BBL501 Biblical Hermeneutics

14 Week Online Version

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

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“Biblical interpretation is not a spectator sport.”

\*\*\*\*\*Please read/study the Syllabus and Course Schedule carefully before the first week of the semester and confirm your reading via an email to Dr. Meadors.\*\*\*\*\*

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

Hermeneutics is an introduction to the process of investigating the meaning and significance of biblical texts. The general, special and literary principles of interpreting texts will be investigated through reading, video lectures, online discussion and research projects. A variety of special issues in hermeneutics will be considered in your reading program.

Hermeneutics is not just a course; it is an entire discipline with multiple facets. A teacher’s challenge in setting up this course is not what to include but what to leave out! Such decisions are a constant stress because of the value of so many items that contribute to the overall task of biblical interpretation. Hermeneutics is not a “Bible Study Methods” course, although it yields methodology for Bible study. Most inductive Bible study methods are merely reader-centered adventures into the words of the text without adequate understanding of literary conventions that create meaning in context. This course will provide you a foundational survey of the literary genre of Scripture so that your inductive observations are guided by valid principles of reading ancient texts. The goal of reading the Bible is not what it means to you but what it meant in its original setting (as best we can determine). When we determine what it meant we are on the valid road to determining what it means in our current setting.

“Biblical interpretation is not a spectator sport.” The student needs to be aware of the demands of doing a self-learning distance education course. This is a three-hour credit graduate level course. Six to nine hours “outside of class time” is the norm for homework. Therefore, to be successful, you need to plan for a concentrated 9-12 hours for your weekly class work. The time needed also depends on your reading and study skills. Success in your weekly course work requires this kind of commitment. In the context of distant education, your learning is mostly self-directed. Reading is a major component and its quality cannot be monitored by anyone but you. Reading is not just “getting it done,” but is an opportunity for lifelong learning.

# COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course should enable the student to

* read the variety of English Bibles with critical awareness.
* orally rehearse key points in the history of the interpretation of the Bible in the Western world.
* identify how systems read meaning into the Bible rather than from it.
* define the various major literary genre of the Bible and key ways in which they create meaning.
* organize the content of selected biblical books into presentable form.
* accept the value of building an exegetical library and gain some understanding in priority of acquisitions.

COURSE TEXTS

On the cost of building a good library: “Quality is like buying oats. Fresh oats require that you pay a fair price. However, if you are satisfied with oats that have already been through the horse, that comes a little cheaper!” (Amish Wisdom)

Since this is a distance education course, it is necessary to ensure that students have a selection of good sources available for their basic work (research pieces will require more). Therefore, the list of required texts is more than usual. Your required weekly reading averages 100+ pages per week…Look ahead; Plan ahead.

Please note that three of the main texts are all revised editions. Be sure you have these updated editions and not the first release. The Schedule lays out the flow of reading. K&S, COTC and KBH (see authors/titles below for these abbreviations) will be completely read/studied. Osborne will be included in the Schedule of readings, but only the Osborne readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are required. M.Div. and Academic M.A. students in biblical studies are encouraged to read all items in Osborne. While these texts have some overlap, their variety of statement and even the elements of repetition provide a broad based reading program for your self-directed learning.

Required Texts:

Today’s Parallel Bible (NIV NASB KJV NLT). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000. [must use this setup only]

Kaiser, Walter C. Jr., and Silva, Moises. Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning. Revised and Expanded Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007. [323pp.]

Klein, William W., Blomberg, Craig L., and Hubbard, Robert L. Jr. Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Revised and Updated. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004. [540pp.]

Osborne, Grant R. The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation. Revised and Expanded. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006. [185pp. required]

Sandy, D.B. and Giese, R.L., eds. Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995. [302pp.]

Stein, R.H. Interpreting Puzzling Texts in the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996. [Reprint on Demand by Wipf and Stock]

You will also read/study a variety of journal articles as identified in the course schedule reading and assignments. Please be sure you are acclimated to retrieving full-text articles from the CU/Seminary Library website.

Additional bibliography you should endeavor to peruse in your work for the semester if you have access to a Library.

Alter, Robert. The Art of Biblical Narrative. USA: Perseus Basic Books, 1981.

Alter, R. The Five Books of Moses. New York: W.W.Norton & Co., 2004. Bray, G. Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Bartholomew, Craig G., et.al., editors. Canon and Biblical Interpretation. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series Volume 7. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

Danker, F.W. Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study. Revised and Expanded Edition. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993.

Dockery, D.S., Mathews, K.A., and Sloan, R.B. Foundations for Biblical Interpretation. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.

Fokkelman, J. P. Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Strutural Analysis. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2004.

Fokkelman, J.P. Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide. Translated by I. Smit. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1999.

Fokkelman, J.P. Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide. Translated by I. Smit. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001.

Grelot, Pierre. The Language of Symbolism: Biblical Theology, Semantics, and Exegesis. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006.

Fee, Gordan D. and Strauss, Mark L. How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

Fox, E. The Five Books of Moses. New York: Schocken Books, 1995.

Hall, E.T. and Hall, M.R. Understanding Cultural Differences. Yarmouth, MA: Intercultural Press, Inc., 1990.

Lawlor, J.I. “Lot” in Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (InterVarsity Press).

Limburg, J. “Psalms, Book of” in the Anchor Bible Dictionary.

Longman, Tremper III. Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation Volume 3. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.

McEntire, M.H. “A Prophetic Chorus of Others: Helping Jeremiah Survive in Jeremiah 26.” Review and Expositor 101, Spring, 2004, pp. 301-311.

Meadors, Gary T., editor. Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Meadors, Gary T. “The ‘Poor’ in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke.” Grace Theological Journal 6.2 (1985): 305-314.

Mickelsen, A.B. Interpreting the Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963. [Old, but handy] Pemberton, G.D. “The Rhetoric of the Father in Proverbs 1-9.” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 30:1 (2005) 63-82.

Ryken, L. How to Read the Bible as Literature. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Sandy, D. Brent. Plowshares & Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002.

Scorgie, G.A. “Hermeneutics and the Meditative Use of Scripture: The Case for a Baptized Imagination.” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 44/2 [2001] 271-84.

Sprinkle, J. “Law and Narrative in Exodus 19-24.” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 47:2 (2004) 235-52.

Tate, W.R. Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.

Treier, Daniel J. Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Webb, W.J. Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.

Wegner, P.D. The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1999.

INTRODUCTION TO ODYSSEY

Odyssey is the name of the GRTS/CU online learning management system. This system primarily delivers online courses, but all courses taught by Seminary professors can be managed from this site. Please be advised, at the present time, you MUST use your Cornerstone email address for all communication. You will need to surf through Odyssey’s features in order to orient yourself to finding applicable material and performing tasks.

To Access Odyssey

Using your Web browser (Firefox is currently recommended. It is a free download), go to http://odyssey.cornerstone.edu and log on using your disciplenet ID number and password. Your log on name is usually your first initial and your student ID. You must however put zeros in between your initial and first number to make the total name 8 characters. For example, f0012345 or f0123456.

You may set/reset your password by selecting the “Reset Your Password” tab or by going to http://techsupport.cornerstone.edu and selected “Network Password Online Reset.” Your network and Odyssey password will always be the same.

If you experience difficulties related to the network or Odyssey, contact the Tech Support Center at 888-272-4001 or technologysupport@cornerstone.edu .

Getting Acquainted with Odyssey

Your class registration automatically links you to the Odyssey system. Your name must be on the course roster in order to access a course. If you make it into Odyssey and cannot get into your course, it will probably one of two reasons: (1) you have not registered properly; or (2) the course is not yet opened to students. Most courses open 2 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. ALWAYS orient yourself to the Course Syllabus and Schedule 1-2 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester so that your 1st week’s work goes smoothly.

Odyssey will provide you with your class Syllabus, Course Schedule, Lesson Discussion Boards, Gradebook, and many other course functions. Experiment with the tabs so you know Odyssey’s layout.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Pre-course communication with course facilitator

Each student is required to email the professor and confirm that the syllabus and course schedule have been read/studied and understood in the week prior to the course start date (i.e. prior to the first week of the semester). Also submit your “Student Information Sheet.” If you do not take this pre-study of the semester seriously, you will find yourself playing “catch up” until you do.

2. Track the Course Schedule carefully

The Course Schedule is under the “Lessons” tab in this course in Odyssey. You should print out this Syllabus and the Course Schedule since you will need to have constant access to these documents.

Online weeks run from Monday to Sunday. The early part of your week is devoted to listening to audio lectures (when provided), reading, learning the categories of the week and preparing the weekly assignments. Discussion Board original posts are typically due by Thursday at 11:59pm and responses by Sunday at 11:59pm.

3. Reading

Reading is education. Yet, it is an item that is difficult to assess (unless we give exams on textbooks!). Consequently, professors usually assign reading because they believe it will form you in a variety of ways. This formation is often undefined in class, but is a key to your education nonetheless. We are/know what we read. Poor reading patterns are a sign of mental stagnation.

The Reading aspect of every course is different. Reading for BibHerm requires learning what the methods are that unpack ancient literature and then reading examples that show you how this happens. There is no one textbook that provides for our needs. Even the combination chosen for this course leaves us wanting in numerous areas. Biblical interpretation requires life-long learning.

Read the required texts according to the class/reading schedule. Record your pattern of reading on the Course Schedule as a reading report (this schedule is emailed to Dr. Meadors during the final week). Merely initial the line provided or provide a statement of “late but read” or “read \_\_% late.” Providing a clear record of your performance avoids grade reduction. Blank entries are assumed to indicate that the assigned reading was not done. Be clear so you receive credit for what you have done.

NOTE: In this online context with more defined reading, there will be or seem to be some overlap. Enjoy it. The three “Rs” of learning are repetition, repetition, and repetition. Overlap is usually more general than exact. Learn from it.

4. Online discussion by means of original and response postings

The Course Schedule will direct you in your weekly work. At times it will require you to compose an “original post” to be posted in ODYSSEY by a certain time. An original post is a 400- word researched statement (sources are to be carefully cited, in-text abbreviated form is OK) from your reading and study in relation to the topic assigned. For example, during Week 1 you will post the results of your own research on three texts that differ in their English translation. This post represents data you originate in concord with the “lecture” of the week…therefore it is an original post. In Week 6, your original post will be your critique of a journal article. It is original because you are probing the significance and implications of the article you have read. The content of the original posts differ in nature but all have in common the fact that you must originate the material of the post from your research. Your original posts should be carefully crafted then copied/pasted into Odyssey.

A response post is when you critique material your classmates have posted. A response post will state agreement, disagreement, make suggestions for further thought and other aspects that represents your critical thinking about the original posts of others. Response posts should reflect researched opinion not just personal opinion. A response must probe and push thinking in an interactive way. Response posts are about 200 words in length. Citing sources in your response to validate your reflection is appropriate.

See the “Interactive Requirement” statement below for more details about your posts. The Schedule and audio notes will direct the content of your posts.

There are some hybrid type assignments in this course. For example, you will prepare an analysis of the Abraham narrative. This is longer than a typical “post,” and therefore will be an attached file in the stipulated place in ODYSSEY. The discussion about the narrative, however, will be posted in the ODYSSEY Discussion Board in a threaded manner (See Weeks 4 and 5). If you follow the weekly directions carefully (which also assumes you have read/studied the readings), you should do well.

5. There are no exams in this course.

6. Grading is as follows:

The student’s final grade for the course will be calculated on the basis of the

following percentages:

Reading as Assigned 20%

Reports, Posts and Responses (8% each) 80%

Week 1 Bible Text Post

Week 3 Bible Text Post

Weeks 4-5 Abraham Narrative Report

and Discussion

Week 6 Sprinkle Article Post

Week 7 Galatians Chart

Week 8 Poetry

Week 9 Wisdom Post

Week 11 Gospel Post

Week 12 Epistle PA & Outline

Week 13 Epistle discussion

Grading is both a science (e.g. assigning numerical value to objective material; following expected objective standards) and an art (professorial judgment in regard to the class continuum).

When grades are assigned, they represent the following judgments:

* A = Exceptional performance, clearly beyond the expected standards. Student exhibits comprehensive knowledge, cogent oral and written communication, independent application of course material, interaction with scholarly theory, correct spelling and grammar with proper form and style.
* B = Expected standards have been met. Student grasps goals of assignments, communicates with few errors, organizes and develops thoughts clearly, shows awareness of relevant scholarship.
* C = Expected standards have not been met in crucial areas. Basic understanding has been achieved but organization of ideas is weak, interaction with scholarship is inadequate, and communication is hindered by a significant lack of attention to the details of spelling, grammar, form and style.
* D = Expected standards have not been met. Work is marginally acceptable for credit. Serious misunderstanding of basic conceptual framework of course principles exists. Extreme weakness in analysis, organization and communication of ideas is apparent.
* F = Failure to meet standards permeates the work and/or evidence of cheating or plagiarism exists.

GRTS numerical grading scale:

98-100 = A 92-94 = B+ 82-84 = C+ 72-74 = D+ 0-67 = F

95-97 = A- 88-91 = B 78-81 = C 68-71 = D

85-87 = B- 75-77 = C-

ORIENTATION NOTES TO STUDENTS

Course Processing

The ODYSSEY site at Cornerstone University coordinates all activities for this course. Be sure to retrieve a syllabus and course schedule before the semester begins in order to start on-time. All audio lectures and handouts will also be available via ODYSSEY. Please remember all communication in this course must be channeled through the CU email system. This means you must set up your account two weeks in advance of the semester so that you can receive and send communications.

Educational Philosophy

The on-line courses available through Grand Rapids Theological Seminary were designed according to the learning paradigm. This paradigm shifts the focus from teaching to learning and places greater responsibility upon the learner. The role of a course instructor is not primarily to impart their knowledge, but to create valuable learning experiences utilizing diverse resources and educational methods. Success within this paradigm in on-line learning requires significant student initiative, discipline, and commitment. On-line learning is not for everyone, since it assumes greater levels of student ownership and engagement in the teaching and learning process. Learning is an opportunity not just a requirement.

Interactivity Requirement

Threaded discussions are a required aspect of all GRTS graduate level on-line courses. Each course will differ in the frequency and nature of interaction. There are two types of on-line interaction: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous interaction consists of on-line discussions that occur in real time and at the same time. Asynchronous interactions consist of on-line interaction over a defined period of time. Consult the course syllabus for the nature of interaction required for each on-line course.

There are two types of on-line posts: original posts and response posts. All posts are research based, not your personal opinions (all your work should show “lines of reason” with your research). Distant education research is no less rigorous than on-campus research (other than the challenge of amount of sources utilized). Original posts should include the student’s learning on the theoretical content, meaning, relationships of ideas, and implications of course material. Original posts should be grounded in source scholarship while also insightful, inquisitive, and reflective in nature on the basis of your reading/study. Typically, original posts may be crafted as responses to a set of questions posed by the course instructor, questions designed to foster reflection and discussion or to an assertion that requires critique. Response posts are offered in reply to the original posts of peers and should seek clarification for deeper understanding and/or extend the level of critical reflection on the topic of discussion.  Responses should probe the thinking of the posts, not merely agree with them.

All on-line interactions should be substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate. By substantive, we do not mean extended descriptions of personal opinion and personal experience. Nor do we mean comments that lack coherence and critical reflection. By substantive, we mean comments that are based on sound research and are therefore reflective and insightful, coherent, theoretically informed, and link theory to practice. This will require that you draft your statements, work them over, then post them. Since your posts are so short, they must be “tight.” Finally, all posts should be grammatically clean, which requires editing before the post is submitted. The interactivity grade for the course will be determined based on the number of posts as well as the character of the post (i.e., substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate).

See discussion board grading rubric / template attached.

Research at/through Miller Library

Miller Library provides online access for GRTS students to all of its subscription databases, as well as rapid-response email to students seeking research assistance, using the “Ask-A-Librarian” link on the Library website (www.Cornerstone.edu/library). The Library Director is also a “theological librarian,” and therefore readily able and eager to assist with most biblical and theological research questions. In addition to the Library’s very adequate in-house collection of resources, several thousand full-text journals and ebooks are available online, linked to the library’s catalog. Learning to retrieve full-text journal articles for your research before you begin this course is essential. Please visit Miller Library at www.cornerstone.edu/library.

The use of Miller Library’s online features is essential to success in distance learning. We are what we read. Many online students are in isolated places without adequate access to a Library for graduate level learning. Some of this challenge can be alleviated by accessing journal articles via Miller’s online provision. Some e-books are available, but this domain is not as helpful for biblical studies as the journal article feature.

You need to experiment searching for journal articles. Go to the Miller Library web site (http://www.cornerstone.edu/library) and select the search tab for “Articles” and “All Databases A-Z.” Select “ATLA Religion” from that window.

Miller Library also provides inter-library loan features that you may need if you are doing a full term paper.

Under “Library Services,” choose “RefWorks and Style Guides” for help with the form and style of footnotes and papers.

When you become an alumnus of GRTS, you have “eternal” access to the Library services. This service will help you to become a life-long learner.

Papers and Projects

Papers and projects should conform to Turabian/Chicago Manual Style and the SBL Handbook on Style (Bible and Theology courses) or APA Style (Ministry and Counseling courses). Review the entire course syllabus or consult with the course facilitator for the specific requirement for this course. The following link will provide you access to the Turabian/Chicago Manual Style Guide, APA Style Guide, and the GRTS Guidelines for Biblical and Theological Papers and Thesis.

Style Guides

http://grts.cornerstone.edu/about/faculty/osborn/courses/the501/stylehelp/

Technology Support

Students experiencing technological difficulty in accessing a course and/or negotiating technological aspects of the course are encouraged to contact the Cornerstone University Informational Technology Center. IT staff can be reached at 616-949-5300 (ext. 1510), http://www.cornerstone.edu/departments/information\_systems , or e-mail to technologysupport@cornerstone.edu

Disability Accommodations

Grant Rapids Theological Seminary will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Copyright Violation and Plagiarism

Copyright violation and plagiarism have serious ramifications for Cornerstone students, both legally (the former) and ethically (the latter). Unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted materials, including downloaded files of various kinds, can result in criminal charges and fines. Plagiarizing another’s words or ideas (passing them off as your own) can result in loss of grade or failure. For a fuller explanation of these issues or of CU’s copyright policy, see Miller Library’s website under “Research: Copyright Questions.”

Policy for Incompletes for an Online Course

Due to the participatory nature of an online course, it is not possible to offer incompletes for weekly expectations. You should decide early that you are able to maintain the pace of the course. If you cannot, it is wiser to drop and reengage at a later time.

SCHEDULE

SEE SEPARATE “COURSE SCHEDULE” DOCUMENT UNDER “LESSONS” TAB.

\*\*\*MAINTAIN YOUR CLASS SCHEDULE SHEET FOR A READING REPORT OF YOUR WEEKLY WORK.

TEMPLATE FOR GRADING ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS

Course:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Week \_\_\_\_ Discussion Board on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| TEMPLATE FOR GRADING ONLINE DISCUSSION BOARDS | | |
| Requirement | Points  Assigned | Points  Earned |
| Post original post on time (posting original or response posts after the period expires will be assessed a significant penalty since purpose of DB is missed) | 5 | X555 |
| Original post evidences critical, evaluative thinking | 20 |  |
| Original post clearly and cogently reflects the required reading | 20 |  |
| Each post connects well to sources with quotes and page number citations | 10 |  |
| Posts response posts on time | 5 |  |
| Post at least two responses to classmate posts | 10 |  |
| Response post go beyond personal opinion and show evidence of researched observations | 10 |  |
| All posts meet length requirements | 5 |  |
| All posts evidence careful composition | 10 |  |
| Student surfaced sources beyond the required texts/readings | 5 |  |
| TOTAL POINTS SCORED:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | | |

STUDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please cut/paste and email the following to the course facilitator during your pre-course review week: gmeadors@cornerstone.edu

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT ID # \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DEGREE PROGRAM AT GRTS: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ HOURS COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

WHAT IS YOUR PROXIMITY TO A LIBRARY THAT HOUSES BIBLICAL STUDIES MATERIAL? [Don’t neglect to check local universities since most have a religion dept.]

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LIST PREVIOUS EDUCATION AND DEGREES:

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EMAIL CONTACT INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ELECTIVE READING REPORT FORM

FOR DR. MEADORS’ CLASSES

[Use for any reading in addition to assigned in schedule]

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