

Biblical Interpretation

McMaster Divinity College

NT/OT 5X15 Biblical Interpretation
DPT Course

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Tuesdays 4:00–5:50 p.m.

Biography

Dr. Cindy Westfall is 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

DPT students who are researching issues that involve different interpretations of Scripture in their community or among Christian groups in conflict will particularly benefit from this course, but this is the place for anyone to build the biblical basis for your research. 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. On the other hand, it explores abuses of Scripture.

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

Knowing

- Be able to describe the relationship of one's identity, life experience, and ministry to your interpretation of the Bible.
- 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
- Recognize cases of Scripture twisting in which the Bible is misused

Course Requirements

Class Participation (15%)

Attendance and participation in interactive lectures and class and group discussions and activities is expected. Participation in online discussions is voluntary but encouraged and counts as participation.

Reading (10%)

Complete **4,000 pages of reading** on Biblical Interpretation and submit a **bibliography due 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 5, submitted to A2L in PDF form**. List the book, the pages read and summarize 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.

Course Texts

The professional students will be reading a variety of texts that would be suitable for your bibliography, but it is recommended that you read at least two of the core texts.

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

***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 on biblical interpretation available in your area of interest. **Submit this assignment to A2L on 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 9. Present your bibliography to the class on February 13.**

***Your Role as an Interpreter* (20%)**

Describe the relationship of your identity, life experience, and ministry to your interpretation of the Bible. **The paper will be approximately 3,000 words (12 pages), and due 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 24, submitted to A2L in PDF form.** This contents of this paper may be used in the major paper.

Include footnotes and bibliography appropriate for the dissertation level. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

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

The student will demonstrate practice-led research with a focus/interest in Biblical Interpretation and be prepared to discuss their research with the class on **April 2**. 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.
- Describe the biblical and theological foundations for practice
- 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 Thursday, March 28 (submitted to A2L) and presented during the final course session on April 2.

Include footnotes and bibliography appropriate for the dissertation level. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Class Presentation

Students will present their research to the course on April 4. There will be a time limitation that will be given in class. The student may choose to make their papers available to the rest of the course on A2L Discussions.

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 5.**

Grading Summary

➤ Participation	15%
➤ Reading	10%
➤ Annotated Bibliography	15%
➤ Role as an Interpreter	20%
➤ Major Paper	40%

All assignments must be completed by **Thursday, April 6**, 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.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an

academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

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, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

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 & office hours

Wed: 1–3

Tues: 12–2

Appointments in person or on zoom can be arranged.

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 9	Introduction to course Introduction: Identifying fallacies/Scripture Twisting
Jan 16	Fallacies cont./The goal and activities of interpretation
Jan 23	The process of writing an exegetical paper Bring an example of Scripture Twisting to class written in a paragraph
Jan 30	The process of writing an exegetical paper
Feb 6	Interpreting & applying Narratives/Stories Submit annotated bibliography to A2L 11:59 p.m. Feb 9
Feb 13	Interpreting & applying the NT Epistles Bring an example of a letter to class Presentation of annotated bibliography to class
Feb 20	MDC Reading Week Role as an Interpreter Paper due 11:59 p.m. Feb 23
Feb 27	Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy
March 6	Interpreting & applying Poetry
March 13	The Canon and translations
March 20	The History of interpretation
March 27	Recent approaches/Watch video: "Role of the Interpreter" Major Paper due 11:59 p.m. March 31
April 3	Presentation of research to class
April 5	Reading Report submitted on A2L by 11:59 p.m.

Select Bibliography

- 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.
- Bowens, Lisa M. *African American Readings of Paul: Reception, Resistance and Transformation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- 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.
- Mbuvi, Andrew M. *African Biblical Studies: Unmasking Embedded Racism and Colonialism in Biblical Studies*. London: T&T Clark, 2023.
- 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.