

Bible I: Introduction
CS-121
August 2017
September 15-16, 2017

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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.

I. Expected Outcomes

The successful student will be able to:

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, Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible

Overall, the successful student will develop the skills, competence, and confidence to articulate informed interpretations that honor the text's complexity.

II. Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading

Generally, students are expected to spend approximately 4 hours weekly outside of class in preparation for this course. Students will be expected to check regularly their e-mail and our Blackboard site for updates or changes to our class schedule.

There will be opportunities to assess progress throughout the course via weekly Blackboard postings. These assignments will give you an opportunity to receive feedback from fellow students and from your instructor, leading to a stronger final product.

The assignment types and percentages are as follows:

Posted Blackboard Assignments (40%)

The short weekly assignments leading up to our September class are intended to help you critically think about the readings and to prepare for the final assignment. You should plan to comment on the posts of your fellow students offering critical feedback, ideas, or suggestions. **These assignments should be posted to Blackboard by the dates indicated.**

Class Participation (25%)

Active participation in class discussion boards and in the in-person sessions are crucial to your learning. Your contributions in class should be informed and relevant to our topics and be expressed in language that is respectful of other's viewpoints.

Final Assignment (35%)

The final assignment will provide an opportunity to practice the skills and test the knowledge you've gained over the semester as they relate to the expected outcomes stated above.

The following grading scale will be used for the final assignment and course grade: 93-100 A; 90-92.99 A-; 87-89.99 B+; 83-86.99 B; 80-82.99 B-; 77-79.99 C+; 73-76.99 C; 70-72.99 C-; 67-69.99 D+; 60-66.99 D; 0-59.99 F.

VI. Textbooks

1. The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Fourth Edition)
2. Magonet, Jonathan. *A Rabbi Reads the Bible*. London: SCM Press, 2004.
3. Coogan, Michael. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
4. Anderson, Janice Capel and Stephen D. Moore, eds. *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Part I: Getting Our Bearings

Week of August 1, 2017: Reading the Bible in Translation

Read:

- Read: Hunter, Alastair G. *Psalms*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Pp. 15-62. ("Which Translation," "Readers and Reading" and "The Language of Poetry")
- Read: Crim, Keith R. "Modern English Versions of the Bible." In *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. I*, 22-32. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Write:

A parishoner sends you an email asking which Bible translation would be best for an upcoming Disciple Bible Study course. She already reads the Bible devotionally at home, and enjoys The Good News Bible, but she wants to have the right type of Bible for the more serious, historical and theological study of the Bible that the study group will offer. In two pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins), offer her a reply weighing the pros and cons of at least three of the more popular Bible choices. Your reply should show evidence that you've read and understood the assigned readings. Post your 2 page response to Blackboard by Saturday, August 5, 2017.

Week of August 6, 2017: Interpretation

Read:

- Read: Learning How to Read (Pp. 18-29) in: Magonet, Jonathan. *A Rabbi Reads the Bible*. London: SCM Press, 2004.
- Read: Strategies for Reading (Pp. 1-33) in: Gunn, David M. and Danna Nolan Fewell. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Write:

You are teaching a Bible study at church and recently reviewed some of the different critical approaches to the Bible. Your class is having trouble remembering what they are, what they mean, and why they might be important. You decide to make the class a two-page (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins) hand out with brief descriptions of each critical approach and how it came to be or why it is useful to know about when you read the Bible. Your handout should list and describe: historical criticism, form criticism, literary criticism, redaction criticism, source criticism, and feminist criticism. Post your 2 page handout to Blackboard by Saturday, August 12, 2017.

Also, find a classmate's post from last week's assignment (the email to a parishoner seeking a new Bible for Bible study). Read your classmate's email response to the parishoner. Respond to your classmate as though you were his/her parishoner responding to the email. Was the email clear? Do you understand the differences in translation? Do you have questions? Which Bible would you choose and why? Your response should be one page (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins). Post your 1 page response to a classmate to Blackboard by Saturday, August 12, 2017.

Part II: Literature of the Bible

During these three weeks, you are expected to read the assigned readings and respond with the written responses, which you will post to Blackboard for your classmates to see. Over the course of the three weeks, respond thoughtfully to two assignments prepared by your classmates post with a one page (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins) response. Raise questions to your classmate. What is clear? What is unclear? How did you understand the reading similarly or differently? What can you share, from your context, that might be constructive to your classmate's post?

Week of August 13, 2017: Hebrew Narrative

Read:

- Genesis
- Read: Introduction to the Pentateuch in:
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)
- Read "Genesis" (Introduction by David M. Carr preceding the Book of Genesis) in:
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)

Write:

You are preparing a children's Sunday School lesson on Abraham. Prior to the lesson, you must explain who Abraham is to the other adults who will be assisting with the lesson. In one page (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins) describe Abraham's character in the book of Genesis. What are his main characteristics? What are his flaws? Why is he important to the Christian faith tradition? Why is he a notable character for the children to learn about? What are some of the key stories about Abraham that you should highlight for the children and how will you choose them? What will your criteria be? Post your one page summary of Abraham's character to Blackboard by August 19, 2017.

Week of August 20, 2017: Prophets

Read:

- Amos and Hosea

- Read: "Introduction to the Prophetic Books" in:
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)
- Read "Amos" (Introduction by Gregory Mobley preceding the Book of Amos) in:
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)
- Read "Hosea" (Introduction by Gregory Mobley preceding the Book of Hosea) in:
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)

Write:

You are teaching a youth group lesson on the prophets and realize that your youth think "prophets" are roughly synonymous with "wizards." In one page (12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins) define "prophet," using Amos and Hosea as examples. To what are the prophets responding? Who is their audience? What are the prophets doing? Post your one page explanation to Blackboard by August 26, 2017.

Week of August 27, 2017: Gospel and Epistles

Read:

- Mark and Philippians
- Read: "Introduction to the Gospels" in
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)
- Read "Mark" (Introduction by Richard A. Horsley preceding the Gospel According to Mark) in:
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)
- Read: "Introduction to the Letters/Epistles in the New Testament" in
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)
- Read "Philippians" (Introduction by Carolyn Osiek preceding the Letter to the Philippians) in
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Fully Revised Fourth Edition)

Write:

You are planning a Lenten Bible study on the book of Mark and you need to write a brief newsletter announcement advertising the study. Compose a brief 1 page (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins) summarizing the contents of the book and what makes it different from the other three gospels. Post your one page announcement to Blackboard by September 2, 2017.

Part III: Developing Interpretive Skill

Prior to our class meeting September 15-16, 2017 please complete the following assigned readings. There is a substantial amount of reading here. Pace yourself! Read a bit each week through August, and MAKE NOTES! When we meet in September, we will work on putting the literature of the Bible together with the many different ways of reading the Bible so that you develop a kaleidoscope of questions you can use to interpret the Bible on your own.

Historical Approaches to the Bible

Read:

- Genesis
- Read Chapters 2, 3, 4 (Pp.12-42) in
Coogan, Michael. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

- Amos and Hosea
- Read Premnath, D.N. "Amos and Hosea: Sociohistorical Background and Prophetic Critique." *Word and World* 28, no. 2 (2008): 125-132.

Literary Approaches to the Bible

Read:

- Mark 4-8
- Read "How Does the Story Mean?" by Elizabeth Struthers Malbon in: Anderson, Janice Capel and Stephen D. Moore, eds. *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.

Theological Approaches to the Bible

Read:

- Genesis 1-3
- Read "Leaving the Garden: Did They Fall or Were They Pushed?" (Pp 121-132) in: Magonet, Jonathan. *A Rabbi Reads the Bible*. London: SCM Press, 2004.
- Philippians
- Read Winger, M. "Grace to Sin: Names and Abstractions in Paul's Letters," *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 41 (2), 1999: 145-175.

Final Assignment

Choose one of the books of the Bible that we read together (Genesis, Amos, Hosea, Mark, or Philippians) as the subject of a six week Bible study you would offer in your church for a small group of adult learners.

Your ten-page plan should include:

- A one-page description of the role of the pastor/teacher as interpreter of the scriptures through the course of the study. What should participants expect of their pastor/teacher? What will the pastor/teacher do? What won't the pastor/teacher do? What role does the community have (in addition to, or as opposed to, the pastor/teacher) in interpretation?
- A one-page summary of the contents of your chosen book of the Bible. What is the book about? What are the major themes, characters, and ideas?
- A one-page newsletter article leading up to the Bible study that would describe the genre, historical background, sociohistorical context, audience, canonical location, and themes of the book in a way that would entice people to want to learn more.
- A one-page outline of the Bible study plan. How would you organize the six weeks? Consider how you would work in the historical, literary, and theological aspects of the book.
- One-page lesson plans for each of the six weeks of study (six pages total). These can be in true outline format, but should include enough detail so that your instructor understands the kind of interpretive approach you would take and what conclusions you hope the class would draw at each session as a result. You need not be an expert on your book of the Bible – but you must demonstrate an understanding for the type of historical, literary, or theological questions that are reasonable to raise of the biblical text you have chosen.

You will be evaluated on how your understanding of the basics of interpretation, your overall understanding of the arch of the book you've chosen to study, and how well you are able to organize the pieces coherently

for others to understand. It is not necessary that you do extensive research, but it is necessary that you demonstrate that you have read and understood the assigned class readings.