

# Biblical Interpretation

## McMaster Divinity College

NT/OT 6XI6: Biblical Interpretation  
MA/PhD

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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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### Course Description

This is a PhD course that involves the advanced study of the principles of hermeneutics: the interpretation and application of the Bible. Students taking the course will have the opportunity to study the theories, theologies and various methodologies of interpretation and will be able to delve deeply into the aspect of hermeneutics that will best contribute to their academic goals, offering the ability to develop as a specialist and as a generalist.

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

### *Knowing*

- Know the main theories, theologies and various methodologies of interpretation
- Acquire a specialist’s knowledge of a theory, theology and/or methodology of interpretation
- Acquire a generalist knowledge as a preparation for the ability to teach a course on interpretation

### *Being*

- Have confidence in one’s faith while thinking critically about interpretation and fallacies
- Maintain commitment to & love for Scripture that communicates in speech and writing
- Become a specialist in theory, theology or methodology of interpretation

### *Doing*

- Develop a methodology that is based on theory and has appropriate tools for analysis
- Analyze a passage of Scripture with the methodology
- Develop & practice pedagogy in hermeneutics

### 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.

On the last day of class, **April 7**, students will submit their attendance record.



***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 a 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%)

Students will read 5,000 pages from works on biblical interpretation & hermeneutics. The reading list is due on **April 7 by 11:59 p.m.**, with a full bibliography and a total page count.

***Written Assignments***

**Methodology paper** (30%)

Each student will write and present a paper on a theory, theology and/or methodology, biblical interpretation/hermeneutics (c. 4,000 words excluding notes and bibliography) **due Friday February 19 at 11:59 p.m.**

**Analysis of Scripture** (30%)

Each student will write and present a paper that applies their methodology to an appropriate passage (c. 6,000 words excluding notes and bibliography) **due Wednesday, March 31 at 11:59 p.m.**

A five-minute summary of the students research will be presented in a 5 minute “Ted Talk” at the final WebEx session on **April 1 between 1–3.**

The professor assumes that students already know the basics about how to research, write and orally present papers. However, we will work at further developing skills that are utilized in scholarly discourse and publication. Both content (research, analysis, organization of material) and presentation (mechanics and style) are important. Each student must utilize the MacDiv style guide. The general guidelines are that the paper should be 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with 1” margins and utilize footnotes (not endnotes). The paper should include a title page, numbering and a staple cover (not fancy). Each paper should include a formal introduction and conclusion as well as implications for contemporary hermeneutics and any applications for contemporary ministry.

***Teaching Unit*** (15%)

The student will prepare and teach 1 hour of the course in a video that will be viewed by the other students in the course, covering a topic determined by the professor and student.

***Grading Summary***

- Participation 15%
- Reading 10%
- Methodology Paper 30%
- Analysis of a passage 30%
- Teaching unit 15%

## **Classroom and Online Behavior**

### ***Attendance***

- Students should be on time to the WebEx/streaming or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor.
- Students are expected to stay for the all WebEx/streaming 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 on message.
- Students are not to access e-mail, send or receive text messages, surf the net, etc., while class is in session
- 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 may lose participation points and/or be dismissed from the class.

### ***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](mailto: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 16–19	On-line video: Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy
Feb 19	<b>Theory-Methodology Paper due 11:59 pm</b>
Feb 22–26	<b>Break</b>
March 2 1:30–5:30 pm	Intermittent Streaming with asynchronous material (1/2 day) Asynchronous: Interpreting and Applying Poetry <b>Asynchronous: The Canon (15 min) translations (15 min)*</b> <b>Your teaching unit</b>
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>Analysis of Text 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>

