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 readings, online lectures, online discussions, assignments, and a research project. 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 explain 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 (note that less expensive electronic versions of some of the print textbooks may be available):

A. For all students:

B. For students without previous B.A. level experience in Biblical Studies, in addition to III.A:


C. For students with previous B.A. level academic experience in Biblical Studies, in addition to III.A:


After the drop/add period has ended, students may also wish to purchase a discounted copy of an Accordance Bible Software Package (Starter Collection with NET Bible & Notes and IVP Essential Collection) though it is not required for this course. Some of the E-readings are available in this package (i.e., those from the IVP New Bible Dictionary) though they are also available on the library e-reserves. See the Accordance Software document that will be posted in the Course Orientation block for details about purchasing this package if you are interested. This will be a helpful resource for this class and for future seminary courses.

IV. GRTS General Online Course Assumptions, Requirements, and Definitions

Online Educational Assumptions. The online courses available through Grand Rapids Theological Seminary were designed according to the learning paradigm. This paradigm shifts the focus from teaching to learning and places greater authority and responsibility upon the learner. The role of a course instructor is not primarily to impart their knowledge, but to create valuable learning experiences utilizing diverse resources and educational methods. Success within this paradigm and in online learning requires significant student initiative, discipline, and commitment. Online learning is not for everyone, since it assumes greater levels of student ownership and engagement in the teaching and learning process.

Interactivity Requirement. Threaded discussions are a required aspect of all GRTS graduate level online courses. Each course will differ in the frequency and nature of interaction. There are two types of online interaction: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous interaction consists of online discussions that occur in real time and at the same time. Asynchronous interactions consist of online interaction over an extended, and sometimes defined, period of time.

There are two types of online posts: original posts and response posts. Original posts should include the student’s reflections on the theoretical content, meaning, relationships of ideas, and implications of course material. Original posts should be insightful, inquisitive, and reflective in nature. Typically, original posts will be crafted as responses to a set of questions posed by the
course instructor, questions designed to foster reflection and discussion. Response posts are offered in reply to the original posts of peers and should seek clarification for deeper understanding and/or extend the level of critical reflection on the topic of discussion.

All online interactions should be substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate. By substantive, we do not mean extended descriptions of personal opinion and personal experience. Nor do we mean comments that lack coherence and critical reflection. By substantive, we mean comments that are reflective and insightful, coherent, theoretically informed, and link theory to practice. By succinct, we mean that online posts should be between 120 - 160 words, unless otherwise defined within the given course [Note: in this BBL501 course, the guideline is 80-100 words, as below]. Finally, all posts should be grammatically clean, which requires editing before the post is submitted. The interactivity grade for the course will be determined based on the number of posts as well as the character of the post (i.e., substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate).

[Additionally, students are expected to respond to one another and to the instructor in a respectful manner in all communication. Note, too, that all comments must be original (i.e., not pasted from a website, blog, etc.) unless otherwise duly cited. In posts, papers, and quizzes students must exercise full integrity consistent with Christian character.]

V. Course Format
Each week, students will log on to their Moodle account and look at the corresponding block for that week. In the Moodle block, by noon Monday of each instructional week, the student will find a video slide lecture with audio commentary that should be watched prior to Wednesday of that week. Students will also be required to read certain portions of the course textbooks and additional readings on electronic reserve each week and these are best completed before watching the lecture though the student will have until 11:59 p.m. EST Saturday of that week to complete the readings and submit a reading report “quiz,” as described below. Discussion questions will also be posted in the Moodle block of each week (except during exams) and students must engage the discussion as outlined below. Additionally, there will be assignments due most weeks. These include the “accountability exercises” and “exegetical worksheets” (EW 1-4; corresponding to the mini-lectures), as described below. There will also be two exams and a paper due. These will appear in the appropriate week blocks as outlined below. No late postings, assignments, or exams are permitted, barring serious circumstances.

The instructors will provide general comments on postings and make course announcements via introductory comments in the following week’s block and/or the News Forum that appears in the Course Orientation block. Any News Forum updates will also be sent to students automatically via email and archived in the News Forum.
VI. Course Assessment & Requirements

Final grades will be calculated on the following components:

- Accountability Exercises: 5%
- Reading Reports: 10%
- Interactivity: 10%
- Exams (two): 35%
- Exegetical outline & worksheets: 40%

Accountability Exercises:

Course Quiz (CQ): This quiz will cover the content of the syllabus and the “GRTS Guidelines” document, both found in the Course Orientation block. The quiz is “open book” and students may (and are encouraged to) refer to the related documents themselves and/or any notes. The quiz may be retaken as often as a student desires up to the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Oct. 15, 2015. The highest grade will be recorded.

Self-awareness Essay #1 (SAE1): This assignment is described in detail in Appendix A. It must be uploaded to the SAE1 dropbox by 11:59 p.m. Sept. 12, 2015. A complete assignment will receive a mark of 100% and an incomplete assignment will receive 0%.

Self-awareness Essay #2 (SAE2): This assignment is described in detail in Appendix A. It must be uploaded to the SAE2 dropbox by 11:59 p.m. Dec. 12, 2015. A complete assignment will receive a mark of 100% and an incomplete assignment will receive 0%.

Reading Reports (RR): A reading report “quiz” indicating the portion of the required readings completed must be submitted, via Moodle, by 11:59 p.m. EST Saturday of each week. The reading report “quizzes” contain a single question simply asking the student to indicate the percentage of the assigned readings that were completed that week: 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, or 0%. Though these reading reports will not address the acquisition of content, please take notes and study the content of the readings as exam questions will draw on this material in addition to topics addressed in the lectures and discussions.

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) in the Course Schedule are supplemental and intended for reference and additional reading if the student feels that she or he needs further clarification; material will not be drawn directly from these sections for exams unless it is covered elsewhere in the lectures, other readings, or discussions.

All students are required to read all of the assigned readings from the sources listed in section III.A (above) in the corresponding week block. In addition, students who have GGW (III.B) as an assigned textbook must read the GGW readings and students who have KBH (III.C) as an assigned textbook must read the KBH readings. Students are free
to purchase both textbooks and complete all of the readings, but for completion of the “reading report” requirement of the course they are only responsible for either GGW or KBH readings according to the guidelines in section III, above.

“E-Readings” are also required as indicated and will be drawn from the online reserves via the library website here: https://eaglelink.cornerstone.edu/search/r. Type the course number without a space (BBL501) in the search window, select the section listed by professor’s name, and then the course password (BBL501ROS) to access these readings.

Interactivity. By noon Monday of each week (except for exam weeks) the instructor will post a question related to the weekly topic for asynchronous peer-to-peer class discussion. Each student is required to post an 80-100 word original post reply to the discussion question by 11:59 p.m. EST Wednesday of each week AND at least one response post to the posts of fellow classmates by 11:59 p.m. EST Saturday of each week. Only one original post is permitted, but multiple response posts are encouraged. Posts will be evaluated after posting closes and an instructor will make general comments on the discussion as a whole as well as specific comments in response to issues raised on the Monday following the discussion. Students who meet the posting minimum (one original post and one response post for the weeks with discussions) and the qualitative requirements for each post (i.e., substantive, succinct, and grammatically accurate) will receive full credit. That said, original and response posting that is done early in the week and response posting that is frequent will enhance the quality of the class, thus benefiting all of us.

Exams. Two exams will be administered through Moodle as indicated on the course schedule. 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, though the exam will be open for an extended exam block period running from Friday 8:00 am until 11:29 p.m. Saturday of the respective week indicated on the course schedule and may be taken anytime during that period. 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. The midterm exam will be open Oct. 16-17 and the final exam will be open Dec. 11-12.

Exegetical Project. The capstone assignment of the course is the Exegetical Outline Paper described in detail in Appendix B. During select weeks of the semester, students will work on steps of the process with the aid of the method mini-lectures and worksheets. The final
assignment must be turned in via the Moodle “TurnItIn” dropbox by 11:59 p.m. Nov. 14, 2015. Late submissions will not be accepted, barring serious circumstances.

To guide the student in preparation for this assignment, a separate series of mini-lectures and exegetical worksheets (EW 1-4) have been developed. Each mini-lecture and worksheet corresponds to each of the steps of the Exegetical Method outlined in Appendix B. Turning in these worksheets is required for all students registered for the BBL501-35 section or for any other students who have not successfully passed the course “Program Introduction”; turning in the worksheets is optional for students who have completed “Program Introduction,” but highly recommended. The mini-lectures are best watched on the Monday of each respective week so that the worksheet may be completed by the deadline of 11:59 p.m. Saturday of that week. On-time completion of each worksheet assignment in its entirety will result in a score of 100%, late or partial completion will result in 50%, and incompletion will result in 0%; the average of EW 1-4 will make up 10% of the mark for the “Exegetical Project” category. Worksheets will be turned in to the course teaching assistant and returned within one week with comments.

WORD TO THE WISE: The final paper is not the sort of assignment that can be left until the final weeks of the semester and requires continued effort beginning in Week 3. Also note that, while this is an online course, you will need to go to the library to access various resources for this project; this assignment cannot be adequately completed by the use of online resources alone, but must incorporate specific print resources as made clear in the worksheets. These materials are on course reserve at the CU Miller Library, but may be accessed at other libraries as well. Please plan accordingly.

VII. 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.

VIII. Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lectures</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Readings (report must be completed)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sep 7-12&lt;br&gt;“The What, Why, and How of Biblical Hermeneutics: Introduction and Overview”</td>
<td>-RR1&lt;br&gt;-Posting&lt;br&gt;-SAE1&lt;br&gt;-CQ Open</td>
<td>Fee &amp; Stuart: ch. 1.&lt;br&gt;Strauss: chs. 1-4.&lt;br&gt;E-Readings: *Croy, Prima Scriptura, ch. 1;&lt;br&gt;*Brown, Scripture as Communication, ch. 6.&lt;br&gt;GGW: ch. 2 (*chs. 7, 10-13) and/or KBH: pp. 3-21 (*pp. 135-209; 451-504).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Reading, Understanding, and Applying</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New Testament Gospels &amp; Acts</td>
<td>Posting</td>
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<td>Nov 2-7</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Old Testament Poetry &amp; Wisdom</td>
<td>-PAPER DUE</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Old Testament Prophetic Literature</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<td>Nov 23-28</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>New Testament Epistles</td>
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IX. Class & Institutional Policies

Technology Support. Students experiencing technological difficulty in accessing a course and/or negotiating technological aspects of the course are encouraged to contact the Cornerstone University Informational Technology Center. IT staff can be reached at 616-222-1510 or e-mail to technologysupport@cornerstone.edu.

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.

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.

Class Email Note. The professors in this class may be contacted by email at anytime, but please note that these professors generally check and respond to email Monday through Friday in the afternoons; they generally do not check or respond to email over the weekend. Thus, one should not expect to hear a response to an email sent after 5 p.m. Friday until Monday afternoon of the following week; please plan accordingly and do not leave issues to the last minute. That said, if any issues arise at any time we will do our best to address these as soon as possible.

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 (Course Orientation block in Moodle for announcement). These assessments provide an opportunity for students to offer feedback to professors on

<table>
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<th>Week 14</th>
<th>Reading, Understanding, and Applying New Testament Apocalyptic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 7-12</td>
<td>-RR13 FINAL EXAM (Dec 11-12)</td>
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<td>-SAE2</td>
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<td>Lawrence: pp. 166-73.</td>
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<td>Strauss: *pp. 194-205.</td>
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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.

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.

MandatoryDisclosureStatement. Confidentiality and Disclosure: 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 requests supervisory consultation with CU Administration.

MissionTrips/Vacations/ExtendedAbsencePolicy. While we as an institution and as individuals want to encourage and support ministry trips of all types, as well as time away with family and friends, it is generally not in the student’s best interest to spend extended time away from the material and online access during the semester and students are advised to plan trips at other times; any exceptions that impact the ability to fulfill to the requirements of the course must be cleared with the professor before the drop/add period.
X. Additional Resources and Bibliography

In addition to the helpful bibliographies in your other textbook, further resources, by category, include:

**Original Sources in Translation**

Also recommended: Accordance Bible Software (especially), Bibleworks, and Logos.

**Introduction, Methods, and Reception History**


**Historical and Cultural Contexts**


**Biblical and Theological Contexts**


Excellent Study Bibles include, among others: the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* and the *Harper Collins Study Bible*. 

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APPENDIX A

HERMENEUTICAL “SELF-AWARENESS ESSAYS” (SAEs)

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 essays should be no more than 1 page, single spaced throughout (NOTE: this is the only deviation from GRTS style guidelines), 1 inch margins, and Times New Roman 12 point font. 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 you 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 changes in your understandings of “how” you read the text of Scripture in light of what you learned in this class.
APPENDIX B
EXEGETICAL METHOD OUTLINE & ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

Description
As you are engaged in the initial lessons introducing the topic of hermeneutics and describing methods for exegesis, you will have an opportunity to apply these principles to your study of the Bible by completing an exegetical paper on a particular selection of biblical narrative. Steps in the process will begin in Week 3 and proceed through Week 10 and you will be guided through the process via the mini-lectures and the exegetical worksheets described above. Your finished project should have the same headings as the Exegetical Method Outline (below) and sub-headings under which you will provide your content in an outline format as described in the worksheets and demonstrated in the “Example Outline Paper” available though Moodle.

1. Historical Context
2. Literary Context
3. Main Point(s)
4. Biblical Context
5. Contextualized Application

Requirements
- MS Word document format (.doc or .docx) with the following file name: LASTNAME_Text-BBL501-XX.doc [or .docx] (“LASTNAME” = your last name in all caps; “Text” = your paper text [Gen 12:10-20, e.g.]; “XX”=your section number [25 or 35, e.g.]).
- Paper must be uploaded to the Moodle “TurnItIn” dropbox by 11:59 p.m. EST Nov. 14, 2015. Late submissions will not be accepted, barring serious circumstances.
- No more than five pages (not counting title page and bibliography) single-spaced body and footnotes (NOTE: this “single-space” requirement is the only deviation from GRTS style guidelines), one-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 Outline (see Example Outline 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 ten sources (not counting Bible translations) selected only from resources mentioned in the mini-lectures and from the bibliographies in your syllabus, textbooks, and worksheets. Source citation via footnotes and a bibliography is required (see “Guidelines” document).
- Papers in Bible and Theology courses should be formatted and sources documented according to the GRTS Guidelines for Papers (see sample footnotes and bibliography on p. 10-17). These guidelines are 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 Guidelines for Papers and APA Style Guide are in the Quick Links menu under “Academic Writing Resources.” These guidelines also appear in the Course Orientation block.