

M. Douglas Nelson, Northwest College



M. Douglas Nelson is Professor of Anthropology, History, Ancient Languages, and Literatures, at Northwest College, in Powell, Wyoming, where he has been since 1983. Prior to that, he was an Instructor in Anthropology and Greek, at Mohave Community College, in Kingman, Arizona. He received his PhD in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, at UCLA.

There are some advantages to teaching in very remote places like rural Wyoming. One is that the people are willing to take on a new opportunity whenever it presents itself — such as looking into the course schedule of a small-town community college catalog and discovering that Biblical Greek, Biblical Hebrew, and Biblical Archaeology are offered on a regular basis. I have found that people in the so-called "remote areas distant from the centers of learning" make good students and have skills equal to anyone I have taught in other contexts.

Another advantage to teaching in the remote areas is that these same rural people have been waiting a long time for such courses to be available. In over fifteen years, these classes have never failed to fill with enthusiastic students. For example, in fall semester 2000 we had twenty-four students in Biblical Hebrew! Not all of them survived, of course, but it was a very good beginning and eleven students completed two semesters.

The Biblical Archaeology course generally has a larger attendance than the languages, though not much larger. Archaeology is usually taught in the day-time schedule and thus draws a more traditional-aged group of students while the Greek and Hebrew classes are taught in the evenings to accommodate commuters from other nearby small towns. Archaeology also has the option of a summer field school experience in Israel or learning some excavation techniques in summer digs in Wyoming in our anthropology program.

Biblical Greek Courses

In 1984–1985, first and second year Greek were added to the language department curriculum and housed in the Humanities Division. Classical Greek was the period of choice since it was not clear how Biblical Greek would be accepted by the college and community. Part of the mission of the college is, of course, to serve the needs and interests of the community. As it turned out, the interest was very strong in Biblical languages, and as a consequence, Classical Greek was replaced by a two-year sequence in Biblical Greek:

Greek 1015, 1025 Elementary Biblical Greek, I and II (4 credits each)

I've used various textbooks and have had about the same success rate with each:

- Machen, J. Gresham, *New Testament Greek for Beginners*. Macmillan, 1923.
- Adam, A.K.M., *A Grammar for New Testament Greek*. Abingdon, 1999.
- Summers, Ray and T. Sawyer, *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Broadman and Holman, 1995.
- Aland, Black, Martini, et.al., *The Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies, current edition.

Greek 2035 Intermediate Biblical Greek (4 credits) for those who need four more credits to complete a college language requirement, or Greek 2150 (1 credit) for those who want to keep building reading skills.

- Aland, Black, Martini, et.al., *The Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, current edition.
- Black, David, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*. Baker, 1995.

Biblical Greek Enrollments:

Year	Class	Students
1984–1985	Classical Greek	9 students

1985–1986	Elementary Biblical Greek	10 students
Fall 1986	Advanced	5 students
Fall 1987	Advanced	3 students
1991–1992	Elementary	6 students
Fall 1992	Advanced	6 students
1994–1995	Elementary	16 students
Fall 1995	Advanced	1 student
1998–1999	Elementary	12 students
Fall 1999	Advanced	4 students
2001–2002	Elementary	19 students

Biblical Hebrew Courses

The Hebrew and Greek classes meet once a week on Tuesday evenings for three hours and fifteen minutes (!). Thus, I must use textbooks that are very user-friendly and that have workbooks and cassettes. I make my own worksheets and cassettes if they are not available with the textbooks. I have found Mansoor's books quite useful so long as there are other available texts for consultation by students, such as C. Leong Seow's grammar.

Hebrew 1010, 1020 First Year Hebrew I, First Year Hebrew II (4 credits each)

- Mansoor, Menahem, *Biblical Hebrew, Step by Step*, vol 1, with cassette and key. Baker, 1980.
- Mansoor, Menahem, *Biblical Hebrew, Step by Step*, vol 2, with cassette and key, chapters 1–6. Baker, 1984.
- Seow, C. Leong, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Abingdon, revised edition, 1995.

Hebrew 2030 (4 credits)

This is a four-credit course for those who are using Hebrew for their twelve-credit foreign language requirement for the BA degree when they transfer. We read Biblical texts from the Mansoor volume which has helpful notes and also from the BHS so students can get some experience with the critical apparatus and masora.

- Mansoor, Menahem, *Biblical Hebrew, Step by Step*, vol. 2, with cassette and key,

chapters 7–24. Baker, 1984.

- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*

Hebrew 2150 Selected Readings in Hebrew (1 credit)

This is a similar course to Hebrew 2030 but for one credit only. It is designed for those students who wish to continue reading Hebrew as it fits their needs.

- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*.
- Greenspahn, Frederick, *An Introduction to Aramaic*, Scholars Press, 1999. Occasionally I have the students read Ezra or Daniel for experience in both Hebrew and Aramaic.
- Wurthwein, Ernst, *The Text of the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, 1979.

Biblical Hebrew Enrollments:

Year	Class	Students
1986–1987	Elementary Biblical Hebrew	12 students
Fall 1987	Advanced	7 students
Fall 1988	Advanced	6 students
1989–1990	Elementary	13 students
Fall 1990	Advanced	12 students
1992–1993	Elementary	13 students
Fall 1993	Advanced	8 students
1996–1997	Elementary	27 students
Fall 1997	Advanced	5 students
2000-2001	Elementary	24 students
Fall 2001	Advanced	4 students

Biblical Archaeology Courses

Anthropology 2350, Biblical Archaeology

This is a general survey of the archaeology of Palestine from the stone ages to Islamic periods. I call the course "Biblical Archaeology" for advertising purposes. This seems to work well, though I sometimes get complaints when I spend too much time on the stone ages and not enough on Biblical periods ("false advertising"). Walter Rast's book is perfect for this course. In the spring of 2002, I am going to experiment with teaching the textbook backwards, starting with the Islamic phases and backing up into the stone ages, as if one were digging a site. This approach may also avert the criticism of not enough time on the Biblical periods.

- Rast, Walter, *Through the Ages in Palestinian Archaeology*. Trinity, 1992.
- Currid, John, *Doing Archaeology in the Land of the Bible*. Baker, 1999.

Additional reading from:

- Mazar, Amihai, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*. Doubleday, 1992.
- McRay, John, *Archaeology of the New Testament*. Baker, 1991.
- Stern, Ephraim, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, II. Doubleday, 2001.

Anthropology 2310, Archaeology Field Methods: Israel

- Hester, Thomas, et. al., *Field Methods in Archaeology*. Mayfield, 1997.

In the summer of 1990, while taking a course at the Rothberg School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus campus, I met Jodi Magness who had just completed a season of excavating at Caesarea. She encouraged me to bring students for excavation experience in Israel. I had worked on a few digs myself, in Israel and in the United States, but had not yet taken students to Israel. With help from Professor Magness I brought five students for the 1995 excavations at Masada in the Roman camps and on the siege ramp (see my forthcoming report on the ramp excavation in the online journal from Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, Wyoming: <http://www.bibleinterp.com/>).

At Masada I met Haim Goldfus of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev Desert, and Benny Arubas of the Israel Antiquities Authority. With their help and kindness to my students, we have

excavated at Halutza (1997 and 1998) and at Beth She'an (1999). We are now planning a 2002 field season.

Biblical Archaeology Enrollments:

Year	Class	Students
Spring 1987	Biblical Archaeology	33 students
Spring 1989	Biblical Archaeology	26 students
Fall 1990	Biblical Archaeology	25 students
Summer 1992		

Archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls

14 students

Fall 1993	Biblical Archaeology	21 students
Spring 1995	Biblical Archaeology	24 students
Spring 1997	Biblical Archaeology	20 students
Spring 1999	Biblical Archaeology	27 students
Spring 2001	Biblical Archaeology	15 students

Religious Studies Specialization

A Religious Studies Specialization was approved in the spring of 2001 by the Northwest College Curriculum Committee and entered the class schedule in the fall of 2001. No new courses have been introduced since the college is not in an expansionist mode just now, but hopefully some expansion of the curriculum will take place in time. Below is the description of the Religious Studies Specialization ("Specialization" is our word for "major"). I welcome any comments or suggestions from readers.

Associate of Arts with Specialization in Religious Studies

Religious Studies is the interdisciplinary study of the subject of religion. Courses are available from Anthropology, English, Philosophy, Humanities, Ancient languages, and History. The purpose of religious studies is intellectual and is not intended to teach any particular religious faith. It is the study of religion from comparative, cultural, and historical perspectives.

Religious Studies includes three tracks. Students may choose to focus on Anthropological and

Linguistic studies, or Humanities and Philosophical studies, or Historical approaches.

General Education Requirements

Students should refer to the Graduation Requirements regarding general education requirements. Your advisor may have suggestions about courses that would be particularly useful for you.

For the 2001–2002 catalog these total 36–39 credits.

Required Core Courses

Three courses (9 credits)

Number and Title	Credits
ANTH 2350, Biblical Archaeology or ENGL 2170, Bible as Literature	3
PHIL 2311, Philosophy of Religion or ENGL 2280, Introduction to Mythology	3

(Courses not chosen above may be used as electives below. The student must complete a capstone experience of 1–3 credits. We recommend Social Sciences [SOSC 2395] or Humanities [HUMN 2440] 1–3.)

Core Electives Required for the Specialization

Students must complete four courses (12–16 credits) from the following list of approved of approved courses, at least one from each track.

Track I — Anthropological and Linguistic Courses

Number and Title	Credits
ANTH 2200, World Ethnography (topics vary by semester)	3
ANTH 2310, Archaeological Field Methods: Israel	6
ANTH 2350, Biblical Archaeology	3
GREEK 1015, Elementary Biblical Greek I	4
GREEK 1025, Elementary Biblical Greek II	4
GREEK 2035, Intermediate Biblical Greek	4
GREEK 2150, Selected Readings in Biblical Greek	1
HEBREW 1010, First Year Hebrew I	4
HEBREW 1020, First Year Hebrew II	4
HEBREW 2030, Second Year Hebrew	4
HEBREW 2150, Selected Readings in Hebrew	1

Track II — Humanities and Philosophical Approaches

Number and Title	Credits
ENGL 2170, Bible as Literature	3
ENGL 2280, Introduction to Mythology	3
ENGL 2400/HUMN 2030, Introduction to Folklore	3
ENGL 2410, Literary Genres	3
HUMN 2440, Dialogues in the Humanities	3
PHIL 1000, Introduction to Philosophy	3
PHIL 2200, Social and Political Philosophy	3
PHIL 2311, Philosophy of Religion	3

Track III — Historical Approaches

Number and Title	Credits
HIST 1110, Western Civilization I	3
HIST 1120, Western Civilization II	3
HIST 2120, Ancient Greece	3
HIST 2130, Ancient Rome	3
HIST 2140, Ancient Near East	3
General Electives	0-9
Minimum credits for the degree	64

The Reasons Students are Enrolled in Biblical Languages and Biblical Archaeology

1. Students completing language requirements for the University of Wyoming or other BA and BS transfer programs. Students must complete twelve credits in one language for the BA or eight credits in one language for the BS.

2. Students taking language courses to meet humanities and/or multicultural general education requirements.
3. Students taking language courses in Track I of the Religious Studies Specialization.
4. Nontraditional students taking languages for personal reasons apart from degree seeking. These students have been the largest and most stable component in enrollments.
5. Students planning to attend seminary or transfer to a Bible-related college.

Types of Students Enrolled in Biblical Languages and Biblical Archaeology

We have had a range of students take Greek and/or Hebrew over the years, including, welders, ministers, ranchers (cattle and sheep), outfitters (hunting and fishing guides), military personnel, senior citizens and retirees, business people, housewives and mothers, engineers, geologists, a few high school students, artists, and traditional degree-seeking students.

A Personal and Illustrative Story

Some years ago I was often seen in a classroom with one student. Little did I know this was stirring up some controversy in another department over the Dean of Instruction, a humanities-oriented scholar, approving an exotic course, Biblical Greek, with only one student in it. That particular semester I was teaching five classes which is our usual load and had 154 students. Clearly I was doing my duty for the college. That semester one of my courses was Biblical Greek with an enrollment of sixteen. Who, then, was that one student seen on a daily basis with me in a classroom? He was an older retired man crippled with arthritis and able to see the Greek text only while holding a large lens. He was not able to attend the Greek course under normal arrangements so I repeated the course one-on-one for him. It was a blessing for both of us. He was a wonderful person with a sharp mind and great passion for learning Greek. We had a great semester.

I suppose there will always be some criticism in the community college of the so-called "exotic humanities curriculum," but the answer, of course, lies in the enrollments. So far, in the sixteen years we have had Greek and Hebrew in the curriculum, the courses have never failed to fill. As I said earlier, I am working in an area of this country where there is a great desire for this kind of learning and hopefully the enrollments in Biblical languages and Biblical archaeology, will continue to be strong.

A Student Testimonial

"What's a forty-six-year-old homemaker, mother of seven children, resident of rural Wyoming, doing in Hebrew and Greek classes? Having the time of her life! I have waited many years for my children to be old enough to enable me to take these classes. My friends gasp when they hear of it and ask why on earth I would want to do such a thing. I just know that it has been a burning desire for as long as I can remember. I love the Scriptures and have always wanted to be able to read them in the original languages. I find there are many benefits to taking these classes. I believe my overall memory has improved in every way. I have taught religion classes in my church for twenty years and know that others will also be able to benefit in a small secondhand way from my new-found knowledge. Excitement over learning is contagious, and my children are showing a lot of interest in learning another language. We have a lot of fun sharing the little we know with each other. But, most of all, the best reason of all, is that it tastes so delicious to me! I love learning it and I will go to my grave thankful that it was taught, of all places, in a small community college in Wyoming."