

# Biblical Interpretation

## McMaster Divinity College Online DPT Course

NT/OT 5XI5

Biblical Interpretation

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Winter 2021

Introductory WebEx Session: first week of class Thursday, Jan 7, 1–2:50 p.m.

On-Line Videos

Streaming Sessions: Tuesday, March 2, 1:30–5:30 pm/Wednesday, March 3, 9 am–5:30 pm

Closing WebEx Session: Thursday, April 1, 1–2:50 p.m.

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### Biography

Dr. Cindy Westfall is the Associate Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College. Her research interests are wide-ranging including Greek, linguistics and discourse analysis, the book of Hebrews, Revelation and the Catholic Epistles, Bible Translation, Gender and Ministry, and Biblical Social Justice. She is the author of *A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* and *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* and co-edited *The Bible and Social Justice: Old Testament and New Testament Foundations for the Church's Urgent Call*. She is married to Glenn and lives in Dundas, ON.



### Course Description

This is an essential course for anyone who has a high view of Scripture and believes that it is the primary authority for all Christians. A study of the principles of interpretation and application of the Bible. Attention is given to students developing a clearly defined framework for interpreting the Bible that is biblically and theologically grounded, spiritually sensitive, critically aware and practically relevant.

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

#### *Knowing*

- Understand how the design of practice-led research intersects and functions in the relationship between one's identity, life experience, and ministry and hermeneutics.
- Possess a strong biblical and theological basis for your practice-led research in hermeneutics that can be clearly articulated
- Extend your understanding of hermeneutics to larger contexts and new possibilities

#### *Being*

- Cultivate a deeper level of awareness in the practice of hermeneutics
- Experience joy in the study of interpretation

- Cultivate postures of learning and gracious critique in the midst of interpretive debates
- Maturing habits in spiritual disciplines that keep pace with research

### ***Doing***

- Develop your specialization in terms of the nature and needs of your ministry target group and the practices/disciplines of hermeneutics
- Present your work, accept critique & function as a resource to others in the course
- Design practical implementation of appropriate actions
- Demonstrate practice-led research in writing

### **Course Requirements**

#### ***View Online Videos*** (attendance)

Students are required to view the scheduled weekly videos online and to do the exegetical exercises as course attendance.

**An attendance report will be submitted to A2L on the percentage of on-line videos watched at 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday,, April 7.**

#### ***Class Participation*** (15%)

There will be three venues in which you will be expected to participate in weekly activities and contribute to the course discussion online: (1) you will complete brief hermeneutical exercises based on each video; (2) you will share content or initiate topics of discussion on the A2L discussion forums or on Padlet (which has a number of ways that you can share); and (3) you will respond or interact with the contribution/content/topics of others. Contribute content once a week and interact with a minimum interaction or response to three others each week (on the average).

#### ***Reading*** (10%)

Complete **4,000 pages of reading** for the course and submit a **bibliography due 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, April 7, submitted to A2L in PDF form.** List the book, the pages read and summarizes the percentage of reading. You may include books from your Preliminary Annotated Bibliography but omit any material that you have read for previous courses and the papers of other students.

### **Written assignments**

#### ***Preliminary Annotated Bibliography & Presentation*** (15%)

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 5–10 resources (at least 1,500 pages) that are the most informative related to Biblical Interpretation in the area of your research interest (see schedule for categories), and write a 100-150 word annotation for each resource. Relevant resources previously read for other courses may be submitted (mark with \*). This is your summary of the best sources available in your area of interest. **Submit this assignment to A2L and to DropBox in PDF form due 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 12 to share with others in the course before the in class session. Be prepared to present your bibliography in our in-class session.**

#### ***Summary of Key Concepts, Methodology or Biblical and Theological Foundations*** (20%)

Utilizing material from the class sessions, online materials and reading the student will describe the biblical and theological basis for *your specific practice-led research* in hermeneutics. **The paper will be approximately 3,000 words (12 pages), and due 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 19, submitted to A2L in PDF form.**

Include footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses:

<http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuide.pdf>

### ***Major Paper on Practice-Led Research (40%)***

The student will demonstrate practice-led research through a particular focus/interest in Biblical Interpretation and be prepared to discuss their research with the class on June 5. Their paper will include an introduction, five sections and a conclusion (subheadings are advised):

- Clearly explain how the paper is rooted based in your identity, experiences and practice
- Explore the challenges and problems that provoke this study (i.e. Why does this ministry practice need to be addressed?)
- Identify and develop a procedure for a methodology suitable for researching this topic.
- Integrate the biblical and theological foundations for practice from your previous paper with appropriate revisions (see #3)
- A consideration of new approaches to address and improve ministry practice (local and beyond) and reflection on the application to your own ministry.

**The paper will be approximately 8,000 words. It is due 11:59 p.m. on Friday, March 31 (submitted to A2L) and presented during the final course session on Webex.**

Include footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses:

<http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuide.pdf>

### ***Class Presentation***

Present/summarize where they are in their research to the class the closing Webex session online (TBA).

The student may choose to make their papers available to the rest of the course in DropBox.

All papers must be submitted to A2L (but also DropBox for sharing).

If the student fails to submit the paper on time, a late penalty of 2% a day will be applied to the paper's final grade until 7 days, when it will be 5% a day. **No papers will be accepted after April 7.**

### ***Grading Summary***

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|--------------------------|-----|
| ➤ Participation          | 15% |
| ➤ Reading                | 10% |
| ➤ Annotated Bibliography | 15% |
| ➤ Summary Paper          | 20% |
| ➤ Written assignment     | 40% |

All assignments must be completed by **Wednesday, April 7**, to receive a passing grade.

## **Classroom and Online Behavior**

### ***Attendance***

- Students should be on time to the in-class sessions or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor.
- Students are expected to stay for the all in-class sessions, unless arranged in advance.
- Students are expected to listen to all on-line videos and do the exegetical exercises on the video which is equivalent to course attendance. “Absences” will result in the reduction of the final grade.

### ***Participation***

- 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.
- Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except that which is appropriate in the course outline.
- Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
- Students are not to access e-mail, send or receive text messages, surf the net, etc., while class is in session

Students who fail to respect these guidelines may lose participation points and/or be dismissed from the class.

### ***Textbook Purchase***

Textbook Purchase: All required textbooks for this class are available from the College’s book service, The Hurlburt Family Bookstore, McMaster Divinity College (Across from Cullen Hall). Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934, Text: 416 668 3434. fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Free Shipping is available to students. Other book services may also carry the texts.

### ***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. [All papers will be analysed for plagiarism by TurnItIn](#)

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

### ***Gender Inclusive Language***

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

***Style***

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>  
Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

**Appointments & office hours**

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via Avenue or e-mail: [westfal@mcmaster.ca](mailto:westfal@mcmaster.ca)  
There are no set office hours, but I am available by Skype appointment at [cynthia.westfall](https://www.skype.com/join/cynthia.westfall)

**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.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	CLASS SESSION
Jan 7 1–2:50 pm	Introductory WebEx Session <a href="https://mcmaster.webex.com/meet/westfal">https://mcmaster.webex.com/meet/westfal</a>
Jan 11–15	On-line video: The goal and activities of interpretation
Jan 18–22	On-line video: Steps to Exegesis, Part 1
Jan 25–29	On-line video: Steps to Exegesis, Part 2
Feb 1–5	On-line video: Interpreting & applying Narratives/Stories
Feb 8–12	On-line video: Interpreting & applying the NT Epistles
Feb 12	<b>Annotated Bibliography due</b>
Feb 16–19	On-line video: Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy
Feb 19	<b>Summary Paper due 11:59 pm</b>
Feb 22–26	<b>Break</b>
Feb 28	<b>Video on Annotated Bibliography due</b>
March 2 1:30–5:30 pm	Intermittent Streaming with asynchronous material (1/2 day) Asynchronous: Interpreting and Applying Poetry Asynchronous: The Canon and translations
March 3 9:00 am— 5:30 pm	Intermittent Streaming with asynchronous material (full day) Asynchronous: The History of Interpretation Asynchronous: Recent Approaches A Asynchronous: Recent Approaches B.
March 8–12	<b>Break</b>
March 15–19	Consultations on projects by appointment Prep to interact with the role of the interpreter (McCaulley)
March 22–26	On-line Video: The role of the interpreter

March 31	<b>Final Paper submitted on A2L by 11:59 pm</b>
April 1 1–2:50 pm	Final WebEx Session <a href="https://mcmaster.webex.com/meet/westfal">https://mcmaster.webex.com/meet/westfal</a> <b>5 minute presentation of final paper (Like Ted Talks!)</b>
April 7	<b>Reading Report submitted on A2L by 11:59 pm</b> <b>Attendance report submitted on A2L by 11:59 pm</b> <b>T-F Quiz on Course Evaluation—use link (will be provided) then take quiz under A2L Assessment: Quiz by 11:59 pm</b>