

CS-121 Bible 1

Wesley Theological Seminary
Weekend Course of Study: September 18,19 and October 23,24, 2020
Offered Virtually, New England Annual Conference

Class: CS-121, Bible 1
Faculty: Thomas L. Blackstone, Ph.D.
Email: ThomasLBlackstone@gmail.com

Virtual Platform: Zoom. (A link will be sent prior to the first class)

Objectives:

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:

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

Required Texts:

Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*, 4th Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) [ISBN: 978-0800635602]

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014) [ISBN 978-0310517825]

John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd Edition (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007) [ISBN: 978-0664227753]

Suggested Reference Texts:

One Volume Bible Commentaries:

New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary, 2010
Harper Collins Bible Commentary, 2000

Oxford Bible Commentary, 2001

Bible Dictionaries:

Harper Collins Bible Dictionary, 2011

Eerdmans' Dictionary of the Bible, 2000

A Good Study Bible (we will be using the New Revised Standard Version in Class):

The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version 5th Edition

Assignments:

Two written assignments (each approximately 10 pages) will count 70% of the final course grade: the first (due 9/17) counts 35%; the second (due October 22) also counts 35%. In-class work and participation will count the remaining 30% of the final course grade.

Students are to turn in their first assignment by 1 PM, Thursday, 9/17. Students are to turn in their second assignment by 1 PM, Thursday 10/22. Assignments are to be emailed to ThomasLBlackstone@gmail.com. Grades will be reduced a step (e.g. from B to B-) for assignments handed in after due date and time (1 PM). Grades will be reduced a full letter (e.g. from B to C) for assignments handed in more than 24 hours late. Class sessions will assume that students have completed their assignments.

Format: Papers should be double-spaced Times New Roman 12-point font, with one inch margins on all sides.

Grading: Papers will be graded based on your grasp of the question as informed by the readings but not captive to them; original thought that reflects a personal engagement with the issues discussed; and few, if any, errors of spelling, grammar, or punctuation (if written work is not your strong suit, PLEASE seek out a proofreader so that I see your best effort). Work which fulfills these basic expectations will be given a "B" range grade. The "A" grade is awarded only for work that shows a creative mastery of the written work.

When writing your essays please be attentive to the wording of the questions and answer what is asked, engage with the assigned readings by specific reference to them (appropriately cited), and demonstrate understanding of the material by putting it into your own words.

Plagiarism is presenting another's work or ideas as your own and will not be tolerated. It is the academic equivalent of theft and has no place in the education of someone for Christian ministry. If in doubt, cite your source!

Whether you are drawing on the assigned readings or on other resources, you must properly cite your sources. I do not require any particular format. Parenthetical

citations or footnotes are equally acceptable. For readings assigned for this class, include author/page numbers (e.g. Anderson, 91). For Bible citations provide book/chapter/verse (e.g. Mark 1:1), along with the translation if relevant.

Assignment # 1: To be emailed by 1 PM on Thursday, 9/17. The assignment should be submitted as a single Word document or PDF. The file name should include your name, CS121, and Assignment No 1 (e.g. Blackstone_CS121_No1.docx).

- A. Read Hayes and Holladay, Chapter 1, and Fee and Stuart, Chapter 1. Reflect theologically on the role of the Pastor as preacher and teacher in light of the insights of these chapters. Who is the pastor in the midst of a community based upon a sacred text? (2 pages)
- B. Read Anderson, Chapter 1: In the Beginning. Answer one of the questions on pages 26,27 (your choice). (2 pages)
- C. Read Hayes and Holladay, Chapters 2-6. Choose one of the forms of Criticism discussed (Textual, Historical, Grammatical, Literary, or Form) and reflect on why such an approach would be important to a person charged with interpreting a text within a community. (1 page)
- D. Read Fee and Stuart, chapter 11 on the Psalms. Pick a Psalm and interpret its lessons for a congregation you are or have been a part of. What is the theological/pastoral value of this Psalm to your community? (2 pages)
- E. Read Anderson, lessons 2 through 5. Reflect on Isaiah 52:12-53:13. Outline the passage and interpret the importance of these verses for Israel and the Christian Church (3 pages)

Assignment # 2: To be emailed by 1 PM on Thursday, 10/22. The assignment should be submitted as a single Word document or PDF. The file name should include your name, CS121, and Assignment No 2 (e.g. Blackstone_CS121_No2.docx).

- A. Read Hayes and Holladay, chapters 7 through 11. Choose one of the forms of Criticism discussed (Tradition, Redaction, Structuralist, Canonical, Special Focus) and reflect on why such an approach would be important to a person charged with interpreting a text within a community. (1 page)
- B. Read Fee, chapters 2 and 7 in preparation for a class discussion of issues of translation and the nature of the Gospels. Write an essay defending keeping all four Gospels in the Christian New Testament rather than either harmonizing them into one book or choosing only one to keep. (3 pages).
- C. Read Anderson, Lessons 6-8 and pages 99 to 105 for discussion
- D. Read Hayes and Holladay, chapters 12 and 13. Using the advice given in chapter 12, write a 6-page exegetical analysis of **either** Mark 8:27-9:1 **or** Philippians 2:1-11. (A guide to writing an exegetical paper will be shared during our first class meeting). Be prepared to discuss your understanding of your passage during our time together.