

Biblical Interpretation

McMaster Divinity College

NT 6XI6: Biblical Interpretation
MA/PhD

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Winter 2023
Tuesdays 4:00–5:50 p.m.

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. This is 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. For the PhD student, it is an opportunity to work on hermeneutics, methodologies and their application, in addition to the practice of pedagogy.



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

Knowing

- Know sound guidelines for reading and interpreting Scripture
- Understand common fallacies of interpretation
- Know the types of literature in the Bible, and how they affect interpretation
- Know critical methods by which the Bible has been interpreted

Being

- Be a scholar who works towards a coherent theology and practice of hermeneutics and exegesis
- Appreciate the variety of interpretive approaches and positions
- Academic transformation in a faith context in which Scripture is valued

Doing

- Research an issue, methodology, or text in biblical interpretation/hermeneutics
- Teach a unit on biblical interpretation at the seminary level
- Develop a syllabus to teach biblical interpretation at the undergraduate level

Requirements for OT/NT 6XI6

This is a graduate research level course. It is assumed that students will perform as graduate research students to facilitate learning. Students will be expected to do suitable academic work outside of the classroom.

Successful completion of the course requires satisfactory completion of the course requirements. Failure to make a valid attempt to complete the requirements may constitute grounds for failure of the course.

Participation (10%)

The student is expected to come to class having prepared sufficiently to make a contribution to the topic of discussion and raise significant questions through reading and preparation for the activities.

Reading (10%)

Students will read 4,000 pages from works on biblical interpretation & hermeneutics. The reading list is due on April 6: list the books with the bibliographic info, the pages read and the total page count.

Course Texts

The professional students will be reading a variety of texts that would be suitable to include in your bibliography

Core Texts

Brauch, Manfred. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009 (294 pp.).

Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Revised and Expanded Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009 (302 pp.).

Klein, William, Blomberg, Craig L. and Hubbard, Robert L. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017 (707 pp.).

Recommended Texts

Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020.

Richards, Randolph E. *Misreading Scripture with Individualist Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020.

Methodologies

Baker, David W. & Arnold, Bill T. *The Face of Old Testament Studies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999 (512 pp.).

Green, Joel. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 (440 pp.).

Written Assignments—

Major Paper (35%)

The paper will be 10,000 words, excluding notes and bibliography on an issue, methodology, or text in biblical interpretation/hermeneutics

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.

The paper is due in PDF form on A2L by 11:59 p.m. on March 17. A penalty of 2% will be subtracted from the paper's final grade for every day for seven days, then 5% a day.

Syllabus: A detailed syllabus and lecture outline for a college level course, either a general introduction, or an elective course that integrates insights from your papers (25%)

Syllabi are due by 4:00 p.m. April 4, and there will be a brief presentation of the material in your syllabus to the class.

Teaching Unit (20%)

The student will prepare and teach 1 hour of the course, covering a section of a course topic determined by the professor and student.

Grading Summary

- Participation 10%
- Reading 10%
- Major Paper 35%
- Syllabus 25%
- Teaching Unit 20%

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, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Additional Materials

Handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available on A2L by class time under Content.

Classroom Behavior

Attendance

Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.

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. Similarly content in all papers should be irenic while it critiques alternate positions.

Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except that which is appropriate in the course online.

Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.

Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up.

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

MDC Policies

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 ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

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.

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 <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

Appointments

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via e-mail (most effective): westfal@mcmaster.ca
Friend me on Facebook and send me a message! We can meet in person or on Zoom outside of office hours if you need accommodation.

Office hours

3–4 p.m. Tuesdays in office + Zoom

2–4 p.m. Thursdays in office + Zoom

Also available by appointment in person or on Zoom

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 <i>Teaching unit on a section of one of the following topics</i>
Jan 10	Introduction to course Introduction: Identifying fallacies/Scripture Twisting
Jan 17	Fallacies cont./The goal and activities of interpretation
Jan 24	The process of writing an exegetical paper Bring an example of Scripture Twisting to class written in a paragraph
Jan 31	The process of writing an exegetical paper
Feb 7	Interpreting & applying Narratives/Stories
Feb 14	Interpreting & applying the NT Epistles Bring an example of a letter to class
Feb 21	Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy
Feb 28	Hybrid Intensive Week
March 7	Interpreting & applying Poetry
March 14	The Canon and translations Major Paper due 11:59 p.m. March 17
March 21	The History of interpretation
March 28	Recent approaches/Watch video: "Role of the Interpreter"
April 4	Syllabus due Presentation of syllabus to class
April 6	Reading Report submitted on A2L by 11:59 p.m.

Select Bibliography

Accordance at accordancebible.com. Gramcord.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Revised and Updated. Basic Books, 2011.

Bartholomew, Craig. *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.

Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Beale, G. K. and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Blomberg, Craig L. and Jennifer F. Markley, *Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Bock, Darrell L. and Buist M. Fanning, eds. *Interpreting the New Testament Text*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2006.

Brown, Jeannine. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

Chisholm, Jr., Robert B. *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew*. Baker, 1998.

Clements, Ronald E. ed. *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*. Cambridge, 1989.

Cohick, Lynn H. *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.

Croy, Clayton. *Prima Scriptura: An Introduction to New Testament Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.

Dallaire, Hélène M. *Biblical Hebrew: A Living Language*. Second edition.

deSilva, David A. *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Content and Significance*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018.

- Dockery, David S. and David A. Black, eds. *Interpreting the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001.
- Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005.
- Evans, Craig A. and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.
- Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Fokkelman, J.P. *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*. Westminster John Knox, 1999.
- _____. *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide*. Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.
- Green, Joel B., ed. *Hearing the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- Green, Joel B., Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.
- Greer, Jonathan S., John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton eds. *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. Baker, 2018. A thorough series of 66 short chapters on many aspects of history and society.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993.
- Hixson, Elijah and Peter J. Gurry, eds. *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism*. Downers Grove: IVP. 2019
- Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Biblical Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.
- _____. *Spirit Hermeneutics. Reading Scripture in Light of Pentecost*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Klein, William W. *Handbook for Personal Bible Study*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2008.

- Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017.
- Koehler, L., and W. Baumgartner et al. (eds.). *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. 5 vols. Brill, 1994-2001; Study edition, 2 vols. Brill, 2001.
- Köstenberger, Andreas and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: B&H, 2011.
- Lange, Armin and Emanuel Tov, eds. *Textual History of the Hebrew Bible: Volume 1A Overview Articles; Volume 1B Pentateuch, Former and Latter Prophets; Volume 1C Writings*. 3 volumes. Brill, 2016-2017.
- Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene A. Nida. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. 2 vols. New York: UBS, 1988.
- Martin, Ralph P. and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1998.
- Mathewson, David L. and Elodie Ballantine Emig. *Intermediate Greek Grammar: Syntax for Students of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.
- McKnight, Scot and Nijay K. Gupta, eds. *The State of New Testament Studies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. New York: UBS, 1994.
- Metzger, Bruce M. and Bart D. Ehrman. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, Restoration*. Oxford: OUP, 2005.
- Noonan, Benjamin. *Advances in the Study of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic: New Insights for Reading the Hebrew Bible*. Zondervan, 2020.
- Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007.
- Overholt, Thomas W. *Cultural Anthropology and the Old Testament. Guides to Biblical Scholarship*. Fortress, 1996.
- Porter, Stanley E. *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992.
- _____. *Linguistic Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015.

- Porter, Stanley E. and Beth M. Stovell, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012.
- Rainey, Anson F. and R. Steven Notley. *The Sacred Bridge. Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World*. Second edition. Carta, 2014. Or more accessible: *Carta's New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible*. Carta, 2007.
- Runge, Steven E. *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010.
- Silva, Moisés, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014
- Soulen, Richard N. and R. Kendall Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011.
- Starling, David I. *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.
- Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 4th ed. Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Sugirtharajah, R. S., ed. *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Orbis/SPCK, 2016.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Tov Emmanuel. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd edition. Fortress, 2011.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Van Der Merwe, Christo H. J., Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. Sheffield, 1999.
- VanGemeren, Willem A. (ed.). *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. Zondervan, 1997.
- Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Waltke, B.K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Walton, John H. and D. Brent Sandy. *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and*

Biblical Authority. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.

Walton, John, Victor H. Matthews and Mark Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010.

West, Gerald O. and Musa W. Dube (eds.). *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*. Brill, 2001.