



MCMASTER DIVINITY COLLEGE
COURSE SYLLABUS
Spring 2025

BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY FOR PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH
(DPT MS 5P1010)

May 5–June 20 (Monday 9:00 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.)

INSTRUCTOR:

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In-Person and Synchronous Online: This course is offered either in-person (for those resident in the Hamilton area) or synchronously online. There is a course web page on [Avenue to Learn](#) (A2L) that will offer all resources needed to navigate the requirements for the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course advances the student's ability to conduct practice-led doctoral research within the framework of biblical and theological studies. By design, one of the unique challenges of the Doctor of Practical Theology program is the integration of professional

practice with the highest standards of research method. This includes content and methods from the social sciences, but no one's research in any discipline proceeds in a cultural vacuum. When conducted within the context of the Christian faith, research must also be informed and critiqued by biblical-theological studies.

Different students enter the DPT program with different levels of formal training and experience in Christian studies. This course provides a framework that orients the student's research within the biblical-theological disciplines, building upon whatever foundation they bring with them into the DPT program. As a result, the student will be able to improve and modify their practice based on theoretical and theological considerations.



Solomon Schlechter in the Cambridge library pondering fragments of ancient texts from the medieval synagogue in Cairo.

MODE OF DELIVERY

In-Person learning is the traditional mode of study where the student is present in the classroom.

Synchronous learning is online or distance education that happens in real time.




Asynchronous learning occurs through online channels without real-time interaction.

This course is offered both In-Person and through Synchronous online learning. Students must have a basic familiarity with computers to participate, including the ability to navigate Avenue to Learn (A2L) course site and make and upload PDFs of assignments to A2L.

Students are also encouraged to meet with the instructor (by appointment either in person or on Zoom) to discuss any questions raised in class and/or the assignments.

LEARNING OUTCOMES



- a.  Knowing
1. To explain how language makes meaning.
 2. To demonstrate sound word-study methodology
 3. To explain the contribution of major parts of the Bible to the grand narrative of redemption.
 4. To describe how one's professional practice fits within the context of redemptive history.
 5. To describe how one's practice relates to the major topics of systematic theology.
- b.  Being
1. "To present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." (2 Tim 2:15)
 2. To allow the Scripture to motivate, form, and transform one's professional practice in the way of the Lord and in the grand narrative of redemption.
- c.  Doing
1. To articulate the primary theological topics relevant to one's research interests.
 2. To identify some of the major biblical passages relevant to one's research interests.
 3. To interpret the biblical text meaningfully within broader context.
 4. To discern appropriate secondary sources relevant to one's research interests.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Textbooks

1. Interpretation for Preaching and Teaching: An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics (required)

Stanley E. Porter. *Interpretation for Preaching and Teaching: An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6637-7

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=30201101>

2. Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook (required)

John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. 4th ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2022. ISBN: 978-0-6642-6698-1

(Do not use the DTL edition for this book as it is not the latest edition.)

3. Introducing Theological Method (required)

Mary M. Veeneman. *Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4949-1

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5215153>

4. The Drama of Scripture (required)

Bartholomew, Craig G. and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4956-9

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3117480>

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. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Suggested Resources

—Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, eds. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017.

This one-volume text is available on DTL and is crucial for completing the Reading Report assignment (below), but it is also a recommended purchase as a long-term reference tool. Bibliographies at the end of each article are good launch points for further study of the topic.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=5188207>

—Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al., eds. *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

This one-volume text offers an introduction to the message of each book of the Bible, brief methodological discussions, as well as summary of some important biblical-theological topics. The emphasis is, as the title suggests, *theological* in its treatment, which means that most background issue to each book of the Bible are not addressed.

DTL:

<https://linker2.worldcat.org/?jHome=https%3A%2F%2Fdtl.idm.oclc.org%2Flogin%3Furl%3Dhttps%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Ftitle%2Fbpgtib&linktype=best&jHomeSig=08ff6dfa63ad60d0bf7ffe66baac9097e4c6ebcb3cde23b2b818431ba0cd7ab6>

—IVP Bible Dictionary Series is arguably the best “first-stop” when embarking on study of a biblical topic:

T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=2009910>

Bill T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005.

DTL:

<https://linker2.worldcat.org/?jHome=https%3A%2F%2Fdtl.idm.oclc.org%2Flogin%3Furl%3Dhttps%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Ftitle%2Fivpold&linktype=best&jHomeSig=d37485d9c41bfaa55fa8b63588bb099120c777f50213ffc83ab603d5c3061866>

Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=2009926>

Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008.

DTL:

<https://linker2.worldcat.org/?jHome=https%3A%2F%2Fdtl.idm.oclc.org%2Flogin%3Furl%3Dhttps%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Ftitle%2Fivpotwvw&linktype=best&jHomeSig=9ea6764af6f6b5edd33a8bacfb36fa8d9b41d200f9f84ac97e88e2a5e610e484>

Joel B. Green, Jeanine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3316699>

Scot McKnight, Lynn H. Cohick, and Nijay K. Gupta, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 2nd edition. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2023.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3317045>

Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Development*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1997.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3317047>

Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, Jr., eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.

DTL: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=2009908>

—Willem A. VanGemeren, ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1997.

Non-Hebrew readers will need to consult the English words in the index to find the relevant article, but I am aware of no good alternative to this set for thorough and methodologically sound semantic studies

in the Old Testament.

DTL: <https://libguides-thedtl-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/c.php?g=1083471>

—Moisés Silva, ed. *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 2nd edition. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Non-Greek readers will need to consult the English words in the index to find the relevant article, but I am aware of no good alternative to this set for thorough and methodologically sound semantic studies in the New Testament.

DTL: <https://search.credoreference.com/books/Qm9va1R5cGU6NTgwOQ==>

—STEP Bible (<https://stepbible.org>)

This online software is designed to help non-original language readers of the Bible to search the appropriate Hebrew or Greek word in their native tongue (over 300 world language translations incorporated!).

—Class notes will offer further suggested reading and resources under respective topics.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Short Answer Essays	30%
Word Study	20%
Reading Report	15%
Relevance to Research Paper	25%
Participation	10%
Total Grade	100%

Assignment Details:

Note: All assignments must be submitted to the appropriate Assignment Box on Avenue to Learn (A2L) [in PDF format only](#).

Short Answer Essays—30% Relate to Outcomes a.1; a.3; a.5; b.2

Students will answer a series of essay questions that capture the essence of important topics covered in class. No outside reading or research is necessary, since every question can be answered from class discussion or textbooks (indeed, it is the point of this assignment to facilitate review and learning of these lessons). Instructions are on the essay-question list provided on A2L. The professor will randomly choose three of these essays to read for grading. Each student is guaranteed a minimum “B” grade for a reasonable and conscientious effort to answer the question. Higher marks will be awarded for good quality answers. All questions will be discussed explicitly in class.

Word Studies—20%. Relates to Outcomes a.1; a.2.

A word from the Old Testament and a word from the New Testament will be assigned for study. A worksheet with instructions will be provided on A2L.

Reading Report on Elective Readings—15%. Relates to Outcomes a.1; a.3; a.4; a.5; c.2; c.4.

In addition to the required textbook reading, students will choose about 100 pages of reading from the

Evangelical Dictionary of Theology edited by Treier (bibliographic details above under “Suggested Resources”). It is available on DTL. Students peruse the volume for articles and choose those that *might* be relevant to their dissertation topic. For each reading selection (articles are about one to three pages each), the student will write a few sentences explaining the justification for choice **and** what s/he gleaned (or not!) from the reading. In other words, what intuitive “hunch” led to the selection, and what relevance does the topic have (or not have) to the student’s research interests. The article may in the end not be helpful, which is fine; but student will write an assessment nonetheless even if negative.

Relevance to Research Paper—25%. Relates to Outcomes c.1; c.2; c.3; c.4.

The student will write an 8-page (maximum) paper explaining what theological topics and biblical texts are particularly relevant to the individual’s research interest and how they might inform the subject matter.

Participation—10%. Relates to All Outcomes b.1; b.2; c.3.

A grade will be assigned for attendance and participation in classroom discussion (full credit for full attendance and regular participation in class discussion).

Policy for Late Assignments:

Marks will be deducted for late assignments if there is no valid reason, such as illness (a doctor’s note may be required) or serious family crisis. The deduction will be 3% per day. Extensions must be approved before the due date.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR, ATTENDANCE, AND PARTICIPATION

- All thoughtful student participation is welcome. There are no “dumb questions” or “stupid answers.” Students will respect the contributions of other students, although they may disagree, and respond to them without ridicule or scorn.
- Students are expected to attend all online classes. Missing a class in order to work on other assignments is a consequence of poor planning and is unacceptable. If you are genuinely ill or there is a serious emergency, your absence is acceptable. Please email the professor to explain.
- Students are expected to be on time for class. Admittedly, unavoidable delays do occasionally happen. If you arrive late, please email an explanation to the professor after class.
- Students are also expected to stay for the entire class session.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

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.

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: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

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.

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.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you “tidy up” your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own as if it is one’s own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is the property of the instructors 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

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
1	May 5–11	Language as conveyor of meaning. Word and thematic studies.	*Class notes on Introduction to Hermeneutics *Porter (chs 1–7; due 5/5)	
2	May 12–18	Word and thematic studies continued.	*Class notes on Semantics	

3	May 19–25 No Class Monday (view recording on A2L)	A framework for biblical theology.	*Bartholomew & Goheen (due 5/19) *Class notes on Theology of the OT and NT (due 5/19)	Word Studies (due 5/23)
4	May 26–June 1	Literature as a framework for language.	*Class notes on Genre	
5	June 2–8	Major methods and tools in biblical studies.	*Hayes & Holladay (skip chs 2, 4, 12–14; due 6/2)	
6	June 9–15	Major methods and tools in theological studies.	*Veeneman (due 6/9) *Elective Readings in Treier (due 6/14)	Short Answer Essays (due 6/13) Reading Report (due 6/13)
7	June 16–20	A framework for systematic theology.		Relevance to Research Paper (due 6/20)