

McMaster Divinity College

OT/NT 2XB3: Biblical Interpretation
and Contemporary Ministry

Cynthia Long Westfall, M.A., M.Div, Ph.D.
Phone: Ext. 23605
Email: westfal@mcmaster.ca

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Hybrid Course Online and Module
Thursday, February 20, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
Friday, February 21, 9 a.m.—12 noon

I. Course Description

A study of the principles of interpretation and application of the Bible, culminating in a project in the student's area of specialization that will make a crucial contribution to their portfolio. Attention is given to students developing a clearly defined hermeneutical framework that is biblically and theologically grounded, spiritually sensitive, critically aware and practically relevant.

The course includes online lectures available through Avenue and two days in which we meet as a class (Feb 20-21). Further instructions on the online access to the course will be sent to each student.



II. Course Objectives— Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments the following goals are set for the student:

A. Knowing—

1. Know sound guidelines for reading and interpreting Scripture
2. Understand common fallacies of interpretation
3. Know the types of literature of the Bible, and how they affect interpretation
4. Know the variety of methods by which the Bible has historically been and is currently being interpreted
5. Know various factors that provide the foundation of reading, utilizing and applying the Bible to the Christian life and to the student's area of specialization

B. Being —

6. Be a person who is habitually challenged and changed by the reading and study of the Bible
7. Be spiritually formed by and through the process of interpretation
8. Become an informed and responsible interpreter of the Bible
9. Be a critical thinker in the process of the constant evaluation of interpretation
10. Become a person who values Scripture deeply and is prepared to speak Scripture and apply it particularly in the area of the student's specialization

C. Doing—

11. Make specific applications of the Bible to your ministry and/or spiritual formation
12. Listen and read critically→Identify fallacies of interpretation
13. Each student will research and produce a written assignment
14. Each student will produce a project for their portfolio

III. Course Requirements

A. Class Participation (25%):

1. Each student will view the course lectures online and submit a report stating the percentage of lectures viewed (10%)
2. Each student will participate in online discussions at least once a week by posting on discussion threads in the course website. (10 %)
3. Participation during the two days in which the course meets (5%)

B. Reading (15%)

There will be selected readings in the Bible, and readings that best reflect a student's specialization

1. Selected Old and New Testament texts New Testament completed by **April 9**.

Old Testament

Narrative: Genesis

Narrative + Law: Exodus

Poetry:

Lament: Psalms 22, 136

Thanksgiving: Psalms 116

Royal: Psalms 93, 110

Salvation History: Psalms 98

Praise: Psalms 89, 132

Prophecy: Isaiah, Jonah, Hosea

Prophecy+narrative+apocalyptic: Daniel

New Testament

Narrative: Luke-Acts

Epistles

Group: Romans, Galatians, Philippians

Personal: Philemon, 2 Timothy

Homiletic: Hebrews, James

Apocalyptic+Epistle+Prophecy: Revelation

2. For the course texts, there are three tracks to choose from for the course reading that best correspond to specific areas of specialization:
 - a. Christian Worldview: The texts reflect an general introduction to Biblical interpretation and guidelines for responsible reading, interpretation and application of Scripture
 - (1) Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003 (288 pp.)
 - (2) Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically* (416 pp.)
Alternative: Evans, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* (333 pp.)
 - (3) Brauch, *Abusing Scripture* (294 pp.)
 - b. Pastoral Studies: The texts reflect the traditional evangelical approach to exegesis, the theoretical foundations of interpretation, and the skills necessary for preparation for a sermon or a Bible Study
 - (1) Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (563)

- (2) Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition* (180)
- (3) Brauch, *Abusing Scripture* (294 pp.)

- c. Biblical Studies: The texts reflect the multi-faceted discipline of exegesis of the Bible
 - (1) Baker & Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (512 pp.)
 - (2) Porter (ed.) *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (638 pp.)

- 3. By the last day of classes (**April 9**), each student will submit a reading report by e-mail for the Bible reading, and the texts in the selected track, stating a percentage of the reading completed. Do your own math on the percentage.

C. Written Assignments

There will be two assignments for each student. The first is a paper that reflects the area of specialization and the second is a project that is a suitable contribution to the student's portfolio.

- 1. Written assignment (30%):

- a. Christian Worldview: Scripture Twisting Journal

- (1) Each student is required to keep a journal of one entry a week (10 total), where they identify a significant abuse of biblical interpretation and/or application that they have observed—some cases can be from past experience, but the students should also be particularly alert to “Scripture twisting” that they encounter during the course. Each student submit their first entry by e-mail or DropBox by
- (2) Remember the priority is biblical interpretation, meaning that each entry should focus on a (mis)interpretation of a particular Bible verse or passage. Avoid addressing theological issues. Do not include comics that are intended to be puns or wordplay (ie. Eve is tempted by an Apple computer).
- (3) The contexts where you observe biblical interpretation can range from children, friends and family to the pew, the pulpit, and scholarly journals as well as popular media. You are welcome to include clippings or illustrations. You may also interact with Jacobs, but limit it and other sources to 1 entry (don't draw from the same source more than once).
- (4) Format: (a) identify the use of Scripture; (b) describe the situation/conversation where you state how the Scripture is interpreted and/or misapplied; (c) explain what is wrong with the use of Scripture; (d) explain a better approach to understanding the passage, researching and footnoting your sources (see Style Guide) utilizing a minimum of 3 commentaries—attempt to look at broad number of commentaries of the best quality to become acquainted with available resources. Include a bibliography (see Style Guide) of all the sources that you have used at the end of the journal.
- (5) Completed journals are due on **April 9**, submitted by e-mail or in the course dropbox. Late journals lose 2% every day. No journals will be accepted after

April 17.

- b. Pastoral Studies: Exegetical Paper
- (1) Each student will write an exegetical paper which is the traditional seminary assignment for the preparation of a sermon but is also useful for teaching. **It will be due March 1, submitted by e-mail or in the course dropbox.** Late papers lose 2% each day.
 - (2) Length & style: It should be no more than 5000 words (about 15 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, For all matters of style and form, see the MDC Style Guide. There should be a minimum of 15 sources used in the footnotes and bibliography. For all other matters, follow the guidelines in the “Steps to Exegesis.”
 - (3) Approach: Choose a text from the Old Testament or the New Testament that forms a cohesive unit (not less than 10, up to 15 verses). Instructions for the exegetical procedure (Steps to Exegesis) will be placed in the class DropBox and discussed during the course, but briefly, the steps involve a broad overview of the text within its book, a study of the socio-cultural and historical context, and analysis of the various features of the text, the identification of interpretive problems, a summary of your findings and an application. Complete your own preliminary research/study of the text in terms of its argument and big idea before you interact with secondary sources. Carefully assess the options when there is a diversity of viewpoints and state your position on those controversial texts.
 - (4) See attachment for criteria for grading
- c. Biblical Studies: Research Paper
- (1) Apply an exegetical methodology to a text in the OT or NT. **It will be due March 1, submitted by e-mail or in the course dropbox.** Late papers lose 2% each day.
 - (2) Length & style: It should be no more than 5000 words (about 15 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, For all matters of style and form, see the Mac Style Guide. There should be a minimum of 15 sources used in the footnotes and bibliography.
3. Portfolio Project (30%)
- a. Utilize the course texts, lectures and the written assignment in your area of specialization to produce a project that you will include in your portfolio: a creative application, the design of a worship service, liturgy, or a sermon, teaching, applied spiritual formation, or the research of a relevant topic or a project appropriate for your ministry in other ways selected in consultation with your professor (on paper or by e-mail). **The project will be due April 9.**
 - b. Length & style: if written, the project should be no more than 1,500 words (about 6 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, see the MDC Style Guide.

- c. Approach: Identity and profile your target audience. The approach to your projects will largely be determined by what application you choose. Creativity is encouraged. Marking will be done by both discussion groups and the professor based on message/content, medium, appropriateness for the target groups, effort.

F. Grading Summary

1.	Participation	25%
1.	Reading	15%
2.	Written Assignment	30%
3.	Project	30%

All assignments must be completed by the last day of the term.

IV. Textbooks and Materials

A. Required

Christian Worldview

1. Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
2. Jacobs, A. J. *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007.
Or
Evans, Rachel Held. *A Year of Biblical Womanhood: How a Liberated Woman Found Herself Sitting on Her Roof, Covering Her Head, and Calling Her Husband "Master."* Thomas Nelson, 2012.
3. Brauch, Manfred. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

Pastoral Studies

1. Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, 2004.
2. Liefeld, Walter. *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.
3. Brauch, Manfred. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

Biblical Studies

1. Porter, Stanley E. (ed.). *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*. Boston/Leiden: Brill, 1997.
2. Baker, David W. & Bill T. Arnold, *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999.

B. Recommended

1. The *IVP Bible Dictionary Series* (4 vols.)
2. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
3. Craig Keener. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.

C. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 245, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

D. Additional Materials

1. Handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available during class and/or online.
2. Procedures and guidelines for assignments will be given in class and/or online on the class web site.

V. Classroom Behavior

A. Attendance

1. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor.
2. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
3. Attendance for the two days of the course is mandatory.

B. Participation

1. Please respect the opinions of others without disrespect or ridicule, even if you do not agree with them. However, feel free to respond logically and critically in an orderly manner.
2. Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except that which is appropriate in the course outline.
3. Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
4. Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines will be dismissed from the class with consequences.

C. Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the

***** Gender Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

****** Disclaimer on Syllabi posted on the web and at the bottom of each syllabus:**

Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Appointments:

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via E-mail: westfal@mcmaster.ca

I'm available for appointments

Teaching Assistant: Jonathan.Numada@mytwu.ca

Office Hours:

NT/OT 2XB3 Online Lectures

1. Welcome and introduction to the course
2. The Canon and translations
3. The goal and activities of interpretation
4. The primary basis for your track (A, B, or C)
5. Interpreting & applying the NT Epistles
6. Interpreting & applying Narratives/Stories
7. Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy
8. Interpreting & applying Poetry
9. The role of the interpreter (in class Feb 21)
10. A or B (other than #4)
11. B or C (other than #4)

Primary Bases

- A. Interpreting the Bible every day (the primary basis for Worldview)
 - (1) Identifying fallacies/Scripture Twisting
 - (2) Formulating biblically sound interpretations

- B. Interpreting the Bible to use in ministry (the primary basis for Pastoral Studies)
 - (1) The process of writing an exegetical paper
 - (2) Formulating applications

- C. Interpreting the Bible for research (the primary basis for Biblical Studies)
 - (1) History of interpretation
 - (2) Recent critical approaches

Class Meeting February 20-21

The class sessions will consist of activities, case studies and discussions of the various course topics, offering hands-on experience with biblical interpretation and contemporary ministry.

Students are encouraged to come with questions and concerns.

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content	Argument	Presentation
90–100 85–89 80–84	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements	Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions	Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation
77–79 73–76 70–72	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements	Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion	General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax
67–69 63–66 60–62	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements	Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements	Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style
57–59 53–56 50–52	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing	Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion	Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors
0–49 %	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing	Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation	Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax