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Canadian Mennonite University

Principles of Biblical Interpretation

BTS-5080M-1
3 credit hours
Graduate Syllabus
Draft

Fall 2017
September 6 - December 1, 2017
Monday 8:30 – 11:15 AM
First class: September 11

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the Christian tradition, the nature of the Bible is closely related to the notion of inspiration, which suggests that the text exhibits a special quality: it is unique. This uniqueness is not to be found at the literary level; as a work of literature, the Bible is like any other book. The difference is epistemological. Christians believe that the Bible is ultimately God's message, first to the people of the Covenant, second to the entire human race. Christians believe that the Scriptures provide a unique window on the meaning and purpose of human existence. This implies that the Bible is the most valuable text ever produced in human history. If this is the case, then the process of interpretation should and must receive our utmost attention.

Biblical interpretation is both a science and an art. In this course, we will examine the "science" part of biblical hermeneutics. Whereas the process of interpretation cannot be reduced to a series of mechanical steps that will always provide the "right" reading, it is crucial that the student of the Bible master the basics of the discipline. We will therefore study the fundamental components and techniques of biblical exegesis with a special focus on grammar, semantics, genre analysis, biblical theology, and contextualization.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. Foster a greater appreciation for the richness and the depth of the biblical text as literature and as a guide for both faith and practice.
- B. Help the student reflect on the hermeneutical implications of the dual nature of the Bible as a divinely inspired text and as a human literary product.
- C. Help the student gain a basic understanding of the historical background of the Old and New Testaments.
- D. Help the student gain an adequate understanding of the basic steps involved in doing biblical exegesis.
- E. Introduce the student to the literary genres found in the Old and New Testaments.
- F. Provide the student with the opportunity to reflect more intentionally on the relevance of the biblical text and the nature of the application¹ process.

¹ The word (or the concept of) "application" is a difficult concept in hermeneutics. At this time, one could also use terms like "actualization" (both in its psychological sense: "self-actualization" -cf. Abraham Maslow, i.e., transfer by analogy the self-actualization [becoming everything one is meant to become] in the pyramid of needs to that of a text: letting the text reach its full hermeneutical potential in the life of the reader; and in the sense of letting the text be actualized in terms of determining its meaning for today) or

- G. Provide the student with “keys of interpretation” for several of the more difficult sections of the Old Testament (time permitting).
- H. Familiarize the student with online resources and specialized software.

III. TEXTS FOR THE COURSE

Fee, Gordon and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003. 288 p.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral. A comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 2nd rev. ed. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2006 [1991].

Recommended Texts:

Bullinger, E. W. *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1968 [1898].

Caird, G. B. *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997 (1980). 271 p.

Dockery, David S.; Kenneth A. Mathews and Robert B. Sloan. *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman and Holman Pub., 1994.

Klein, W. W.; Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. Ed. Dallas: Word, 2004 (1993).

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.

IV. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

A. Required Textbooks

1. Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*.

Students are expected to carefully read *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* and to write a 3-4 page (900-1200 words double space—Times New Roman) report in which students will address the following elements:

- 1) Description of the exegetical method that is advocated and its presuppositions (inspiration, historicity, etc.).
- 2) Highlights
- 3) Critique

Due Date: September 25, 2017

2. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*.

Students are expected to carefully read *The Hermeneutical Spiral* and to write a 3-4 page (900-1200 words double space—Times New Roman) report in which students will address the following elements:

- 1) Description of the exegetical method that is advocated and its presuppositions (inspiration, historicity, etc.).
- 2) Highlights
- 3) Critique

Due Date: October 30, 2017

B. Supplementary Readings

Students are required to read a total of 500 pages in addition to the required textbooks. This includes the articles posted on the student portal. Students should use up the remaining portion of the required readings for their research or to explore further some aspect of hermeneutics that is of special interest to them. Students are expected to hand in a report that will provide the bibliographical data pertaining to the material read.

Due Date: November 27, 2017

C. Exercises

The precise parameters for completing the following exercises will be provided in class. For the purposes of discussion, the students will be responsible to complete the exercises by the date assigned for each. Late exercises will not be accepted.

- a. Defining text units
- b. Analyzing the structure of a text
- c. Word study
- d. Biblical theology paper
- e. Application paper

D. Exegetical Paper

Details will be provided in class.

Due Date: November 27, 2017

V. PRELIMINARY COURSE OUTLINE

- A. Introduction
 1. Presentation of participants
 2. Syllabus
- B. Inspiration and Authority of Scripture
- C. The Hermeneutical process
- D. The New Methods
- E. Canon as Context
- F. The Bible as Literature
- G. Structural Outlines
- H. The Flow of the Text: Literary Connections
- I. Word Studies
- J. Exegesis and Contextualization

VI. COURSE GRADING

1. Reading	10%
2. Reading Report (Fee/Stuart)	5%
3. Reading Report (Osborne)	10%
4. Exercises	35%
a. Defining text units	5%
b. Structural analysis	4%
c. Word study	12%
d. Biblical theology	7%
e. Application	7%
5. Exegetical paper	40%

Total 100%

VII. HANDING IN ESSAYS

Normally, students will submit written assignments by e-mail. Students are responsible for ensuring that assignments have in fact been received by the professor. If the student does not receive confirmation of receipt within 24 hours, the communication is deemed to have failed. The student must then take the initiative to contact the professor to confirm receipt of the submission. In case of disagreement in regards to an electronic submission, the professor's electronic reply will constitute the only proof of submission. Without such proof, the assignment will be deemed not to have been submitted and will be assigned a grade of 0 or F.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS

- *All grades submitted by CMU's instructors are provisional until they have been vetted by the Dean's Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.
- *Please consult the *CMU Academic Calendar, Section II: Academic Policies* for further information about extensions and incompletes, multiple submissions of the same work, attendance policies, examination rescheduling, academic misconduct, appeals, and other academic matters. (Available at http://www.cmu.ca/docs/academic/CMU_Academic_Calendar_SecII.pdf)
- *Late research papers will be accepted up to five (5) week days after the due date provided the student submits a written note at least 2 days before the day the paper is due. The written note will include a formal request and a statement explaining why the delay is necessary. An extension will be granted only for clearly serious reasons. In this case, a late paper will not be penalized but the professor reserves the right not to annotate said paper. Only a grade will appear.
Longer extensions will be approved only for medical reasons or by permission from the registrar's office. Papers submitted beyond the 5-day grace period without adequate justification will be penalized by 5% per day past the deadline.
- *CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. The Accessibility Services office coordinates with the Academic Office to provide academic accommodations to eligible students. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at sloepky@cmu.ca or 204.487.3300 x.340.

VII. SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography refers mainly to some basic reference works. For more extensive bibliographies, consult Osborne's *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*

1. Bibliographies.

Old Testament

Eissfeldt, Otto. *The Old Testament. An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1966 (1964).

Elenchus Bibliographicus Biblicus. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1920- .

Glanzman, G. S. and J. A. Fitzmyer. *An Introductory Bibliography for the Study of Scripture*. Westminster: Newman Press, 1961.

Lasor, W. S.; D. A. Hubbard and W. B. Frederick. *Old Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982.

Old Testament Abstracts. Washington, 1978- .

New Testament

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. 3rd ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970.

Kümmel, W. G. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1975 (1973).

New Testament Abstracts. Cambridge, 1956- .

2. The Hebrew and Greek Texts

Old Testament

Abbatiae Pontificiae Sancti Hieronymi in Urbe. *Biblia Sacra iuxta latinam vulgatam versionem ad codicum fidem*. Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1926- .

Kittel, R., ed. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche bibelstiftung, 1976-1977.

Rahlfs, A. ed. *Septuaginta*. 2 vols. 8th ed. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1965.

Würthwein, Ernst. *The Text of the Old Testament*. Tr. by E. F. Rhodes. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979.

New Testament

Aland, Barbara, et al. *The Greek New Testament*. 4th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft; London: United Bible Societies, 1993.

Farmer, W. R. *Synopticon. The Verbal Agreement between Greek Texts of Matthew, Mark and Luke contextually exhibited*. Cambridge: University Press, 1969.

Metzger, B. M. *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.

3. Grammars and Helps

Old Testament

Davidson, B. *Hebrew Syntax*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973.

_____. *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*. London: Samuel Bagster, new printing 1970.

Gesenius, W. Kautzsch, E. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. 28th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909.

Jouön, P. *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique*. Rome: Institut biblique Pontifical, 1923.

New Testament

Berry, George Ricker. *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament (With the Authorized Version)*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958.

Blass, F. and A. Debrunner. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University Press, 1961.

Metzger, Bruce M. *Lexical Aids for Students of New Testament Greek*. Princeton, New Jersey: Theological Book Agency, 1975.

Guillemette, Pierre. *The Greek New Testament Analyzed*. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1986.

Kubo, Sakae. *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and A Beginner's Guide for the Translation of New Testament Greek*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975.

Marshall, Alfred. *The NRSV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English (With Interlinear Translation by A. Marshall)*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Rienecker, Fritz. *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Tr. and ed. by Clon L. Rogers, Jr. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1976-1980.

Robertson, A. T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947 (1914).

Robertson, A. T. and W. Hersey Davis. *A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament*. 10th ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1977 (1931).

4. Dictionaries

Old Testament

Baumgartner, W. *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 1967, 1974.

Brown, F.; Driver, S. R. and C. A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.

Koehler, L. Baumgartner, W. *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros*. Leiden: Brill, 1958.

New Testament

Arndt, W. F. and F. W. Gingrich. *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2nd ed. 1979.

Thayer, J. H., tr. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan: 1976.

5. Theological Dictionaries

Botterweck, H. J. and H. Ringgren. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: 1974-.

Brown, C., ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. 3 vols. Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975, 1976, 1977.

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962, 1976.

Kittel, G., ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964-1974.

Moises, Silva. *Biblical Words and their Meanings*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975-1976.
Supplément au dictionnaire de la Bible. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1928- .

6. Concordances

Old Testament

Wigram, G. V. *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1980.

New Testament

Wigram, G. V. *The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1979.

7. Background

Old Testament

Albertz, R. *The History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*. 2 vols. Louisville, 1994 (prob. the best treatment of the history of Israel now available).

Aharoni, M. *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel*. Tr. by A. Rainey. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.

Albright, W. F. *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1942.

Couturier, Guy. "L'archéologie de la Palestine: ses progrès et ses rapports à l'exégèse biblique." In *Recueil de travaux de l'Association des études du Proche-Orient ancien*. Vol. 4. Montréal: L'Association des études du Proche-Orient ancien, 1995.

Frankfort, H. A.; Wilson, J. A. and Jacobsen, T. *The Intellectual Adventure of the Ancient Men*. Chicago, 1946.

- Kitchen, K. A. *The Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*. Chicago: Inter-Varsity Press, 1966.
- Kramer, Samuel N. *History Begins at Sumer*. London: Thomas & Hudson, 1958.
- Labat, R., ed. *Les religions du Proche-Orient asiatique. Textes babyloniens, ougaritiques et hittites*. Paris: Fayard/Denoël, 1970.
- Livingston, George H. *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1987 (1974).
- Oppenheim, L. *Ancient Mesopotamia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
- Pritchard, J. B., éd. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3e éd. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1958.
- Vaux, R. de. *Bible et Orient*. Paris: Cerf, 1967.
- _____. *Histoire ancienne d'Israël*. 2 vols. Paris: Lecoffre, 1971-1973.
- _____. *Les institutions de l'Ancien Testament*. 2 vols. Paris: Cerf, 1958.
- _____. *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*. London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1972.
- _____. *The Early History of Israel*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978.
- Wiseman, D. J. *Peoples of Old Testament Times*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1973.

New Testament

- Barrett, C. K. *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents*. New York: Harper and Row, 1961.
- George, A. and P. Grelot. *Introduction à la Bible Tome III. Introduction critique au Nouveau Testament. Vol. 1. Au seuil de l'ère chrétienne*. Tournai: Desclée, 1976.
- Lohse, E. *Le milieu du Nouveau Testament*. Paris: Cerf, 1973.
- Reicke, B. *The new Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 B. C. to A. D. 100*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968.

8. Commentaries

Commentaries range highly in terms of style or level of technicality. They can generally be classified as exegetical, theological, popular, and devotional. There are commentaries in series, single commentaries on individual books, or one-volume commentaries on the entire Bible. We have listed a few representative examples.

The Anchor Bible

Believers Church Bible Commentary

Hermeneia

The International Commentary on the Old Testament

Interpretation

Keil and Delitzsch

The Old Testament Library

Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries

Word Biblical Commentary

Brown, R. E.; Fitzmyer, J. A. and Roland E. Murphy. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. 1990.

9. Methodology

Baker, David W. and Bill T. Arnold, eds. *The Face of Old Testament Studies. A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999. (CMU BS1193.F33)

Barthes, R., et al. *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis*. Tr. by Alfred M. Johnson. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series. Vol. 3. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The Pickwick Press, 1974 (FPC BS531.a513).

Caird, G. B. *Language and Imagery of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980.

Carson, Donald A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.

Coats, George W., ed. *Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable. Narrative Forms in Old Testament Literature*. JSOT Sup. Vol. 35. Sheffield, England: The University of Sheffield, 1985 (FPC BS1171.2.s35).

Green, Joel B. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995.

Habel, Norman. *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971

Klein, William W.; Blomberg, Craig, L. and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas: Word, 1993.

Macky, Peter W. *The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought: A Method for Interpreting the Bible*. Lewiston, N. Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.

Rast, Walter E. *Tradition History and the Old Testament*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1972 (FPC BS1171.2.R34).

Ryken, Leland. *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987.

Sandy, D. Brent and Ronald L. Giese, Jr. *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Broadman, 1995.

Steck, Odil H. *Old Testament Exegesis: A guide to the Methodology*. Tr. by James D. Nogalski. SBL Resources for Biblical Study. Vol. 33. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995

Tucker, Gene M. *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Fortress Press, 1971).