



MB BIBLICAL
SEMINARY

Exposition of Genesis BIB 621

The mission of MB Seminary is to educate and equip men and women to help lead the church in reaching Canada and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Instructor: Robert J. V. Hiebert, PhD, Professor of Old Testament
Email: robh@twu.ca
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: none
Course Term: January 30 - April 1, 2023
Instruction: Teaching Intensive at Willingdon Church

- Thursday, Feb 16 (6:30 pm – 9:30 pm)
- Friday, Feb 17 (6:30 pm – 9:30 pm)
- Saturday, Feb 18 (9:00 am – 1:00 pm)

Description

How does God reveal himself in Scripture and in creation? What were humans originally created to be and do, and what might the implications be for life and ministry today? In this course, we will seek to place the book of Genesis in its historical, cultural, and literary contexts, and will consider why that matters. We will also focus on God's relationship with the Israelite ancestors and will think about how their story relates to the rest of humanity. Be prepared to have assumptions challenged and horizons expanded with respect to the relevance and good news message of the first book of the Bible.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- articulate the essence of the intended message and canonical and theological significance of the book of Genesis;
- demonstrate familiarity with the context out of which this inspired text arose and the issues to which it was addressed;
- identify the hermeneutical issues that are relevant for the study of Genesis;
- exhibit a basic grasp of the interpretation history of the book of Genesis;
- demonstrate an understanding of the book's place in past and present discussions of issues such as cosmic and human origins, the creation/cultural mandate, ecology and the environment, eschatology, etc.;
- exhibit a growing level of competence in thinking about and articulating the applicability of the message of Genesis in the current MB and Canadian contexts.

The most effective learning takes place as you carefully process information through higher-order thinking skills. Your performance and evaluation in this course will be based on demonstrating your engagement and learning, not by simply repeating basic facts. In all that you do in this class, you should always remember to use higher-order thinking skills, as described below:

- Comprehension: demonstrates the ability to grasp meaning, explain, and restate ideas.
- Application: demonstrates the ability to use learned material in new situations.
- Analysis: demonstrates the ability to separate material into component parts and show relationships between the parts.
- Synthesis: demonstrates the ability to put together the separate ideas to form a new whole, to establish new relationships.
- Evaluation: demonstrates the ability to judge the worth of material against stated criteria.

Required Texts

- Moberly, R. W. L. *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*. Cambridge: University Press, 2009.
- Walton, John H. *Genesis*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001

Additional Required Readings (PDFs will be provided)

- 3000 Year Timeline. [3 pages]
- Primeval Stories. [2 pages]
- Biblical and Other Ancient Texts. [9 pages]
- Barbour, Ian G. *When Science Meets Religion*. New York: HarperOne, 2000. [Pages 7-38].
- Brusatte, Steve. *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs: A New History of a Lost World*. New York: William Morrow, 2018. [Pages 13-21, 49-52, 85-87, 96-117].
- Buchanan, Mark. *Your God Is Too Safe: Rediscovering the Wonder of a God You Can't Control*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2001. [Pages 80-91].
- Fretheim, Terence E. *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. [Pages 1-37].
- Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: HarperOne, 2008. [Pages 93-108, 189-232]

Other Recommended Reading/Viewing Resources

- Barrett, Matthew and Ardel B. Caneday, eds. *Four Views on the Historical Adam*. Counterpoints: Bible and Theology. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.
- Borgman, Paul. *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001.
- Enns, Peter. *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say about Human Origins*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2012.
- Hyers, Conrad. *The Meaning of Creation*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1984.
- Polkinghorne, John. *Belief in God in an Age of Science*. New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Provan, Iain. *Convenient Myths: The Axial Age, Dark Green Religion, and the World that Never Was*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013.
- Provan, Iain. *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What the Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014.

- Venema, Dennis R. and Scot McKnight. *Adam and the Genome: Reading Scripture after Genetic Science*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2017.
- Video Lectures on the Interface page of the Regent College website: <https://www.regentinterface.com/resources/video/>. See especially Alister McGrath – “Science and Faith: Conflicting or Enriching?”; Alister McGrath – “God, Science & the Meaning of Life: C. S. Lewis and Richard Dawkins”; Sarah Coakley – “Is there a Future for ‘Natural Theology’? Evolution, Cooperation and the Question of God”; Bruce Hindmarsh – “Re-enchanting the Universe: Evangelicals and the Rise of Science.”

Schedule and Assignments

Week	Due Date	Assignments	% of Grade	Cumulative
1	Feb 4	Reflection Paper #1	8%	8%
2	Feb 6 – 11	Discussion Group #1 (date to be determined by group leader)	2%	10%
3	Feb 16-18	Course Intensive (See schedule below)		
4	Feb 25	Reflection Paper #2	8%	18%
5	Feb 27 – March 4	Discussion Group #2 (date to be determined by group leader)	2%	20%
6	March 11	Reflection Paper #3	8%	28%
7	March 13 – 18	Discussion Group #3 (date to be determined by group leader)	2%	30%
8	March 25	Expository Paper Reading Statement	40%	70%
9	April 1	Character Study Paper Course Evaluation	30%	100%

Course Intensive (Willingdon Church)	
Thursday, Feb 16, 2023	6:30 pm – 9:30 pm
Session 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Genesis contextually • geography, history, literature
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Genesis contextually • genre, language, hermeneutics

Friday, Feb 17, 2023	6:30 pm – 9:30 pm
Session 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primeval prologue (Gen 1-11) • Biblical creation stories
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primeval prologue (Gen 1-11) • Theological themes
Saturday, Feb 18, 2023	9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Session 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancestral history (Gen 12-50) • Abraham & Isaac
Session 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancestral history (Gen 12-50) • Jacob & Esau
Session 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancestral history (Gen 12-50) • Joseph & his brothers

Note: Attending all sessions of the course intensive is a requirement for passing the course.

Assignments and Evaluation

Reflection Papers and Discussion Groups: There are three sets of Reflection Papers and Discussion Groups, with grading based on two components for each Paper/Group set. During three weeks of the course (Weeks 1, 4, and 6), you will write a three-page reflection paper in response to the instructional content and the required readings. Your reflection paper should answer the questions assigned to each of the three weeks (see below). The week after your reflection paper is due, you will meet in church-based discussion groups to discuss your responses to the questions and to explore other related topics. The maximum length for each reflection paper is three pages.

1. **Reflection Papers** (3 reflection papers x 8% = 24% of final grade): The following are the questions you should address in your three reflection papers (there are three questions for each week, so aim for one page per question):

- **Week 1 (Due Feb 4, 2023):** Read the book of Genesis, the “Introduction” in Walton’s book, and the PDF excerpts listed under the heading Additional Required Readings on page 2 above.
 1. In what ways does learning about the historical, cultural, and literary context of the Old Testament impact your understanding of the book of Genesis?
 2. What are the implications (both ancient and current) of the fact that some of the stories in Genesis exhibit striking similarities to ancient Near Eastern myths that predate the book of Genesis by centuries?
 3. How do you respond to the following statement by Old Testament theologian John Goldingay?: “God’s inspiring the biblical historians did not make them write as if they

were modern historians, but made them write as really good ancient historians” (*Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1: *Israel’s Gospel* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2003], p. 863).

- **Week 4 (Due Feb 25, 2023):** Review material from “Primeval prologue (Gen 1-11)” (biblical creation stories, theological themes) and relevant readings.

4. Is it possible to reconcile scientific and biblical accounts of cosmic and human origins? If so, how? If not, why not?
5. In view of the fact that human beings are depicted in Genesis as having been assigned viceregal and priestly roles in the created order, what might be the implications for people in general and/or Christians in particular with respect to matters such as creation care, the environment, politics, economics, public policy, creativity, social media, etc.?
6. Within an MB theological framework, how can one account for and deal with the moral/ethical dilemma of God destroying all animate life except for Noah, his family, and the animals in the ark by means of a flood?

- **Week 6 (Due March 11, 2023):** Review material from “Ancestral history (Gen 12-50)” (Abraham & Isaac, Jacob & Esau, Joseph & his brothers) and relevant readings.

7. How do you respond to Goldingay’s assessment of the stories about the fallible and flawed human characters in the book of Genesis as “haggadah, not halakah” (*Israel’s Gospel*, p. 286) — i.e., description, not prescription — and what do you think readers should derive from such stories in the light of the book’s narrative and theological profile?
8. What do God’s interactions with, and responses to, characters such as Abraham (Gen 18:22–19:29) and Isaac (Gen 25:21) suggest about the nature and function of intercessory prayer?
9. What do you consider to be the practical, theological implications of the promise – delay/obstacle – fulfillment dynamic in the book of Genesis?

2. **Discussion Groups** (3 discussion groups x 2% = 6% of final grade): During Weeks 2, 5, and 7, you will meet in a church-based or virtual discussion group to discuss the questions you addressed in your reflection paper, explore other related topics, and contextualize ideas to your ministry setting. A designated leader from the church will facilitate the church-based discussion groups. The assessment of participation in discussion groups involves attendance and actual participation in the group sessions (both are worth 50% of the discussion group mark). The discussion group leaders will use the following rubric to assess each group member’s participation:

Excellent participation	47-50/50	The group member consistently engaged in the group conversations. The person did an excellent job listening to other group members and consistently added meaningful content to the conversations.
Great participation	43-46/50	The group member sometimes engaged in the group conversations. The person was somewhat attentive to the group conversation and would add relevant content periodically.
Good participation	40-43/50	The group member sometimes engaged in the group conversations. The person was somewhat attentive to the group conversation and would add relevant content periodically.

Fair participation	35-39/50	The group member did not often engage in group conversations. The person seemed out of touch with the group conversation and would rarely add relevant content.
Poor participation	<35/50	The group member rarely, if ever, engaged in the group conversations. The person seemed distant and uninterested in the group discussion and even other group members.

3. **Expository Paper** (40% of final grade): Write a 3500 word expository paper on Genesis 50. In the paper, you must:

- discuss relevant biblical, historical, cultural or literary backgrounds that contribute to your understanding of the passage
- outline the structure and describe the compositional flow of the passage;
- identify any key words, and explain why they are key and, based on a careful investigation of usage, what they mean;
- explicate other significant points/ideas/themes in this text in your discussion of its overall message/meaning;
- describe how the passage functions in relation to the rest of the book of Genesis;
- suggest at least one specific, contemporary application/illustration that you would use to underscore the relevance of this text if you were expositing it in your home church congregation.

This paper is to be well researched, properly footnoted, and is to include an outline/table of contents (the headings of which appear in the body of the paper as well) and a bibliography of works consulted and cited. You may consult the class texts, reference works (concordance, Bible dictionary/encyclopedia, theological dictionary, etc.), and other reputable and recent books and journals/periodicals (be sure that they are more substantive than, for example, Study Bible notes). At least **ten such sources** should be used. However, be sure to employ these sources for background and contextual information. Do not simply survey the interpretations of commentators for the passage that you investigate, but give evidence of having worked through interpretative issues for yourself. Citation or other use of sources must be scrupulously and properly documented. The grade for this assignment will be based on both the content of the paper and the quality of your writing. **Due March 25, 2023.**

4. **Reading Statement.** Submit the completed and signed Reading Statement on the final page of this syllabus. NOTE: Marks can be reduced for failure to complete all readings. **Due March 25, 2023.**

5. **Character Study Paper: Who Is the God of Genesis?** (30% of final grade): Write a 2000 word paper that summarizes your findings pertaining to a detailed character study of God as he is portrayed in the book of Genesis. What is communicated to the reader about God through the words that he speaks and through the descriptions of his actions and emotions? Apart from the book of Genesis itself, your primary reference materials can be the course textbooks. Citation or other use of sources must be scrupulously and properly documented. The grade for this assignment will be based on both the content of the paper and the quality of your writing. **Due April 1, 2023.**

Course Evaluation

Near the conclusion of this course, you will be asked to complete a course evaluation. Because feedback is very important to us, the course evaluation is a required part of the course and is tied to the submission of your last assignment. The course evaluation will be integrated into the Populi classroom in Week 9.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Description	Grade Point	Meaning in Graduate Work
A+	Superior	4.30	Exceptionally well-reasoned, compelling development of position. Outstanding incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Strikingly appropriate examples. Extraordinary insight, critical analytical and evaluative ability, and creativity. Superlative style and language usage. Makes an original contribution and is potentially publishable.
A	Excellent	4.00	Well-argued and convincing development of position. Insightful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Notably appropriate examples. Excellent insight, critical analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Impressive style and language use.
A-	Very Good	3.70	Thorough and plausible development of position. Skillful incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Very good examples. Very good insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Commendable and fluent style and language usage.
B+	Proficient	3.30	Proficient development of position. Appropriate incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Relevant examples. Good quality insight, analytic and evaluative ability, and creativity. Clear and correct style and language usage.
B	Good	3.00	Competent development of position, but possibly with some gaps and/or limitations. Good incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Good examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally good style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
B-	Average	2.70	Average development of position, but with obvious gaps and/or limitations. Satisfactory incorporation of personal vision as well as of references and resources. Satisfactory examples. Reasonable insight, analytic and evaluative ability. Little creativity. Generally satisfactory style and language usage, but possibly with some minor flaws.
C+	Adequate	2.30	Adequate development of position with significant gaps and/or limitations. Some incorporation of personal vision as well as references and resources. Adequate use of examples. Very little creativity. Considerable number of issues related to coherence and style.

C	Acceptable	2.00	Limited development of position with a noticeable lack of consistency with personal vision or references. Limited integration with external sources. Acceptable analytic and evaluative ability. Numerous weaknesses in terms of clarity, coherence, and grammar.
C-	Needs Work	1.70	Passable but unimpressive development of position. Position not completely consistent with personal vision or references and resources not taken fully into account or examples are basic or not completely convincing or barely acceptable insight and analytic and evaluative ability. Adequate style and language usage, but with weaknesses in some respects (e.g., clarity, coherence, grammar). Overall quality shows noticeable deficiencies.
F	Below Standard	0.00	Unacceptable work at graduate level. Shows lack of understanding and/or competence in several of the criteria described above. This grade is a failing grade at the graduate level.

Assignment Grade Appeals

Students can appeal their grade to the course instructor by stating in writing their reasons for contesting the grade. Deadline for such appeals is one week after the student has receipt of grade. Formal course grade appeals can be made directly to Dr. Brian Cooper, Director of Student Development, briancooper@mbseminary.ca.

Web Support-Student Portal — <https://mbseminary.populiweb.com>

All students at MBS will receive a MBS-Populi username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application. If you have any difficulty with your password or your login credentials, please contact Keith Reed, Director of Ministry Support, (keithreed@mbseminary.ca).

Course Intensive/Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to your church host and contact.

Paper Formatting

Students are required to adhere to the Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format for all papers. Consider the [Purdue Owl](#) website for information or,

Turabian, Kate, L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Thesis, and Dissertations*, 9th ed. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire MB Seminary community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound academic scholarship at MBS.

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the MB Seminary Director of Student Development (briancooper@mbseminary.ca) of that fact **before the beginning of a course** so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. To repeat: To ensure that instructors know to accommodate a student who has a learning access issue, the student must inform the Director of Student Development of a disability before the beginning of the class. After that is too late.

Reading Statement
Exposition of Genesis
BIB 621

Note: Readings are to be completed by the dates indicated below.

Feb 4 The book of Genesis. PDF excerpts: 3000 Year Timeline. Primeval Stories.
Biblical and Other Ancient Texts. Barbour. Brusatte. Buchanan. Fretheim. Wright.

Feb 18 Moberly.

March 25 Walton.

Record the percentages for the appropriate options below. Then sign and date this statement.
Due: March 25, 2023.

I completed _____% of the assigned readings.

I failed to complete _____% of the assigned readings.

NB: The total of the preceding percentages cannot exceed 100%!!

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please print your name (in English!) _____