Ph.D./M.A. Seminar
Interdisciplinary Studies
Biblical Theology:
The Bible and Its Role within the Theological Disciplines
6R1030

McMaster Divinity College
Winter Semester 2025
Wednesday 11:00 am –12:50 pm

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I. Description

Drawing on recent studies and debates within the study of Biblical and Old Testament Theology, this course provides an opportunity for deeper reflection on the hermeneutics of Scripture within theology. In this course students will locate their academic discipline(s) within the broader context of theological and cultural reflection. It also exposes students to the resources of the biblical tradition for their M.A./Ph.D. studies.

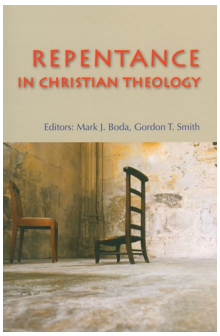
II. Purpose

A. Knowing: To know the breadth of disciplines within the theological academy and to locate one's own discipline within that context. To know the role that canonical resources play within the theological enterprise and the role that theological resources play within the exegetical enterprise. To know the development of the discipline of biblical theology and the impact of hermeneutical shifts on this discipline.

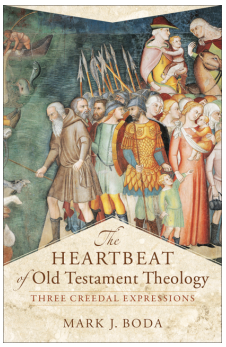
B. Being: To fully embrace the global agenda of the theological enterprise. To gain sensitivity and appreciation for theological disciplines outside one's own expertise. To reflect on and embrace a spiritual theology for the academic vocation.

C. Doing: To articulate the mission of one's own particular discipline within the larger theological enterprise. To showcase the biblical resources available for carrying out one's particular academic theological pursuit. To learn the skills and contact points for dialogue with those within other theological disciplines and for facilitating such dialogue among colleagues.

III. Reading Resources



Boda, Mark J., and Gordon T. Smith, eds. *Repentance in Christian Theology.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press (Michael Glazier), 2006.



Boda, Mark J. *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology: Three Creedal Expressions.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

Articles available in Avenue 2 Learn.

All required and recommended books 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. See also the Digital Theological Library for resources.

IV. Schedule

Phase 1: Hermeneutics, Biblical Theology and the Theological Disciplines (Jan 8, 15, 22, 29, Feb 5, 12)

The first phase of this course is a combination of reading, lecture and discussion to lay the historical and hermeneutical foundations for understanding the discipline of Biblical Theology within the larger context of the Theological Disciplines. Outside of class seminar participants will be reading and working on their Position Papers (see Phase 2) as well as doing preparatory reading for class discussion.

No Class Feb 19 (Reading Week)

Phase 2: Presentations and Discussion of Theological Discipline Position Papers (Feb 26, Mar 5).

The first week the students will work within smaller groups, which will each have representatives from various disciplines of theological research, facilitated by faculty members. The second week we will debrief these sessions.

Phase 3: Seminar Papers (Mar 12, 19, 26, Apr 2)

In these weeks seminar participants will present major seminar papers. These papers will be reviewed by classmates prior to class.

Mar 12:
Mar 19:
Mar 26:
Apr 2:

Phase 4: Wrap up (Apr 9)

V. Learning Experiences

A. Theological Discipline Position Paper

Contribution: For this paper the student will write a 5-6,000 word research essay articulating the hermeneutical, historical and theological foundation for the particular discipline they are pursuing within theology and the ways in which that discipline relates to the larger theological agenda.

- **Historical Foundations**: The paper will provide an orientation to the history of the particular sub-discipline within theology (thus, if Old Testament, then the history of the study of the Old Testament within Christian Theology and beyond; if Ethics, then the history of Ethics within Christian Theology and beyond). This history will have to be selective, by identifying key figures or streams over the past 2 millennia or over the past 2 centuries. The history should end with a concentrated overview of present approaches to the sub-discipline in which the student is taking her or his place.
- **Hermeneutical Foundations**: The paper will provide an orientation to key hermeneutical and epistemological issues which have shaped their particular sub-discipline of theology. This may be integrated with the historical foundations as one traces from pre-modern, to modern, to post-modern approaches to the study of the sub-discipline, but the paper should show sensitivity to recent shifts and advances in hermeneutics that must be taken into account when articulating one's sub-discipline of theology.
- **Theological Foundations**: Having oriented the reader to the historical and hermeneutical foundations for a particular sub-discipline of theology, the paper will then articulate where the student places herself or himself within the sub-discipline, based on the various approaches articulated in the historical foundations, taking into account the hermeneutical realities articulated in the hermeneutical foundations section, and then based on particular theological foundations. This theology may be drawn from whatever sources are considered legitimate for the student, ranging from biblical texts to creedal expressions, to systematic theological categories, etc. It is not enough to just describe the history and hermeneutics of a sub-discipline and then articulate a preference for a certain approach. One's approach must be linked to a theological basis.
- **Larger Theological Agenda**: Finally, the paper will show how the student's sub-discipline of theology relates to the broader array of theological sub-disciplines ranging from those focused on the horizon of Scripture (traditionally, exegetical theology, biblical theology) to those focused on the horizon of Culture (traditionally, systematic theology, historical theology, practical theology).

Although this paper will have a personal dimension, it must not be journalistic autobiography, but rather must engage in deep hermeneutical, historical and theological reflection that engages key primary and secondary theological resources. Those resources will include (but not be limited to) the articles read in class, as well as those available in the textbooks and in the course Avenue 2 Learn website, as well as any others the writer finds helpful. Papers are due in .pdf digital form by **February 15** (11:59 p.m.) via Avenue 2 Learn.

Peer Review: Contributors will be put in groups of 2-3 led by a Divinity College professor and will be required to read their group members' position papers prior to the February 14 class and come prepared to reflectively interact. A minimum 2 page written review (focus on the content of the paper, both areas for affirmation and improvement/clarification, no summary of the paper needed) is to be prepared for *each* other member of the group. This will form the foundation for the oral discussion in your groups (you will not read this formally, but use as a basis for conversation) and then a digital .pdf copy sent to the other members of the group immediately after your session. Each contributor should come prepared to articulate, defend and even revise their approach in light of the discussion.

Value: Contribution: 25%; Review: 10%
Due: Paper: February 15, 11:59 p.m.
Reviews: immediately after the session on February 26.
Submission: .pdf digital format to Avenue 2 Learn

B. Seminar Paper

For this learning experience the student will write a minimum 7000 word research paper that has a direct relationship to one's concentration for their advanced degree. There is some flexibility on the topic, but it must be related in some way to exegetical and biblical theology, that is, the study of the canonical resources for theological reflection. Half of this paper must focus on texts and discussions related to the discipline of exegetical/ biblical theology while the other half of the paper must interact with texts and discussions related to at least one other non-biblical theological discipline. The precise topic will be chosen in consultation with the professor, but it should be a topic that is conducive to interaction across the theological disciplines. For instance:

- one could study recent approaches to eschatology in systematic theology alongside recent exegetical/biblical theological work on eschatology in Pauline literature;
- one could study recent research within Old Testament studies on the genre of lament alongside recent systematic theology which uses trauma theory to structure theological categories;
- one could study the kerygmatic form of the gospels and recent discussion on this topic alongside recent pastoral theological reflection on homiletics;
- one could study recent approaches to war through the history of theology alongside a study of recent work on the Divine Warrior motif in the Bible.

The key is that you responsibly work with the best original and secondary resources within both biblical studies and non-biblical studies. In class the student will provide a precis of the paper (no more than 3 visual slides in no more than 5 minutes) and then class members are required to engage the paper in reflective and critical interaction (minimum 2 page review with focus on the content of the paper, both areas for affirmation and improvement/clarification, no summary of the paper needed) which will be posted to our Avenue 2 Learn website weekly and will form part of the basis of your participation mark.

Value: 45%
Due: The Wednesday prior to presentation in class at 11:59 p.m.
Submission: .pdf digital format to Avenue 2 Learn
Reviews: due 15 minutes after the session presented to Avenue 2 Learn

C. Class Experiences

This is a graduate seminar style class of collaborative learning in which professor and students are engaged in active learning together. Learning to critically (in its positive sense) engage material is essential to functioning in a graduate program and is expected of all students in our MA/PhD. It is expected that all students will not only attend these sessions, but also that they will assume responsibility for contributing to and learning from the experience. This means that readings will be completed prior to arrival in class with **reading responses to this reading posted to A2L (minimum 2 pages).** The goal is for both student and presenter to pursue the acquisition of knowledge in the learning environment. It is expected that ALL members of the class will ask questions and contribute insights whenever opportunity is given, during and following presentations by professor or student alike. Students are graded on their level of preparation and contribution.

Value: 20%

VI. Avenue 2 Learn

We'll be using Avenue 2 Learn this semester for sharing resources for reading, responding to one another's work as well as distributing papers for evaluation.

VII. Format and Evaluation

So I can properly evaluate your work the following guide is to be used for papers in this class.

- **Medium for Submission:** All material in this class is to be submitted in .pdf format to Avenue 2 Learn.
- **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/. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. Title page, footnoting where appropriate and bibliography are not included in the length required. Material should be written in excellent modern literary English with proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and rhetoric (including an introduction, conclusion and logical flow of argument). If it helps an outline may accompany the "paper" but this is not included in the length of the "paper." Secondary and Primary sources should be used, cited and footnoted appropriately.
- **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 (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).
  See further: http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations.
- **Citations**: You must cite the source of your material very carefully, not only when quoting from a section, but also when drawing from it as a resource. Quotations should be kept to a minimum as I favour summary and integration of secondary literature (footnoted).

- **Statement on 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, including AI) 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.
    - this is a special issue for those pursuing second and third degrees in theology. It is understood that students will be building on earlier ideas and work, but it is expected that students will not hand in material that is merely "warmed over" previous work. If there is reason for concern speak with the professor about this.

  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. 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. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty @ https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/
- **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.

So I can properly evaluate your work and help you grow in your biblical and writing skills the following evaluation guide should be kept in mind as you write:

- **Presentation**: Is the spelling correct? Does the grammar/syntax reflect proper English? Is the paper laid out properly?
- **Argumentation**: Is there a good introduction and conclusion? Does the argument flow with ample support? Is the question answered
- **Content**: Are all the points considered? Is there proper documentation of sources used?

VIII. Accountability

Note on Timeliness of Submissions: Since this is a seminar style course all participants must be timely in their submission of material. People will need to read the various submissions and once the schedule is set there is no room to switch dates. For that reason there are considerable penalties for late materials in this course. Each **DAY** a paper is late will mean **the loss of half a letter grade (5%).** Take this into account when planning out your semester.

Note on Timeliness of Attendance: From time to time you may find that you are late for class. Late arrivals, hereafter called "tardies," are unacceptable and will lead to a negative disposition in the professor and your classmates. Such "tardies," however, can be redeemed at the rate of Timbits for the entire class at the session following the second tardy as well as a coffee for the professor.

Rule of the Timbits (הלכה התמבתים): Because "tardies" raise the ire of the covenant community (bound by this covenantal syllabus document delivered here at the foot of the "Mountain"), those who are late for class must have a means by which to atone for such "accidental sins" (בִּשְׁגָגָה, if they are defiant sins, בְּיָד רָמָה, then the offender will be "cut off" from the community, see Num 15:27-31).[1] which means anyone late for class will need to bring Timbits for the entire class (מִנְחָה) no later than the next class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (נֶסֶךְ) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מִנְחָה and נֶסֶךְ will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (חַטָּאת, Leviticus 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שְׁלָמִים, Leviticus 3) enhancing the fellowship of the covenant community. See the high professor for further details and any torah-rulings (see Haggai 2:10-14) regarding specific situations.

Especially important is to take seriously the cry of Joel of old in 1:13:

חִגְרוּ וְסִפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים — Gird yourselves *with sackcloth*
הֵילִילוּ מְשָׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ — And lament, O priests;
בֹּאוּ לִינוּ בַשַּׂקִּים מְשָׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהָי — Wail, O ministers of the altar!
כִּי נִמְנַע מִבֵּית אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ׃ — Come, spend the night in sackcloth
O ministers of my God,
For the grain offering and the drink offering
Are withheld from the house of your God.

And note his promise of a reward to those repent in 2:14:

מִי יוֹדֵעַ יָשׁוּב וְנִחָם — Who knows whether He will turn and relent
וְהִשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה
מִנְחָה וָנֶסֶךְ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם — And leave a blessing behind Him,

Even a grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?

[1] Of course, see the "definitive" work on this: Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 53-54. For specific torah ruling also see the fuller הלכה התמבתים in Avenue 2 Learn.

IX. Select Bibliography

Key volumes on the relationship between Theological Disciplines

Bartholomew, Craig, Mary Healy, Karl Möller, and Robin Parry, eds.
2004 *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Vol. 5 of *Scripture and Hermeneutics Series*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Farley, Edward
1983 *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Green, J. B. and M. Turner, eds.
2000 *Between Two Horizons. Spanning New Testament studies and systematic theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Green, Joel B.
2012 *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation* (Theological Explorations for the Church Catholic). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Helmer, Christine, & Petrey, Taylor G., eds.
2005 *Biblical interpretation: history, context, and reality*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.

Marshall, I. Howard.
2004 *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.

Meadors, Gary T., ed.
2009 *Four Views of Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

Muller, Richard A.
1991 *The Study of Theology: From Biblical Interpretation to Contemporary Formulation*. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 7. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan.

Ollenburger, B. C., ed.
1991 *So Wide a Sea: Essays on Biblical and Systematic Theology*. Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies.

Treier, Daniel J.
2008 *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Welker, Michael, & Schweitzer, Friedrich, eds.
2005 *Reconsidering the Boundaries Between Theological Disciplines. Zur Neubestinnung der Grenzen zwischen den theologischen Disziplinen.* Theology: Research and Science 8. Münster: Lit Verlag.

Key journal volumes on the relationship between Theological Disciplines

***Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 167-289 (papers presented at the University of Chicago Divinity School, May 7-9, 1995)**

Collins, J. J.
1996 "Introduction: The Bible and Christian Theology," *Journal of Religion* 76:167-171.

Ogden, S. M.
1996 "Theology and Biblical Interpretation," *Journal of Religion* 76:172-188.

Wood, C. M.
1996 "Scripture, Authenticity, and Truth," *Journal of Religion* 76:189-205.

Morgan, R.
1996 "Can the Critical Study of Scripture Provide a Doctrinal Norm," *Journal of Religion* 76:206-232.

Jeanrond, W. G.
1996 "Criteria for New Biblical Theologies," *Journal of Religion* 76:233-249.

Donahue, John R.
1996 "The Literary Turn and New Testament Theology: Detour or New Direction?" *Journal of Religion* 76:250-275.
Long, B. O.
1996 "Ambitions of Dissent. Biblical Theology in a Postmodern Future," *Journal of Religion* 76:276-289.
Newsom, Carol A.
1996 "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth." *Journal of Religion* 76:290-306.
Perkins, Pheme
1996 "Spirit and Letter: Poking Holes in the Canon." *Journal of Religion* 76:307-327.
Rendtorff, Rolf
1996 "Recent German Old Testament Theologies." *Journal of Religion* 76:328-337.
Lefebure, Leo D.
1996 "The Wisdom Tradition in Recent Christian Theology." *Journal of Religion* 76:338-348.

***Biblical Interpretation* 6 (1998): 131-257**

Brett, M. G.
1998 "Biblical Studies and Theology. Negotiating the Intersections," *Biblical Interpretation* 6:131-141.
Sweeney, M. A.
1998 "Reconceiving the Paradigms of Old Testament Theology in the Post-Shoah Period. [inaugural lecture, School of Theology, Claremont, Ja 23 1996]," *Biblical Interpretation* 6:142-161.
Olson, D. T.
1998 "Biblical Theology as Provisional Monologization. A Dialogue with Childs, Brueggemann and Bakhtin," *Biblical Interpretation* 6:162-180.
Boer, Roland T.
1998 "Deutero-Isaiah: Historical Materialism and Biblical Theology." *Biblical Interpretation* 6:181-204.
Riches, John
1998 "Text, Church and World: In Search of a Theological Hermeneutic." *Biblical Interpretation* 6:205-234.
Watson, Francis
1998 "A Response to John Riches." *Biblical Interpretation* 6:235-242.
Jeanrond, W. G.
1998 "The Significance of Revelation for Biblical Theology," *Biblical Interpretation* 6:243-257.

Assorted Articles on Biblical Theology and the Disciplines

Blaising, Craig.
2017 "Integrating Systematic and Biblical Theology." In *Explorations in Interdisciplinary Reading: Theological, Exegetical, and Reception-Historical Perspectives*, edited by Robbie F. Castleman, Darian R. Lockett, and Stephen O. Presley, 158–67. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.

Capetz, Paul E.
2011 "Theology and the Historical-Critical Study of the Bible." *HTR* 104 (2011): 459–88.

Carson, D.
2000 "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner, eds., pp. 89-104 Leicester/Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.

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1985 "Biblical Theology: Situating the Discipline," *Understanding the Word: Essays in honor of Bernhard W Anderson* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements), J. T. Butler, E. W. Conrad and B. C. Ollenburger, eds., pp. 37-62 Sheffield: JSOT Press.

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1997 "Problems in a Theology of (Only) the Old Testament," *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, H. T. C. Sun and K. L. Eades, eds., pp. 275-280 Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans.

Porter, Stanley E.
2004 "Hermeneutics, Biblical Interpretation, and Theology: Hunch, Holy Spirit or Hard Work?" Pages 97-127 in *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology.* Edited by I. Howard Mashall. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

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1999 "Johann Philipp Gabler and the Delineation of Biblical Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 52:139-155.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J.
2000 "Exegesis and Hermeneutics," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner, eds., pp. 52-64 Leicester/Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press.

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Debate Between Riches and Watson (also part of Biblical Interpretation)

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Debate Between Gnuse, Brueggemann and Barr

Brueggemann, W.
2000 "James Barr on Old Testament Theology: A Review of *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective*," *HBT* 22:58-74.

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2001 "The Critic of Biblical Theologians: A Review of James Barr's *The Concept of Biblical Theology*," *BTB* 31:44-52.

Barr, J.
2000 "Predictions and Surprises: A Response to Walter Brueggemann's Review," *HBT* 22:93-119.

See Also:

Barton, John.
2016 "James Barr and the Future of Biblical Theology." Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology 70 (2016): 264–74.

The Character of Old Testament Theology

Anderson, B. W.
2000 "The Bible in a Postmodern Age," *HBT* 22:1-16.

Anderson, B. W. and S. Bishop
1999 *Contours of Old Testament theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

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