

McMaster Divinity College
Biblical Interpretation

NT/OT 2A03
BS/CW/PS

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Winter 2016
Saturday Course
Jan 9, Feb 6, Feb 27, Mar 19
9:00 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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.



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

A. Knowing—

1. The student will know sound guidelines for reading and interpreting Scripture
2. The student will understand common fallacies of interpretation
3. The student will know the types of literature of the Bible, and how they affect interpretation
4. The student will 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 produce a written assignment according to his/her choice of specialization
14. Each student will produce a project for their portfolio

III. Course Requirements

A. Class Participation (15%)

1. Each student will attend the four sessions and participate in discussions and activities.
2. Each student will participate in online discussions on Avenue at least once a week by posting on discussion threads in the course website. (10 %).

B. Reading (10%)

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

1. Selected Old and New Testament texts

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. Course Textbooks

A. Required

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 a 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, 1981, 1993, 2003
 2. Brauch, Manfred. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- 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, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, 2004.
 2. Brauch, Manfred. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.

- c. Biblical Studies: The texts reflect the multi-faceted discipline of exegesis
 - 1. Green, Joel. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
 - 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 145, 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.
- 3. By the last day of scheduled classes (**April 1**), 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. Exegetical Worksheets (15%)

Due midnight Friday March 26.

Submit by e-mail in PDF form to the professor & GA.

Worksheets that provide hand-on practice in exegesis will be distributed in class and on Avenue. They will form the basis of group discussions, and each student will complete and submit their own worksheets.

2. Written assignment for Specializations (30%)

All written assignments for specializations are due midnight Friday March 11.

Submit by e-mail in PDF form to the professor & GA.

Late papers will lose 1% a day for a week, then 4% a day.

Each student must utilize the MDC Style Guide:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

a. Christian Worldview: Scripture Twisting Journal

- (1) Each student is required to keep a journal with 10 total entries, 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 may submit their first entry by e-mail for feedback
- (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 MDC 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.

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.
- (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 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, an 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.
submitted by e-mail. Late papers lose 1% each day for a week and then 4% per 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 see the MDC Style Guide. There should be a minimum of 15 sources used in the footnotes and bibliography.

3. Portfolio Project (30%)

Due midnight Friday, April 1

They may be either PDF form or hard copy.

Late projects will lose 2% a day; no projects will be accepted after April 8.

- 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).
- 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, and the effort expended

F. Grading Summary

1.	Participation	15%
2.	Reading	10%
3.	Exegetical Worksheets	15%
4.	Written Assignment	30%
5.	Project	30%

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

IV. 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 four days of the course is mandatory. In the case of illness, one day exceeds the maximum absence allowed for credit for course, so that the time must be made up.

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 Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

D. Late Papers

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness any request for extensions will take into account the entire class. All assignments must be received by **April 8** in order to avoid a failing grade in the class.

***** 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: 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.

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via E-mail: westfal@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Mondays 2-5, Tuesdays 1:30-3:00, other times by appointment

Course Schedule

Date	Class Session	Reading	Scripture
Jan 9	Course Introduction The Goal and Practices of Interpretation The Canon and Translations Exegesis		
Feb 6	Fallacies & Scripture Twisting History of Interpretation Recent Approaches	CW & PS: Baruch BS: Green (NT) Baker (OT)	
Feb 27	Interpreting & Applying the Narratives Interpreting & Applying the Epistles Interpreting & Applying Law	CW: Fee PS: Klein et al BS: Green (OT) Baker (NT)	Genesis, Exodus Luke-acts Listed Epistles
Written Assignment due midnight March 11			
Mar 19	Interpreting & Applying Prophecy Interpreting & Applying Poetry The Role of the Interpreter		Listed Poetry Isaiah, Jonah, Hosea Daniel, Revelation
Exegetical Worksheets due midnight March 26			
Portfolio Project due midnight April 1			
Reading Report due midnight April 1			