

ENGL 4001 Senior Honors Seminar, Fall 2016
The History of the Bible as a Book, as an Artifact
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This course will study the history of the production of the Bible as a book, as an artifact, from the ancient past to the present. In many respects, this course will study the history of the book as a product in the Western tradition, focusing upon the fascinating (and often extremely controversial) evolution of the Bible as a book.

The course material will be organized into four units: From Clay Tablets (6th century BCE) to the Codex (1st century CE), The Vulgate (4th century) to the Guttenberg Bible (15th century), Wycliffe (14th century) to King James (17th century), and The English Bible in America to the Contemporary Bible Publication Industry (17th century to the present). We will consider three primary threads within each unit: the chronological development of the Bible as a book, the technical development of the book as a product, and political, translation, and religious controversies within each unit that contributed to the form and contents of the Bible as a book.

A few examples of the technical aspects include consideration of how wax tablets were used and their constraints, the development and production of papyrus as an early form of paper, the rise and use of parchment (animal skin), the production of ink, the skills of scribes as they relate to page design, line layout, illuminating the page, the transition from scrolls to codex, binding the books, and the bookseller trade. A few of the controversies to be considered involve the development of the Bible from early texts initially written in Hebrew (the *Tanach* or Jewish Bible) to today's Bible translated into over 500 languages (full Bible) or over 2000 (for portions of the Bible). For example, there was a contentious quarrel between early Christian and Jewish writers over the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, a text now referred to as the Septuagint (which was the "Bible" of the earliest Christians), as both groups accused the other of altering passages to their religious advantage. Then, for reasons similar to why Hebrew texts were translated into Greek, Christians translated the Greek Bibles into Latin and one of these translations, the Vulgate (translated primarily by Jerome, a trained rhetorician), served as Western Christianity's Bible for well over a 1000 years, and when Wycliffe and then Tyndale (14th - 15th centuries) translated the Bible from Latin into the English vernacular so that the common person would have access to these culturally significant texts, political and religious authorities responded by condemning such translations, arresting those responsible, and burning them at the stake. As will be seen, controversies concerning translations of the Bible continue today.

Texts to be purchased:

Daniel, David. *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*. New Haven: Yale, 2003. ISBN 978-0300099300
De Hamel, Christopher. *The Book. A History of the Bible*, Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 2001.

ISBN 0714837741

_____. *Medieval Craftsmen: Scribes and Illuminators*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997 [1992].

ISBN 0802077072

Other materials will be made available.

Assignments will include:

- Four 3 pg summary and response essays (one for each section outlined above).
- An oral presentation on a topic from one of the sections outlined above.
- A substantial researched essay or researched creative project (at least 15 pages), relevant to the course material, that will include an annotated bibliography of at least 15 sources.
- An oral presentation on the researched essay or creative project.