



TYNDALE
• SEMINARY •

Course Syllabus

FALL 2017
BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:
INTERPRETING AND APPLYING THE BIBLICAL TEXT
BIBL 0501 (SECTION 01)

SEPTEMBER 11 – DECEMBER 4, 2017
MONDAYS, 6:45 PM – 9:35 PM

INSTRUCTOR: DR. WILLIAM J. WEBB
Email: bwebb@tyndale.ca

“Office Hours”:

You are welcome to post questions in the appropriate forums online. Posted interaction with the professor benefits the whole class. For other matters where more direct communication is helpful, we can set up a phone call, Skype interact or, if possible, meet at any Starbucks in Waterloo, ON (where I live). Kindly email me to book a time. Thanks.

To access your course material, please go to <http://classes.tyndale.ca>. Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account. For information how to access and forward emails to your personal account, see <http://www.tyndale.ca/it/live-at-edu>.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a study of the pivotal methods and interpretative principles involved in discerning the meaning of the biblical text. Topics covered include essential steps in interpreting the Bible, the variety of methods and approaches available to the contemporary student of Scripture, historical and theological issues arising out of the interpretive task, the relationship between the testaments, word studies and literary genre. Students learn to use the standard tools of biblical research.

Hermeneutics is concerned with understanding the meaning of the text as well as its significance for people today. This course will develop some of the philosophical and practical skills needed for the complexities of biblical hermeneutics. As a subcategory of communication theory in general, students will explore the relationship between the author, text and reader and how each contributes to the formation of meaning. Various interpretive models are examined in order to explore their value and limitations.

II. LEARNING ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, by:

1. Conducting and presenting a semantic fields (word meaning) study involving the ability to recite Greek and Hebrew alphabets and use a concordance and lexicon,
2. Building a validation case for choosing between semantic fields where there is ambiguity in meaning (mutually exclusive options) and through interacting with other student's validation,
3. Presenting an application study, which wrestles with interfacing two distinctly different horizons,
4. Developing and writing an exegetical paper on a selected passage of Scripture,
5. Discussing the application of biblical interpretation skills with colleagues, and
6. Reflecting upon course materials (lectures, handouts, textbooks, etc.),

Students should be able to:

- Explain the dynamics involved in reading and understanding texts.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competing approaches within the spectrum of interpretive methods.
- Formulate a “personally adopted” hermeneutical philosophy—not necessarily the professor’s perspective—that integrates all three areas of author, text, and reader.
- Demonstrate basic skills in using a range of Hebrew-English/Greek-English tools as well as commentaries and periodical articles for the task of exegesis.
- Articulate how the Bible has been interpreted in the past, both within Scripture itself and within second-temple Judaism and church history.
- Explore approaches to re-reading and “hearing” the ancient text that foster a healthy understanding of biblical authority.
- Develop an attitude of “hermeneutical humility”¹ towards the correctness of one’s own interpretive conclusions.

¹ “Hermeneutical humility” lies somewhere between the polar attitudes of absolute *dogmatism* and absolute *skepticism* about our ability to derive/know personally the correct biblical meaning; it is methodologically based upon degrees of *reasoned probability* in the assessment of that meaning

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED TEXTS

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and updated. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004. [ISBN: 0-7852-5225-8].

Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women, & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. [ISBN: 0-8308-1561-9].*

*Note: If you have taken a *Wrestling With Troubling Texts* course at Tyndale and have already read this [*Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*] as a textbook, please let me/the professor know and I will give you an alternative reading assignment possibly from the recommended list below.

B. RECOMMENDED TEXTS & TOOLS

Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation. An Integrated Approach*. 3rd ed. Peabody, TN: Hendrickson, 2008. [ISBN: 978-1-59856-080-0]

Webb, William J. *Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011. [ISBN: 978-0-8308-2761-9].

Hebrew-English and Greek-English Concordance (either a hardcopy [e.g., Kohlenberger] or computer version [e.g., *BibleWorks*]).

Interlinear Hebrew-English OT and Greek-English NT (either a hardcopy or computer version).

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Research-Based Forum #1: Semantic Fields (5%)

The assignment on semantic fields comes in two parts: (a) learning the Hebrew/Greek alphabets and (b) exploring semantic fields [SFs].

Hebrew/Greek Alphabets. Believe it or not, the Greek alphabet is incredibly easy to learn! If you know “alpha” and “omega”, then you already know two of the letters. The student must now learn the rest of the Greek alphabet. This part of the SFs assignment will be tested orally for recognition (not reproduction) of the alphabet. You can work off of a Greek alphabet list in front of you. See resources under “RB Forum #1” for the alphabets. E.g., at the point of testing, when you see the small Greek letter alpha on the alphabet list, you say “alpha” (without peeking at the English word “alpha” next to the letter alpha —only the person listening to you can look at both the Greek letter and English pronunciation).

The student must be able to read the Greek alphabet (small letters) and the Hebrew alphabet

by the second week (Week 2). This stage of the assignment is like an admissions test (GRE) for entering law or medicine. While it does not count towards your grade, the two alphabets are a *requirement for entry* into doing the remainder of the SFs assignment and the next assignment on validation. For a wee bit of work the two-alphabet exercise has immense payback. It is extremely valuable for several reasons:

- ✓ begin using Hebrew/Greek-English concordances
- ✓ start reading interlinear Hebrew/Greek-English Bibles
- ✓ crack open Hebrew/Greek-English dictionaries (called, “Lexicons”)
- ✓ enjoy Hebrew/Greek-English theological lexicons (entire articles on H/G words)
- ✓ gain a greater comfort level in using Hebrew/Greek-English commentaries (no longer have to “skip over” those foreign language words)
- ✓ allows you to do word studies that (a) explore the range of possible meanings for a H/G term and (b) engage in the validation process of choosing between semantic domains (dictionary meanings) for a particular passage

In order to proceed to the second part of the assignment (i.e., the “semantic fields” portion) the professor must receive an email confirmation that “[your name] has recited perfectly or almost-perfectly (one ‘mulligan’ allowed) the Greek and Hebrew alphabets.” Please have an adult person/friend who heard the two alphabets send this email confirmation. Thanks.

Exploring Semantic Fields. After reciting the two alphabets, the student may now complete the semantic-fields part of this assignment. Use the instructions, grading rubric and various resources posted on the course site under “RB Forum #1: Semantic Fields”.

2. Research-Based Forum #2: Validation (20%)

Becoming familiar with the concept of semantic fields and how they work is the first step in word studies. The next step is to wrestle with meaning in a text where several semantic fields are possible and commentators are divided over which one is correct. In this assignment students will begin to develop the skills for choosing between semantic fields in a case where there is ambiguity in meaning. Please use the instructions, grading rubric and various resources posted on the course site under “RB Forum #2: Validation”.

3. Research-Based Forum #3: Reading Slavery Texts from Two Horizons (25%)

The process of applying Scripture to our lives involves assessing the interface between two horizons (a) the *ancient* world horizons of the biblical text and (b) our *contemporary* horizon—the world in which we live. Applying or appropriating Scripture in a cogent manner requires just as much rigorous thinking and skill as does a good word study or choosing between interpretive options. Kindly use the instructions and grading rubric posted under “RB Forum #3: Reading Slavery Texts from Two Horizons”.

See the discussion of late RB Forum submissions below.

4. Exegetical Paper (50%)

The culmination of the course is the writing of an exegetical paper. Choose one of the

following passages of Scripture and write your exegesis (+ application) paper on it:

- Exodus 34:1-9*
- Isaiah 64:1-7*
- Jonah 2:1-10
- Mark 8:22—9:1
- Philippians 2:1-11
- Revelation 7:1-17*

[*While the selection of a text is completely your choice, there may be some greater learning benefit choosing a text that is not known as well by the Christian community and/or one that you have not worked on before.]

Use the instructions, grading rubric and various resources posted on the course site under “Exegetical Paper: Resources.” The exegetical paper is due *through email submission* as an attached file [bwebb@tyndale.ca] on the date specified in the syllabus schedule below. See discussion of late submissions below. Length: 12 – 15 pages. The page count does not include title page and bibliography; these are additional pages beyond the 12 – 15 page count. Please use single-spaced 10 point footnotes (no endnotes and no short-form, author-year citations within the body of the text). Footnotes are included in the page count. Going over the allowable page limit will result in a reduction of the grade. The final paper must use correct Turabian style in all of its components—font size, title page, headings, paragraph spacing, margins, block quotes, footnotes, bibliography, etc. See grading rubric.

Due date: **Dec. 11th, 2017**. See the discussion of late Exegetical Paper submissions below.

5. Fun Forums (5% bonus on Exegetical Paper)

Every course needs some fun. Students can achieve a 5% bonus (maximum) towards their exegetical paper by participation in some “fun forums” during the semester. These are like interaction class discussions where you get graded simply on the basis of participation. If you contribute something to the fun forum, you have just earned yourself a 1% bonus. There are four fun forums but one fun forum has the potential for two contributions (2% bonus) so that is how if it possible to get 5% easy mark advantage on your final paper. I mark your final paper, give it a grade and then look to see what your Fun Forum bonus marks are and, hopefully, I can add 5% to boost your grade! So, join us for some fun.

D. GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Submissions. Kindly email all assignments as attached files (either MSWord or PDF formats are fine) to the professor at: bwebb@tyndale.ca

Late FORUM Submissions. The initial “*assignment*” post to a RB Forum is due between Monday and Thursday (midnight, Eastern Standard Time) of the week it is scheduled in the course. Two subsequent “*critical interaction*” posts are due by the end of the week—i.e., by Sunday (midnight, Eastern Standard Time). Any interaction the following week is encouraged

but optional. *The penalty for late RB Forum submissions is one letter grade reduction per day late* (rather weighty) since these submissions play an educational component for all students within the course.

Late EXEGETICAL PAPER Submissions, part I: *ON OR BEFORE* the “Last Day of Exams” [LDOE] Deadline. The last day of exams in a semester is the official deadline for any late submissions. After that day the professor cannot accept late work without the explicit/written approval of the dean’s office (see below). If student recognizes that a late submission on or before the LDOE deadline does not involve clear extenuating circumstances (defined below), they may submit the material to the professor as **(i) a late submission with penalty** until midnight of the LDOE. In this case there is no need to contact the professor for approval. For every day late, the grade will be reduced by 5 %, a half a letter grade (i.e. one day late: 82 % A- becomes 77% B+; two days late, 82 % becomes 72 % B-, etc.). Please note that the deduction for a partial day late counts that same as a full day late. On the other hand, if there are clear extenuating circumstances, the student may ask the professor for **(ii) a late submission without penalty** (or with partial penalty). By clear mitigating circumstances I mean something along the following lines. Suppose I as your professor were to take your circumstances to the class (hypothetically, not in reality) and ask them the following question, “Should I treat this student differently regarding late penalties than I would treat the rest of you based upon their particular [mitigating?] circumstances?” If the class were to respond with an overwhelming, “Yes, of course,” then you have a case of clear mitigating circumstances. If you wish to ask for this sort of late submission without penalty (or with only partial penalty) where the submission is on or before the LDOE, please contact the professor. The student must take the initiative in this matter.

Late EXEGETICAL PAPER Submissions, part II: *AFTER* the “Last Day of Exams” [LDOE] Deadline. Any submissions after the LDOE require a formal process of appeal to the Registrar’s Office (not to the professor). Requests for such extensions beyond the LDOE must be (a) submitted in writing using the Tyndale Extension Forms, explaining the reason why the extension is needed and (b) submitted to the registrar before the LDOE unless there are reasons why this was not possible. No assignments will be accepted after the LDOE unless the student has a valid reason for an extension. In that case, the student must apply for an extension to the dean/registrar (again, not to the professor). Extensions will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, the hospitalization of yourself or a member of your immediate family, or an illness for which you require treatment by a physician. Reference to a heavy work load, other assignments, professional or ministry obligations or holidays do not constitute legitimate grounds for an extension.

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism.

Tyndale University College & Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

Students should consult the current Academic Calendar for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at <http://tyndale.ca/registrar/calendar>.

For proper citation style, consult the [Chicago-Style Quick Guide](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially [ch. 14](#). For citing scripture texts, refer to sections [10.46 to 10.51](#) and [14.253 to 14.254](#).

E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following:

RB Forum #1: "Semantic Fields"	5%
RB Forum #2: "Validation"	20%
RB Forum #3: "Reading Slavery Texts from Two Horizons"	25%
Exegetical Paper	50%
Fun Forums [bonus added to EP grade]	*5% bonus (maximum)
Total Grade	100%

F. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE

KBH = Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, *Biblical Interpretation*

W = Webb, *Slaves, Women, & Homosexuals*

W2 = Webb, *Returning Home* (Appendix A & B) (handout)

W3 = Webb, "Balancing Paul's Original-Creation and Pro-Creation Arguments"; article in *Westminster Theological Journal* (handout)

Note: W2, W3 and other reading materials will be posted online with their corresponding week and topic.

Date	Lecture/Subject	Assignments/Reading
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I. Author-centered Approaches

Week 1	Syllabus Dimensions of Communication	KBH (<i>skim</i> chp. 2)
Week 2	Authorial Intent: a rationale SOCIAL, CULTURAL, & HISTORICAL analysis The Spirit & Interpretation	Grk./Heb. Alphabets KBH (chps. 1, 5)
Week 3	Dimensions of Language	RB Forum #1: "Semantic Fields" KBH (chp. 6, 7) W2 (two appendixes)
Week 4	Validation of Semantic Fields	RB Forum #2: "Validation"

Monday Oct 9th: No class (Thanksgiving Weekend; Monday holiday)

II. Text-centered Approaches/Genre

Week 5	A Text-Centered Approach: a rationale INTRO TO GENRE NARRATIVE RITUAL TEXTS	KBH (323-40)
Week 6	GOSPELS EPISTOLARY (reading; no lecture) POETRY PROVERBS & WISDOM	KBH (399-417) KBH (426-39) KBH (chp. 8; 351-58) KBH (387-97)
Week 7	PROPHECY APOCALYPTIC	KBH (359-83) KBH (384-86; 440-48)

III. Reader-centered Approaches

- Week 8** THE READER & MEANING
A Reader-Centered Approach: a rationale
Reader-Oriented Methods: “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly!”
Use of Scripture in later Scripture
Canon and Community
- Week 9** SW&H OVERVIEW
 Criteria #1—9
 Criteria #10—18
W (all); W3
RB FORUM #3:
“Reading Slavery Texts”
- Week 10** Applying the Bible Redemptively
 Slavery texts
 Women texts
- Week 11** Application I—General Procedure
 Principle/Abstraction Approach
 CP texts
- Week 12** Application II—The Covenants

Application III—The Will of God & Scripture
 Hermeneutical Spiral²
 Never Ending Story
 The Bible & God’s Will
KBH (chps. 11, 12)

EXEGETICAL PAPER: Due December 11th, 2017.

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: GENERAL HERMENEUTICS

- Bartholomew, Craig, Collin Greene, and Karl Möller, eds. *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.
- Barton, John. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Brown, Jeannine K. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007.
- Conzelmann, H. and A Lindemann. *Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of N.T. Exegesis*. Trans. by S. S. Schatzmann. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988.

² I am drawing upon the spiral metaphor as popularized by Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006).

- Cosgrove, Charles H. *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate: Five Hermeneutical Rules*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Danker, Frederick W. *Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study*. Rev. ed. Minneapolis, MS: Fortress, 1993.
- Dockery, D. S., Mathews, K. A., & Sloan, R. B., eds. *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994.
- Dyck, Elmer, ed. *The Act of Bible Reading: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Fee, Gordon D. *New Testament Exegesis*. 3rd ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Fee, Gordon and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.
- Ferguson, Duncan S. *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1986.
- Goldingay, John E. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Green, Joel B., ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Green, Joel B. *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011.
- Hayes, John and Carl Holiday. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Revised ed. Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1987.
- Johnson, Elliott E. *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academia, 1990.
- Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. and Moisés Silva. *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. Revised and expanded ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
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- Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and updated ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004.
- Kuhatschek, Jack. *Taking the Guesswork out of Applying the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990
- Lundin, Roger, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton. *The Promise of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.
- Marshall, I. H., ed. *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Method*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977.
- McCartney, Dan and Charles Clayton. *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1994.
- McKim, Donald K. *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986.
- McKenzie, Steven L., and Stephen R. Haynes, eds. *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Revised and expanded ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- McKnight, Scot, ed. *Introducing New Testament Interpretation*. Guides to NT Exegesis 1. Grand Rapids, IL: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Meadors, Gary T., ed. *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Osborne, Grand R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical*

- Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.
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- Porter, Stanley E. and Beth M. Stovell, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.
- Rohrbaugh, Richard, ed. *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Silva, Moisés, ed. *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.
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- Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Primer for Students and Pastors*. 4th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 2009.
- Swartley, Willard M. *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation*. Kitchener: Herald Press, 1983
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- Yoder, Perry B. *From Word to Life: A Guide to the Art of Bible Study*. Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1982.