**BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**  
BBL501-01, Fall 2015 (3 Credits)  
GRAND RAPIDS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Fridays 8:30 - 11:20 p.m.  
Wood 103  

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Office hours: by appointment during the week; Wood Seminary Bldg  

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**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**  
This course provides an introduction to the process of investigating the meaning and significance of biblical texts. The general, historical, literary, and contextual principles of interpreting texts will be investigated through lectures, reading, discussions, and research projects. A variety of special issues in hermeneutics will be considered.

**II. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**  
Upon the completion of this course each student should be able to:

- exegete portions of the Bible, utilizing a variety of available tools, in order to explicate the meaning and significance of these texts in today’s context.  
- recognize different hermeneutical approaches and one’s personal presuppositions brought to the interpretive task.  
- describe the process of the formation of the Bible and canonization and identify major phases in the history of biblical interpretation.  
- demonstrate an awareness of the importance of historical-cultural backgrounds, literary issues, and a sensitivity to genre for the task of biblical interpretation.  
- appreciate the broader context of interpretation and application within a global setting.

**III. REQUIRED COURSE TEXTBOOKS**  

**IV. COURSE ASSESSMENT & REQUIREMENTS**  
Final grades will be calculated on the following components:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (daily) &amp; SAE 1 and 2 completion</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Paper. Students will be required to submit an exegesis paper on a select text portion from the Bible. The paper must follow the guidelines explained in Appendix B and demonstrate competency in the various methods of exegesis, as well as interaction with critical methods and theories, historical and cultural backgrounds, literary methods, and biblical theology. For students unfamiliar with the practice of exegesis, a series of exegetical worksheets (EW1-4) with accompanying mini-lectures have been prepared and may be accessed on Moodle. Suggested completion dates are inserted on the course schedule.

Exams. Two exams will be administered through Moodle as indicated on the course schedule and will be open during the following timeframes:

Midterm: Oct 23, 12:00 noon – Oct 24, 2015, 11:59 p.m. EST.
Final: Dec 15, 8:00 a.m. – Dec 16, 11:59 p.m. EST.

The exams will be comprehensive but will focus on the preceding half of the class. Exams will consist of 25 objective multiple-choice questions. Once an exam is started, it must be completed in one sitting within one hour. Only one question may appear at a time, so make sure you are satisfied with your answer before moving to the next question. The exams are “closed book” exams: no additional resources (notes, books, other internet sites, discussion, interaction of any kind, etc.) are permitted while taking the exam, nor is it permitted to discuss any specific questions in any form with others after the exam.

Self-awareness Essays (SAEs). Two self-awareness essays must be completed according to the guidelines in Appendix B, attached below, and turned in via the Moodle dropboxes by 11:59 p.m. of the respective weeks of the schedule. These assignments do not receive grades but incomplete assignments will negatively impact the participation grade.

V. COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>The What, Why, and How of Biblical Hermeneutics:</td>
<td>SAE #1</td>
<td>Fee &amp; Stuart, chs. 1-2 Strauss, chs. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gombis</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Overview</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lawrence, pp. 7, 12-13, 68-71, 121, 134-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept. 18</td>
<td>What is the Bible and Where Did It Come From? Development</td>
<td>EW1</td>
<td>Strauss, chs. 2-3 Lawrence, pp. 50-55</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greer</td>
<td>of the Biblical Canon &amp; Bible Translations</td>
<td></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td>The Contexts of the Word: Importance of Geographical,</td>
<td>EW2</td>
<td>Brown, ch. 7 (e-reserve; BBL501ROS)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Greer</td>
<td>Historical, and Cultural Contexts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>The Words of the Word: Importance of Genre, Literary</td>
<td>EW3</td>
<td>Strauss, ch. 4 McKnight (e-reserve;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Greer</td>
<td>Structure, Text Form, &amp; Word Use</td>
<td></td>
<td>BBL501ROS)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>The Story of the Word: Drama of Redemption &amp; Biblical</td>
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<td>Strauss, chs 5, 8, 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gombis</td>
<td>Echoes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>Reading the Bible with the Church, Yesterday &amp; Today:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gombis</td>
<td>History of Interpretation &amp; Modern Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td>Reading, Understanding, &amp; Applying Old Testament</td>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>Fee &amp; Stuart, ch. 5 Strauss, pp. 107-117</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greer</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(wks 1-6)</td>
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Week 8
Oct. 30
Gombis
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
New Testament Narrative (Gospels & Acts)
Fee & Stuart, chs 6-8
Strauss, pp. 157-180
Lawrence, 136-147

Week 9
Nov. 6
Greer
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
Old Testament Law
EW4
Fee & Stuart, ch. 9
Strauss, pp. 117-125
Lawrence, pp. 38-41

Week 10
Nov. 13
Greer
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
Old Testament Poetry & Wisdom
Literature
Fee & Stuart, chs 10-12
Strauss, 135-155,
Lawrence, 66-67, 72-73

Week 11
Nov. 20
Gombis
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
New Testament Letters
Fee & Stuart, chs 3-4, 13
Strauss, 181-194
Lawrence, 150-165

Week 12
Dec. 4
Gombis
First Half:
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
New Testament Letters (cont.)
Exegetical
Greer
Second Half:
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
Old Testament Prophetic Literature &
Apocalyptic
Paper Due
Fee & Stuart, ch. 10
Strauss, 125-135,
Lawrence, 84-85, 104-105.

Week 13
Dec. 11
Gombis
Reading, Understanding, and Applying
New Testament Epistles (cont.) &
Revelation
Strauss, 194-205.
Lawrence, 166-175

Week 14
Dec. 14-18
Exam Week:
1. Final Exam
2. SAE #2 due

VI. GRADE SCALE
A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 86-89; B = 83-85; B- = 80-82; C+ = 76-79; C = 73-75;
C- = 70-72; D = 60-69; F = 59 or below.

Rubrics for Letter Grades
A = Exceptional performance, clearly beyond the expected standards. Student exhibits broad knowledge, cogent oral
and written communication, independent application of course material, interaction with scholarly theory, correct
spelling and grammar.

B = Expected standards have been met. Student grasps goals of assignments, communicates with few errors,
organizes and develops thoughts clearly, shows awareness of relevant scholarship.
C = Expected standards have not been met in many areas. Basic understanding has been achieved but organization of ideas is weak, interaction with scholarship is inadequate, and communication is hindered by significant grammar and spelling errors.

D = Expected standards have not been met. Work is marginally acceptable for credit. Serious misunderstanding of basic conceptual framework of course exists, and/or extreme weakness in analysis and communication of ideas is evident.

F = Failure. There is fragmentary understanding of basic principles and materials of the course, inability to communicate ideas, cheating or plagiarism.

VII. CLASS & INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Student Course Evaluation. In the last week of each resident course, all students are expected to complete a course evaluation (IDEA Form). This paper-based assessment form will be distributed and completed in class. In Ministry Residency, Counseling Practicum and Counseling Internships, and for all online courses, student evaluations will be completed within Moodle (see final week of course in Moodle). These assessments provide an opportunity for students to offer feedback to professors on the quality of the learning experience, feedback that informs future offerings of the course. More information about these evaluation processes will be provided late in the given semester.

Inclusive Language. As noted in the GRTS academic catalog, writing and discussion should reflect the GRTS policy on inclusive language when referring to other people, regardless of their gender, nationality, culture, social class, or religion.

Copyright Violation and Plagiarism. Copyright violation and plagiarism have serious ramifications for Cornerstone/GRTS students, both legally and ethically. Unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted materials, including downloaded files of various kinds, can result in criminal charges and fines. Plagiarizing another’s words or ideas (passing them off as your own) can result in loss of grade or failure. For a fuller explanation of these issues or of CU’s copyright policy, see Miller Library’s website (under Library Tools menu)—“Copyright, Fair Use, & Plagiarism”: http://library.cornerstone.edu/content.php?pid=125720&sid=1079827.

Disability Accommodation. The University will make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The purpose of accommodation is to provide equal access to educational opportunities to students affected by disabilities, and the university does not intend that the standards be altered, nor that the essential elements of programs or courses be changed. Students having documented disabilities may apply for accommodations through Student Disability Services (SDS), which is part of the Cornerstone University Learning Center located in Miller Hall on the main campus. In the event that students have questions regarding whether they are eligible for accommodations, how they might provide appropriate documentation of disabilities, or how they might handle a disagreement with a professor over questions of accommodation, the Director of Academic Support should be contacted immediately at (616) 222-1596 or via email at learning.center@cornerstone.edu. Further information about applying for and utilizing accommodations is provided in the Student Handbook and on the university’s website.

Confidentiality Statement. Students may request that information shared with a faculty or staff member in individual settings will remain confidential, except under the following conditions:

• There has been serious harm or threat of harm to self or others.
• There is reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child, elder or vulnerable person.
• There is a court order mandating disclosure of information.
• There is a dispute between a student and faculty/staff member and disclosure is necessary for resolution.
• The faculty or staff member seeks appropriate consultation with CU faculty and/or administration.
Classes may not be recorded without professors’ approval. Students may want to record class sessions for the purposes of review of the material that is presented. Please speak to the professors to get permission for this.

Email Communication. Email is the official means for communication with every enrolled student. Students are expected to receive and read those communications in a timely fashion. Since the seminary will send official communications to enrolled students by email using their Cornerstone University email addresses (i.e., first.last@cornerstone.edu), students are expected to check their official email addresses on a frequent and consistent basis to remain informed of seminary communications. Students can access their Cornerstone University email account as follows: Go to gmail.cornerstone.edu > Enter CU username (e.g., n0236522) and password. Students can forward or IMAP their “@cornerstone.edu” email to a preferred address as follows: Log into CU email > Select “Settings” in the upper right hand corner > Select “Forwarding and POP/IMAP” > Follow the on-screen instructions. Students are responsible for any consequences resulting from their failure to check their email on a regular basis for official seminary communications.

VIII. SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY


This assignment consists of writing a brief essay at the beginning and end of the semester as described below.

The purpose of the assignment is to provide you with a comparative context to reflect upon your presuppositions and processes in regard to how (not why) you interpret the Bible. The hope is that you will advance your understanding of what it means to read/interpret the Bible during the semester and that your self-understanding will reflect this growth in your end-of-the-semester essay. Although a grade will not be assigned to these essays, failure to submit them as directed will be considered in the computation of course grade as part of the “interactivity” requirement. Both essays will become a part of your academic portfolio that is maintained in the Seminary office and they are required for graduation.

These essays are to be written “off the top of your head.” They are not research assignments. They are to provide a mirror of your honest self-awareness when you come to the task of reading the Bible to interpret it.

Please reflect carefully on the instructions below. Your essay should be between 3-5 pages. While this is not a formal research project, please draft and re-draft your statements to reflect your best communications skills.

SAE #1: Essay One (Beginning of the course)
Without preparing yourself by reading or review, write a personal essay which exposes your (1) self-understanding in regard to how you study the bible, including (2) what “life baggage” (personal journey to this point which has given you a set of predispositions and pre-understandings; this would include such things as church background, etc., that have predisposed you to read the bible in a certain way) do you bring with you when you study the Bible, and (3) how do you go about your task (focus on a brief, essential description of what your think about in terms of finding out what the Bible means). You should reflect upon these issues, organize your thoughts in an outline, and then write an essay in prose style. Your essay should expose your skills in thoughtfulness, comprehensiveness, and composition.

SAE #2: Essay Two (End of the course)
Without reference to your first essay, reflect on the same items as essay one. Interact with yourself concerning how you sense that your interpretive self-awareness has remained the same and how it has changed during the process of the course. Specifically reflect upon development in your understandings of “how” you read the text of Scripture in light of what you learned in this class.
Appendix B: Exegetical Outline Paper

➤ Choose a text from the testament you were assigned:

  o OT texts:
    ▪ Genesis 12:10-20
    ▪ Judges 17:1-13/18:1 (students decide where the break is)

  o NT texts:
    ▪ Mark 3:1-6
    ▪ Luke 7:36-50

➤ Follow the steps outlined in the Exegetical Method Worksheets and organize your paper according to the main headings outlined below with the various subsections listed in the worksheets, sample paper, and rubric:
   1. Historical Context
   2. Literary Context
   3. Main Point(s)
   4. Biblical Context
   5. Contextualized Application

Students should also consult the list of frequent errors in the “Helpful Tips” document in the Moodle Exegesis block.

➤ Due date. Turn in your paper via the Moodle “TurnItIn” dropbox by 11:59 p.m. Friday of Week 12: December 4, 2015.

Commentaries on Reserve in the Library

**Genesis 12:10-20.** Select commentaries that may be referenced include:

Judges 17:1-13/18:1 (students decide where the break is). Select commentaries that may be referenced include:


Mark 3:1-6. Select commentaries that may be referenced include:


Luke 7:36-50. Select commentaries that may be referenced include:


**Further Paper Requirements**

- MS Word document format (.doc or .docx) must be uploaded to the Moodle “TurnItIn” dropbox by 11:59 p.m. EST Saturday of Week 12 (Professors may assess a penalty for late papers).
- No more than 5 pages (not counting title page or bibliography), single-spaced throughout (NOTE: this “single-space” requirement is the only deviation from GRTS style guidelines), 1 inch margins, Times New Roman font, 12 point font for main text, 10 point font for footnotes. If you choose one of the longer text selections, you may be permitted to extend your paper up to one half-page.
- Arranged in bullet-point outline form, following each step of the Exegetical Method (see Example Paper).
- Free from spelling and grammatical errors; reread and edit many times over before turning the paper in (please do not turn in a “rough draft”!).
- At least 10 sources (not counting Bible translations) selected only from resources mentioned in the mini-lectures and from the bibliographies in your syllabus and textbooks. Source citation via footnotes and a bibliography are required.
- Papers in Bible and Theology courses should be formatted and sources documented according to the *GRTS Guideline for Papers* (see sample footnotes and bibliography on p. 10-13). This guideline is based on the Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style and the SBL Handbook of Style. To access these style guides in EaglesNest: Go to eaglesnest.cornerstone.edu>Select GRTS>The GRTS Guideline for Papers and APA Style Guide are in the Quick Links menu under “Academic Writing Resources.” These guidelines also appear in the Week 1 block.