

# Biblical Interpretation

## McMaster Divinity College

NT 6XI6: Biblical Interpretation  
MA/PhD

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Winter 2024  
Tuesdays 4:00–5:50 p.m.

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### 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*

- Be able to explain sound guidelines for reading and interpreting Scripture
- Identify common fallacies of interpretation
- Recognize the types of literature in the Bible, and how they affect interpretation
- Name 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 Friday, April 5 at 11:59 p.m.**: 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*. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Friday, March 15. A penalty of 2% will be deducted each day for seven days, then 5% a day.**

### **Syllabus (25%)**

Each student will prepare a detailed syllabus and lecture outline (lesson plans) **submitted to A2L by April 2 by 4 p.m.** (class time). The syllabus should be designed for a college level course of a specific institution, either a general introduction, or an elective course that integrates insights from your papers and general reading plus a presentation. Note: Some institutions require an abbreviated syllabus—in such cases, the student should prepare an expanded detailed syllabus that can be abbreviated.

Each student will submit their syllabi to the professor on Avenue to Learn, distribute their syllabi to class members on Communications: Discussions, and give a short presentation of their syllabi in 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 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](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

### **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 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.

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 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).

### ***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.

### ***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.

### ***Appointments***

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via e-mail (most effective): [westfal@mcmaster.ca](mailto: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 accomodation.

***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<br><i>Teaching unit on a section of one of the following topics</i>   |
|----------|---|
| Jan 9    | Introduction to course<br>Introduction: Identifying fallacies/Scripture Twisting  |
| Jan 16   | Fallacies cont./The goal and activities of interpretation   |
| Jan 23   | The process of writing an exegetical paper<br><b>Bring an example of Scripture Twisting to class written in a paragraph</b> |
| Jan 30   | The process of writing an exegetical paper  |
| Feb 6    | Interpreting & applying Narratives/Stories  |
| Feb 13   | Interpreting & applying the NT Epistles<br><b>Bring an example of a letter to class</b>                                     |
| Feb 20   | MDC Reading Week  |
| Feb 27   | Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy  |
| March 5  | Interpreting & applying Poetry  |
| March 12 | The Canon and translations<br><b>Major Paper due 11:59 p.m. March 15</b>  |
| March 19 | The History of interpretation   |
| March 26 | Recent approaches/Watch video: "Role of the Interpreter"  |
| April 2  | <b>Syllabus due</b><br><b>Presentation of syllabus to class</b>   |
| April 5  | <b>Reading Report submitted on A2L by 11:59 p.m.</b>  |

### *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.