

Wesley Theological Seminary  
Course of Study Philadelphia Satellite School  
Fall 2017

CS-121: Bible I: Introduction

September 22-23, 2017 (Exton, PA at the Comfort Inn)  
October 21, 2017 & November 4, 2017 at West Chester UMC, West Chester, PA

**Instructor**            Amy Beth Jones, Ph.D.  
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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 written assignments. 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. Gordon Fee and Douglass Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth*
2. John Hayes and Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A beginner's Handbook*
3. Bernhard Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*

### **Reference:**

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

## **Part I: Getting Our Bearings**

Please prepare the assignments under "Part I" for our September 22-23, 2017 class meeting.

### **Reading the Bible in Translation**

#### **Read:**

- Fee & Stuart, "The Basic Tool: A Good Translation" (chapter 2)
- Hayes & Holladay, "Grammatical Criticism" (chapter 4)

#### **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 **one page** (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1 inch margins), offer her a reply weighing the pros and cons of at least two of the more popular Bible choices. Your reply should show evidence that you've read and understood the assigned readings. Bring your response on September 22, 2017.

### **Interpretation**

#### **Read:**

- Read: Learning How to Read (Pp. 18-29) in: Magonet, Jonathan. *A Rabbi Reads the Bible*. London: SCM Press, 2004.
- Hayes & Holladay, "Introducing Exegesis" (chapter 1)
- Fee & Stuart, "Introduction: The Need to Interpret" (chapter 1)
- Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*"

**Write:**

You are teaching a Bible study at church and have introduced the idea of reading the Bible critically to the group. An outspoken gentleman is very resistant to what he calls "the way scholars rip apart the Word of God" and doesn't understand why the group can't just read the very plain words on the page and simply do what the Bible says. Why do you insist on mudding up what is perfectly clear and plain as day, he asks. You're too flustered to respond to him in front of the group, but you go home and journal your response, where you present a logical and thoughtful, but pastoral, response to this gentleman's objections. In your journal entry, be sure to reflect on what your role is, as pastor, to present, encourage, and guide critical readings of the Bible. Bring your **1 page** (12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins) journal entry to class on September 22, 2017.

## Part II: Literature of the Bible

Please prepare the "Part II" assignments for our October 21, 2017 class meeting.

### Hebrew Narrative

**Read:**

- Genesis
- Tod Linafelt, "Hebrew Narrative" in NIB One Volume Commentary
- Fee and Stuart "The Old Testament Narratives: Their Proper Use" (chapter 5)
- 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 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? Bring your one page summary of Abraham's character to class on September 30, 2017.

### Prophets

**Read:**

- Amos and Hosea
- Robert R. Wilson, "Prophetic Literature," in NIB One Volume Commentary
- Fee & Stuart, "The Prophets: Enforcing the Covenant in Israel" (chapter 10)

**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? Bring your one page explanation to class on October 7, 2017.

**Gospel and Epistles**

**Read:**

- Mark and Philippians
- Susan R. Garrett, “Narratives of the New Testament” in NIB One Volume Commentary
- David Downs, “Letters,” in NIB One Volume Commentary
- Fee & Stuart, “The Epistles: Learning to Think Contextually” (chapter 3)
- Fee & Stuart, “The Gospels: One Story, Many Dimensions” (chapter 7)

**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. Bring your one page announcement to class on October 14, 2017.

**Part III: Developing Interpretive Skill**

Please prepare the Part III readings and assignments prior to our November 4, 2017 class meeting.

There is a substantial amount of reading here. Pace yourself! Read a bit each week and **MAKE NOTES!** When we, 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.

Before starting these assignments, read:

- Fee & Stuart, “The Epistles: The Hermeneutical Questions”

**Historical Approaches to the Bible**

**Read:**

- Hayes & Holladay, “Historical Criticism: The Setting in Time and Place” (chapter 3)
- Amos and Hosea
- Read Premnath, D.N. “Amos and Hosea: Sociohistorical Background and Prophetic Critique.” *Word and World* 28, no. 2 (2008): 125-132.

**Write:**

- After you’ve read Premnath’s “Amos and Hosea” fill out the “Discerning the Logic of an Article” guidesheet (found on Blackboard), using everything you’ve read to this point to help guide your interpretation and help you intuit the assumptions, ideology, and overarching rhetorical thrust of the article. What critical methods does Premnath employ? How does Premnath do it? How do you evaluate the argument? (**approx. 1 page**). Please bring your completed “Discerning the Logic” worksheet for Premnath’s article to class on November 4, 2017.

## Literary Approaches to the Bible

### Read:

- Hayes & Holladay, "Literary Criticism: The Composition and Rhetorical Style of the Text" (chapter 5)
- 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.

### Write:

- After you've read Malbon's "How Does the Story Mean?" fill out the "Discerning the Logic of an Article" guidesheet (found on Blackboard), using everything you've read to this point to help guide your interpretation and help you intuit the assumptions, ideology, and overarching rhetorical thrust of the article. What critical methods does Malbon employ? How does Malbon do it? How do you evaluate the argument? (**approx. 1 page**). Please bring your completed "Discerning the Logic" worksheet for Malbon's article to class on November 4, 2017.

## Theological Approaches to the Bible

### Read:

- Hayes & Holladay, "Exegesis with a Special Focus: Cultural Economic, Ethnic, Gender, and Sexual Perspectives." (chapter 11)
- 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.

### Write:

After you've read Winger's "Grace to Sin" fill out the "Discerning the Logic of an Article" guidesheet (found on Blackboard), using everything you've read to this point to help guide your interpretation and help you intuit the assumptions, ideology, and overarching rhetorical thrust of the article. What critical methods does Winger employ? How does Winger do it? How do you evaluate the argument? (**approx 1 page**). Please bring your completed "Discerning the Logic" worksheet for Winger's article to class on November 4, 2017.

After you've read the above assignments, please read:

- Hayes & Holladay, "Employing the Fruits of Biblical Exegesis" (chapter 13)