of any curriculum.

The curriculum is for secondary education. In all instances, teachers are urged to utilize intellectually creative ways to engage students in the literary, historical, sociological, cultural, and religious qualities of the Bible.

It is important to remember that the student's experience, or in some cases lack of experience with the Bible, may influence their perceptions of the assignments. Be aware that a broad range of religious and nonreligious perspectives among the students and be cognizant of student rights to their personal views.

All lessons should be planned with regard to their inherent academic and intellectual qualities and with attention to helping students develop a greater sense of their civic roles as responsible citizens.

General Objectives

The student will be able to

- A. Describe how the Bible was transmitted, translated, and gradually recognized as authoritative by religious communities from antiquity to the present

1. identify the original languages of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament and their relative dates of authorship;
 2. demonstrate knowledge of early Jewish and Christian communities and the reasons they recorded these writings;
 3. gain familiarity with later translations and audiences for whom they were composed;
 4. analyze primary source information and using the information appropriately;
 5. synthesize information from multiple sources to draw conclusions.
- B. Select and use appropriate study and research skills and tools according to the type of information being gathered or organized, including almanacs, print and digital publications, internet news sources, and information services
- C. Read biblical narratives
1. identify the chief characters;
 2. describe and analyze in those narratives the elements of plot, such as setting, major events, problems, conflicts, and resolutions;
 3. describe and analyze several narrative styles, literary form, and intended impact on the reader.
- D. Read biblical poetry
1. identify the characteristics that distinguish poetic forms from prosaic forms;
 2. describe and analyze the way they invite the reader to share emotions, through the use of imagery, personification, and figures of speech, including simile and metaphor; and the use of sound, such as rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and alliteration.
- E. Demonstrate knowledge of historical, geographical, social and cultural contexts of biblical literature in the ancient world
1. learn and discuss pivotal historical events;
 2. learn and discuss pivotal geographical locations;
 3. compare the religious, social and cultural lives within the ancient Near Eastern/Greco-Roman world
- F. Identify diverse interpretations of biblical texts
1. compare the way people and communities respond differently;
 2. illustrate diverse interpretations of several prosaic and poetic biblical texts.
- G. Illustrate knowledge of ways the Bible has impacted literature, art, music, and thought
1. read several pieces of literature that extensively use biblical allusions;
 2. listen to several pieces of music that rely on the biblical text;

3. view several artistic works (sculpture, oils, watercolors) that use biblical images, characters, or scenes.

Units

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| Unit One | Origin and Development of the Bible |
| Unit Two | Overview of the History, Geography, and Social Groups of the Hebrew Bible |
| Unit Three | Beginnings - Genesis |
| Unit Four | Laws and Stories |
| Unit Five | Conquest and Settlement |
| Unit Six | Kingdom Established |
| Unit Seven | Divided Kingdom |
| Unit Eight | Prophetic Traditions |
| Unit Nine | Psalms and Wisdom |
| Unit Ten | Exile and Restoration |
| Unit Eleven | Overview of the History, Geography, and Social Groups of the New Testament |
| Unit Twelve | Gospels and Jesus I |
| Unit Thirteen | Gospels and Jesus II |
| Unit Fourteen | Letters and Paul |
| Unit Fifteen | Communities and the Book of Revelation |
| Unit Sixteen | Bible's Impact on Art and Music |
| Unit Seventeen | Apocrypha |

Each unit should have the following sections:

1. Thematic Sections
2. Purpose and Objectives
3. Biblical Readings
4. Maps, Timelines, Charts
5. Differentiation
6. Vocabulary
7. Resources

Example Unit

UNIT ONE: THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BIBLE

THEMATIC SECTIONS

1. Bible in America (first amendment)
2. Bible and Bibles (diversity of traditions)
3. Historical overview (setting the stage for later units)
4. Geographical overview (setting the stage for later units)

PURPOSE

To provide a framework for a historical, cultural, and literary understanding of the Bible

Specific Objectives

1. Discuss the reasons for studying the Bible in American public schools
2. See an ancient scroll and codex
3. Read and compare several translations of specific biblical texts
4. Read and discuss a text that shows the issues that a translator faces when going from an original text to a translation
5. Compare the diverse order, grouping, and number of books in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament
6. Understand the similarity and difference between translation and interpretation
7. See a chronological chart of events

BIBLICAL READINGS

Genesis 1.4; 1.1 – 2.1; 1 Samuel 17; Job 1.1 – 2.13; Psalm 1.1 – 6; Matthew 17.19 – 21; Mark 7.24 – 31; Matthew 8.28//Mark 5.1//Luke 8.26

MAPS, TIMELINES, CHARTS

East Mediterranean area maps in various formats and from various historical periods
Chronological timelines that show comparative dates
Chart of the grouping of biblical books according to various religious traditions

DIFFERENTIATION

Draw up a timeline of the history of the English Bible
Find biblical names of US cities in your state
Discuss Lincoln's use of the Bible
Discuss Martin Luther King's use of biblical imagery
Look at the Book of Psalms and see if you can determine the five divisions

VOCABULARY

BC – BCE

AD – CE

Scroll

Codex

Translation

Interpretation

Torah

Tanakh

Distribute a list of geographical names that will be used throughout the course and will appear in future units

RESOURCES

Guidelines for Teaching the Bible in Public Education

First Amendment along with description

Description of present translations

Pictures of scrolls and codices

Hebrew and Greek alphabets

History of English translations