

**Wesley Theological Seminary**  
**Weekend Course of Study: March 12-13 and April 16-17, 2021**

CS-121 Bible I: Introduction

Faculty: Rev. Jamie Coles Burnette

Email: [jcoles@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:jcoles@wesleyseminary.edu)

Course Format & Times:      Online via Zoom (link will be posted on Blackboard the week leading up to the first day of class)  
Friday, March 12<sup>th</sup>: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>: 8 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup>: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>: 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

**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:**

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:**

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

**Required Texts (other articles may be assigned and posted to Blackboard):**

1. Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*, 4th Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) [ISBN-13: 978-0800635602]
2. John H. Hayes and Carol R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd Edition (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007) [ISBN-13: 978-0664227753]

3. The New Interpreters Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003) [ISBN 978-0687278329] (the ISBN is for the hardcover but of course paperback is also fine)

**Reference Books** (These are helpful to help you build your library, and to have on hand to help you complete class assignments. You may obtain/access a copy from a library, church, etc.; other information is listed below should you decide to purchase):

*Harper's Bible Commentary*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988.

*Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1982--.

*New International Biblical Commentary*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992--.

*The New Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994--.

*The Oxford Bible Commentary*. New York: Oxford U.P., 2001.

## Guidelines for Submitting Work

### **Format:**

Papers should have one-inch margins on all sides, be double-spaced, and use a 12-point Times New Roman font. Please proofread papers carefully, avoiding as much as possible spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors, which can easily diminish the effectiveness of your writing.

### **Grading:**

Students should be clear from the start that good, solid work, fulfilling the assignments responsibly, deserves the "B" grade. The "A" is awarded only for work that is excellent.

### **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 forms of plagiarism or dishonesty:

Copying from another student's paper

Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another person

Using unauthorized material during an examination

Borrowing and presenting as one's own (i.e., without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another

If in doubt, ask in advance. Do not risk the possibility that your work will not be accepted due to an issue of plagiarism.

Note that you must provide proper bibliographical citations for works you consult. For pre-course work, MLA parenthetical citations are preferred. Example of MLA citation: (author name, page of material cited); (Burnette, 142)

## Assignments Overview

**Please note:** Your work should reflect engagement with the reading from the required texts. While you may consult (and properly cite) supplemental resources (i.e. commentaries, journal articles, etc.), it is not required for the assignments given in this class. Also, hearing *your voice* in your assignments is important. Please do not “copy and paste” large swaths of material (even if properly quoted), but show that you are, as stated before, engaging with the material, stating ideas in your own words and giving proper credit when appropriate.

***You will have 3 assignments total for this course, and will comprise of approximately 20 pages of work total:***

**1. Pre-Course Assignment 1 (Details below)**

- a. Due via Blackboard no later than 10:00 a.m., Friday, March 12, 2021
- b. Comprises 25% of final grade

**2. Assignment 2: Details posted to Blackboard by February 15, 2021**

- a. Due via Blackboard no later than 10:00 a.m., Friday, April 16, 2021
- b. Comprises 25% of final grade

**3. Working Paper: Details posted to Blackboard by March 12, 2021**

- a. Due via Blackboard no later than 11:59 p.m., April 17, 2021
- b. Comprises 50% of final grade
- c. We will go over all details together our first weekend together in March

### Pre-Course Assignment #1\*\*

**Submit via Blackboard by 10:00 a.m., Friday, March 12, 2021.**

The assignment should be submitted as a single document with each question separately numbered, as below. ***Also, each page of your assignment must include your name, this course number (CS121), and your annual conference.***

#### ***1.1 Learning to Read***

**Read: Hayes/Holladay Biblical Exegesis, ch. 1, and then respond to the following:**

- a. What sorts of reading do you do in your everyday life (news, recipes/instructions, poetry/song lyrics, novels, other)? What skills do you use in this reading? How is this reading like or unlike reading the Bible? How do the skills you use in your ‘everyday’ reading apply to your Bible reading? **(1 page; 10 points)**

**Read Anderson, The Unfolding Drama of the Bible, and then respond to the following:**

- b. Isn’t the Bible ‘finished’? In what way can it be described as ‘unfolding’? What does Anderson mean by using the word ‘drama’? **(1 page; 10 points)**
- c. On page 92, Anderson quotes Thomas Merton:  
‘It is 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, perhaps outrage.'

How do you understand and react to this quotation? How would the people in your congregation react to this quotation? [NOTE: you must read the whole book to properly understand Anderson's use of Merton, and your answer should show that you have done so.]. **(2 pages; 15 points)**

d. What is the role of the leader (preacher/teacher/etc) in communicating this 'unfolding drama'? **(1 page; 10 points)**

### ***1.2 What Is Reading?***

**Read: New Interpreter's Study Bible (NISB) articles: "Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation" and "Varieties of Readings and Interpretations of the Biblical Text" and then respond to the following:**

A parishioner comes to you, quotes the bumper sticker, 'God Said It; I Believe It; That Settles It,' and argues 'We need to read the Bible like that: just read it and do it and don't "interpret" it.' With what you have read in mind, respond to this parishioner. **(1 page; 10 points)**

### ***1.3 What Are We Reading?***

**Read: Hayes/Holladay, Biblical Exegesis, ch. 2; NISB articles: "Reliability of Scripture", "Authority of the Bible" and "Inspiration of Scripture"; also look at the tables of Jewish/Protestant/Catholic [etc] Canons and then respond to the following:**

An elderly parishioner is confused because the King James Bible she's had since she was a child does not match the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible her granddaughter is using for her college religion class. The two versions are different from the very beginning: Genesis 1:1 in the KJV is a complete sentence: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.'; Genesis 1:1 in the NRSV is an incomplete clause: 'In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,...'. How can both of these books be called 'Holy Bible' when they do not even say the same thing? Explain to your parishioner how/why all Bibles do not use the exact same words. **(1 p., 15 points)**

### ***1.4 Tools for Reading***

**Read: Hayes/Holladay, Biblical Exegesis, chs. 3 (Historical), 5 (Literary), 6 (Form), 8 (Redaction), 11 (Special Focus), and 12 (Integrating Exegetical Procedures) and then respond to the following:**

You have decided to lead an adult Sunday School class on techniques for reading and interpreting the Bible to support your parishioners in their continuing journey through what Anderson calls 'the unfolding drama'. Prepare a handout briefly introducing several different tools for reading and interpreting the Bible. Your handout should include (1) historical criticism, (2) form criticism, (3) literary criticism and (4) one of the approaches presented in Hayes/Holladay ch. 11.

*For each critical approach (1-4, above), you should (a) briefly describe what it is, (b) explain how it came to be, and (c) describe how it is useful when you read the Bible. (2 pp.; 20 points)*

*\*\*Rubric Revised from K. Brown*