DRAFT v1
Subject to change. Full syllabus available in Canvas week of January 13, 2027.

Introduction to the Bible for Ministry
Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

RELM 338-YA1
Spring 2027

Instructor: Rev. Moses Gordon
Email: msgordon@loyno.edu

Office Hours: By appointment, email to set up a meeting

Important: Please check your Canvas course and/or your Loyola email account for an email from the instructor alerting you the course is open, then reply to that email confirming you are ready to begin the course.

Because this is an online course and the instructor is a part-time faculty member, **the best way to reach your instructor is by email.** Feel free to contact your instructor with questions and suggestions. You may post questions of general concern to the **Question Board** accessed in Canvas on the course homepage. If you have concerns that are best communicated by a **phone call**, please provide your phone number through email and suggest evening or weekend times that you could receive a phone call.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the Bible in light of the best in contemporary biblical scholarship. It focuses on the Bible not as a museum piece but as the living Word of God that reveals, challenges, and comforts and that serves as a crucial resource for ministry.

Key Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- view the Bible as God's Word and as a resource for ministry and spirituality.
- discern in the Bible Judaism's sacred texts.
- gain insights into Christian origins.
- use Catholic and other approaches to read the Bible.
- interpret the Bible from the perspective of the best of contemporary biblical scholarship, including from contemporary cultural and contextual perspectives.
- articulate the ways in which this course helps you achieve Lay Ecclesial Ministry competencies, especially 1.1, 1.4, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1.

Required Course Materials

Please order the required text as soon as possible from the bookstore of your choice.

Carmody, Timothy R. *Reading the Bible*: *A Study Guide*. Paulist Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8091-4189-2. **Note:** This book is available to read at the Internet Archive instead of purchasing a copy.

The Catholic Study Bible (CSB), 3rd edition, edited by Donald Senior, et al., Oxford UP, 2016. ISBN 0-19-02672-32

Additional readings and videos available in Canvas and from the Library (L).

What You Should Bring to This Course

Please come to our coursework in Ministry and Theology (MTH) with the habits of mind and spirit that will help you do these things:

- Be willing to reflect deeply on your ministry, your role in it, and how God may be calling you to grow in that ministry and your life.
- Be able to study and grow within our MTH intentional learning community, participating in its ongoing disciplined conversations.
- Organize your time so that you can be present online both early and often, surveying each week's work and completing tasks throughout the week instead of at the end (if everyone writes Blackboard posts on the last day, then there's no "conversation" at all, let alone "disciplined conversation").
- Share your authentic ideas, insights, and questions to all our interactions.
- Arrive online prepared, ready to listen (or read!) carefully, and able to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

Evaluation and Course Requirements

Sequence of Topics/Calendar of Assignments

Each new week will **begin on Tuesday and end on Monday.** For Week 1, you must complete your personal introduction by Sunday, 1/24, by 11:59pm CT, or risk being administratively dropped from the course.

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1: January 19–25	Introductions 1 1/18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday	• Personal Introduction • Assigned readings/media • Discussion Questions • Initial Understanding Due

Week 2: January 26–February 1	Introductions 2	• Assigned readings/media • Discussion Questions
Week 3: February 2–8	Pentateuch and History	• Assigned readings/media • Discussion Questions • Optional synchronous class meeting • Prayer Journal 1 Due
Week 4: February 9–15	Mardi Gras Holiday	
Week 5: February 16–22	Wisdom	• Assigned readings/media • Discussion Questions • Select article for Old Testament Essay
Week 6: February 23–March 1	Prophets	• Assigned readings/media • Discussion Question • Old Testament Paper Due • Optional synchronous class meeting
Week 7: March 2–8	Gospels	• Assigned readings/media • Discussion Questions • Prayer Journal 2 Due • Final Exam Review available
Week 8: March 9–15	Paul	• Assigned readings/media • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Select article for New Testament Essay
Week 9: March 16–21	General Letters and Revelation	• Optional video exam review (tentative date 3/15 or 3/16) • New Testament Essay Due • Complete final exam March 18

Mid-Term Grades: Due for posting TBA
Final Exam: 6–9 pm Central Time, Thursday, March 13
Final Grades: Due for posting by 11:59 pm on March 23

Week 1 Assignments

- Complete Initial Understanding
- Complete Personal Introduction by 11:59pm CT on 1/19 to avoid being administratively dropped from the course)
- Carmody, *Reading the Bible*, Preface and chapters 1-2
- Canon Handout (in Canvas)
- Spiritual Formation pages 1-6 and pray text for Week 1 (in Canvas)
- Vatican II, *Dei verbum*

- *Catholic Study Bible* (CSB) Reading Guide:
    - "Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible" (RG xv)
    - "Key to References" (RG xvii)
    - "General Introduction" (RG 3-9)
    - "The Bible Texts and Their Background" (RG 11-13)
    - "The Bible in Catholic Life" (RG 19-32)
    - "Biblical History and Archaeology" (RG 33-34)
    - "Biblical Translation and Pastoral Interpretation" (RG 88-99)
- Complete Discussion Questions

Assessment

Each student's final grade will include the following parts:

		Percentage of Grade
1	Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings	45%
2	Initial Understanding	5%
3	Journals (Spiritual Formation / Current Events and Ministry)	10%
4	Paper 1 (Old Testament)	10%
5	Paper 2 (New Testament)	10%
6	Final Exam (open book; display mastery of objective components of course material	20%

1) Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings (50%)

As in all RELM courses, the strength of our program is the intentional learning community and its ongoing invitation to disciplined conversation. Through the online courses you will be part of an intentional learning community that will carry on extended and disciplined conversation by way of the internet.

A discussion is an "asynchronous" or time-independent application. This means that generally you will have no set times or schedules when you must be in class on any particular day. It is up to you to determine when to log in and post during the course of a week, within the parameters of the given weekly deadlines. You are expected to log in to this class several times a week to read the comments of your instructor and fellow students and to post your required comments. Except for the last week, each weekly session runs from 12:01 a.m. US Central Monday until 11:59 p.m. Central the following Sunday. The final week ends at 11:59 p.m. Central on March 13. Late posts are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Please consult with your professor about any foreseen or unforeseen absence from the course.

Each week several Discussion Leaders will help initiate the flow of the conversation. The task of the Discussion Leader is simply to post first. S/he will

essentially begin the conversation around the given question(s) for the week by posting her response to the session question; everyone else assigned to that group will respond on that same thread. In at least one of your responses, you will also offer your own reflections on the question (perhaps in addition to your response to the discussion question). Each week you will be able to earn four points for each question, for your weekly participation; this includes your response to the assigned question(s), as well as the thoughtful replies you are asked to make to your colleagues' posts.

All students are expected to contribute at least three substantive responses for each question. Lead students post their initial reflections by Wednesday; everyone who is not a lead student should post at least once by Friday.

Posting

Contributions to Discussions should be the fruit of, and therefore demonstrate, a critical engagement with the course assignments. To achieve this, you are asked to note comments, questions, observations, reflections, insights that surface as the natural result of thoughtful reading. Your weekly postings should be substantive and respect the word limit posted for each week's questions. A substantive response will include both your own reflections on the question and some interaction with course materials you're your fellow students' reflections.

Please include references to the course materials to indicate this interaction; include a parenthetical reference with at least the name of the material or the author and, if possible a page number (e.g., Groome 15; Hahnenberg video). Please also alert your readers when you refer to other outside sources, such as other books or websites.

Your replies to your colleagues should also be substantive: "I agree" or "I like what you posted" or something similar is not a substantive comment. Please articulate what about their posting is compelling to you, the connections you make with the assigned material for the week, and why you consider their comment relevant, challenging, important, etc. Ideally, each discussion thread will become a conversation. (If you have a comment that you would like to make to a colleague that is not related to the discussion, you may either post it in the "Student Lounge" Discussion (accessible from the course homepage) or send an email to the student via the People section of the course.)

Asking Questions

One of the most effective tools of a good online discussion is the question. Communication in the online medium can be easily misinterpreted. It can be challenging to effectively convey tone and nuance in an online discussion. This can sometimes lead to misunderstanding, conflict and frustration in the learning group.

But this does not have to be the case! When in doubt about the meaning of a posting, please ask questions before making assumptions or jumping to conclusions. Even if the meaning seems straightforward, it is good practice to ask follow-up questions and/or questions for clarification. Questions will also help to discussions deepening our conversations and reflections.

In sum, what should your Discussion posts look like?

- Your posts should always be substantive, meaning focused, succinct, and worth reading. Keep in mind that we all have to read these posts!
- Your posts should bring your own experience into conversation with our course materials and with what the other members of the learning community are saying, and they should always directly address the question at hand.
- Your responses should also be critical, meaning that the conversation should also generate questions, requests for clarification, and other methods of deepening the discussion. As you can see, remarks like "I loved your post" or "I agree wholeheartedly" are NOT substantive posts!
- In addition to being substantive, our online conversations should also be authentic—that is, anything that you say online should be something that you would say if we were all sitting around a table in a physical room.

2) Initial Understanding (5%)

The purpose of this exercise is for you to articulate your initial thoughts about some of the things we'll study in this course. You'll return to these reflections at the end of the course to see how you've grown over these several weeks. Full details are in the final syllabus posted in Canvas.

3) Journals (10%)

Spiritual Formation Journals

As part of the spiritual formation component of this program, the graces of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola have been woven through this course. In weeks 3 and 6, you will submit in Canvas a 300+-word journal entry in light of your prayer and other material in the spiritual formation prompts. Late submissions are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Full details are in the final syllabus posted in Canvas.

Current Events and Ministry Journals

For this assignment, you will be asked to read articles from one of three periodicals: *America Magazine: The Jesuit Review*, *First Things: Journal of Religion and Public Life*, or *Commonweal: A Review of Religion, Politics and Culture*. In Weeks 3 and 6,

you will be required to read and write about at least one article of at least 2 pages or 700 words in length. Your journal entry should be 400+ words in length. Late submissions are subject to a reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Full details are in the final syllabus posted in Canvas.

4) Paper 1 on the Old Testament (10%)

Due in Week 5, you will write a 4-7 page essay in which you present what you've learned about an Old Testament book, passage, or theme, primarily from a scholarly article but also from assigned course material. The essay must be at least 4 pages in length. Full details are in the final syllabus posted in Canvas.

5) Paper 2 on the New Testament (10%)

Due in Week 9, the purpose of this 4-7 page essay is for you to present what you've learned about an New Testament book, passage, or theme, primarily from a scholarly article but also from assigned course material. The essay must be at least 4 pages in length, which does not include your name, the paper title, or Works Cited page. Full details are in the final syllabus posted in Canvas.

6) Final Exam (20%)

The purpose of the open-book final exam is for you to synthesize what you've learned in this class and articulate implications for you, the Church and/or the world. You will also be asked to reflect on your experience of prayer on the final exam. You will receive precise instructions in Week 6.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	**B-**	80-82.9	**D+**	67-69.9
A-	90-92.9	**C+**	77-79.9	**D**	63-66.9
B+	87-89.9	**C**	73-76.9	**F**	0-62.99
B	83-86.9	**C-**	70-72.9		

Course Policies

Incomplete Grade Policy

Students are subject to the university policy regarding incomplete grades with the following additions to university policy. Grades of Incomplete are given at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources » Policies, Forms, & Services section of their Canvas course. Students should first inquire of their instructor whether or not they are eligible for an

incomplete; this must occur with sufficient time to complete the process explained here. To be eligible, students may not have received an Incomplete in the previous semester, must have completed at least 75% of the course work to date, and must have at least a C or above in the course. After the instructor makes an initial assessment of eligibility, including checking with the LIM Office to ensure there was no Incomplete in the previous semester and finds the student eligible, by the due date of the course's final assignment, a student must complete and obtain all signatures for LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources section of their Canvas course and submit it to their instructor, who will forward a copy to the LIM Director. LIM graduate students may not receive Incompletes in LIM courses in consecutive semesters.

Attendance & Participation

Students are subject to the university policy regarding attendance found online in the *Bulletin*. Students in online courses communicate their presence by active participation in weekly discussions. Each course's instructor sets requirements for how many times students must post on the Discussion Board in Canvas. Failing to post during the first week of class may result in removal from the course. If you foresee that you will be unable to post in a given week, please contact the instructor ahead of time. Extensions for posting are given at the instructor's discretion and for a valid reason may be granted if arranged ahead of time. In extraordinary circumstances, students may arrange with their instructor to post up to two weeks after a deadline, though this may entail a grade reduction. Posts and other assignments submitted more than two weeks late may be subject to a grade of zero. If students do not post in a given week, they are considered absent. Absence for more than one week without contacting the instructor may result in removal from and failure of the course.

Tentatively, there will be two-three **optional video conferences** during the course. To participate, students will need access to a computer with a web camera and microphone, and earphones or earbuds. More information will be included in the Canvas course.

University Policies

Please read Part 2 of the syllabus (located on LORA and in Canvas) for university policies on plagiarism, AI, accessible education, and more.