

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study
July Intensive Term 2 | July 25 – August 4, 2016

COS-121 Bible 1: Introduction
Faculty: Dr. Rebecca Abts Wright
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Please read this study guide *carefully*. We have split the previous pre-course work up into two parts. **Everyone will have one assignment due by June 1 submitted via Blackboard and one assignment due the first day of class, also submitted via Blackboard.**

Please schedule time each week to work on your pre-course work. If you are able to do this you will have the opportunity to come to DC next summer and enjoy some Sabbath time with us. Please let Sara Sheppard or Doug Powe know if we can help you with this in any way.

Objective:

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

Goals:

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

Textbooks:

To obtain textbooks or view the list go to **My Wesley** on the website (<https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/MyWesley>) and click on the button that says “Textbooks” From there select your program (Course of Study Summer Intensive), then select your course number. You may order books on-line directly from our e-store.

You may also order your books from Cokesbury or any other bookseller or borrow from friends.

Required Texts:

Fee, Gordon & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*
Hayes, John & Carl Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*
Anderson, Bernhard. *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*
Fee, Gordan. *Gospel Parallels*

Reference:

The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary
Harper Collins Bible Dictionary
NRSV – New Interpreter's Study Bible

Written assignment – each written assignment should be no more than 10 pages in length, double spaced with one inch margins.

Assignment Part 1 Due June 1, 2016 posted to Blackboard

1. Read Bernhard Anderson's *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* before answering these questions.
 - Isn't the Bible finished? In what way can it be described as “unfolding?”
 - What does Anderson mean by using the word “drama?”
2. On page 92 Anderson quotes Thomas Merton who said “It is of the very nature of the Bible to affront, perplex and astonish the human mind. Hence the reader who opens the Bible must be prepared for disorientation, confusion, incomprehension, and perhaps outrage.”

In no more than two pages, discuss your reaction to this quotation. How do you think people in your parish would react?

[Note to students: You probably cannot deal with this question adequately if you start reading the book on page 92. You *must* read the whole book in order to understand what Anderson and his use of Merton are actually talking about!]
3. The heart of Anderson's book is eight “studies,” each of which includes some “Questions to Think About.” Write a two-three page review of this portion of the book with these questions in mind: Do you think this is a study you would be able to

use with your congregation(s)? Is it too simple, too advanced, or about right for where you think your folks are in terms of Bible study?

4. You have probably seen the bumper sticker that says, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it."

- How do you think the person who puts that on the car would react to Anderson's book?

- What do you think might be Anderson's reaction to the bumper sticker?

- Explain as you would to an adult parishioner why we are never finished with Bible study.

5. Choose any one of the questions on the Genesis chapter (found on pp. 26-27) and answer it in not more than two pages.

Part 2 Due the first day of class, posted to Blackboard

1. The book of Genesis is largely a narrative. The books of Amos and Hosea are quite different. They are written primarily in poetry rather than prose. They do not have a "plot" in the same way that Genesis has an overarching story line. Using examples from each of the three books, describe the similarities and differences as you would to an adult Bible study group in your parish.

2. Name and describe some significant differences between Amos and Hosea on the one hand and earlier prophets who do not have books named after them – Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha, for example.

3. What does Amos consider to be Israel's underlying sin? What does Hosea consider their primary sin? How do you account for the differences you find?

4. Why were letters such as the one to the Philippians written? Why were they included in the Bible?

5. Using *Gospel Parallels*, identify one significant passage that is in Mark and not in the other gospels. Identify one significant passage that is in another gospel and not in Mark. What does this say about the responsible use of the gospels in the church?

Grading:

The instructor assumes that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a "B" grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members review their work to identify strengths and problems.

A "B" means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.

A "B+" means the assignment is also well crafted.

An “A-“ means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also probes the issues with considerable insight.

An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.

A “C-“ means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

A “D” means the individual needs to see me.

An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.

Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to a B-) for assignments handed in after the start of class, and a full letter grade for any assignments 24 hours past due.

Assignments over 48 hours past due will be lowered two letter grades. We need to talk if an assignment is over 72 hours past due. Please note only two unexcused absences are allowed before grade is lowered one step.

Final course grades are mailed to the student, GBHEM in Nashville and the student’s conference representative by September 30. Grades are not posted on-line.

Inclusive Language

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

Academic Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty member have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regards the following as form of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another students paper
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- Using unauthorized material during an examination
- Borrowing or presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office 202-885-8688.