



**TYNDALE**  
Seminary

**Course Syllabus  
FALL 2011**

**BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:  
INTERPRETING AND APPLYING THE BIBLICAL TEXT  
BIBL 0501**

**SEPTEMBER 13 TO DECEMBER 6, 2011  
TUESDAYS, 1:00 PM-3:50 PM**

**INSTRUCTOR: DR. REBECCA G. S. IDESTROM**

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Tuesdays, 4:15-5:30 PM, by appointment

To access your course materials at the start of the course, please go to  
<https://www.mytyndale.ca>

## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 interpretative task, the relationship between the testaments, word studies and literary genre. Students learn to use standard tools of biblical research.

## **II. LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Through this course, the student will learn the following:

### **A. Knowledge and Understanding**

1. to understand the importance and value of responsible and careful exegesis and interpretation of a biblical text.
2. to demonstrate a knowledge of the literary genres of the Bible and the rules for their interpretation.

3. to be acquainted with the history of interpretation of the Bible, including contemporary approaches and methods of interpretation.
4. to learn to use the necessary research tools, skills and various methods for interpreting the Bible and applying its message.
5. to develop observational skills in doing a close reading of the biblical text.
6. to be able to evaluate the validity of an interpretation and/or application of a biblical text.

#### B. Discipline-specific Skills

1. to be able to analyze and exegete a biblical text.
2. to learn how to read biblical texts with perception and insight.
2. to assess and evaluate various approaches taken in interpreting Scripture.
3. to critically evaluate commentaries and articles written on the Bible.
4. to seek practical ways in which the message of a biblical text can be interpreted and applied to the Church today in our contemporary context.

#### C. Transferable Skills

1. to be able to use the available resources for doing biblical studies.
2. to foster the ability to communicate effectively orally and in writing by participation in small discussion group and through writing papers.
3. to develop critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate and synthesize a wealth of material.
4. to learn self-disciplined study habits and the ability to meet fixed deadlines as set out by the course outline.
5. to foster a desire for life-long learning in the study of Scripture.

### 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: Thomas Nelson, 2004. ISBN: 0-7852-5225-8.

Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. Third edition. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-59856-080-0.

Wald, Oletta. *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. Revised ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 2002. ISBN: 0-8066-4429-X.

#### B. RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. [\*How to Read the Bible for all its Worth\*](#). Second edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Stuart, Douglas. [\*Old Testament Exegesis\*](#). Fourth edition. Louisville: Westminster Press, 2009.

Fee, Gordon D. [\*New Testament Exegesis\*](#). Third edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Danker, F. W. [\*Multipurpose Tools for Bible Study\*](#). Revised ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

Kuhatschek, Jack. [\*Applying the Bible\*](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Tate, W. Randolph. *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006.

### **C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

The following written assignments will help foster the skills of critical analysis and doing biblical exegesis, and the ability to evaluate various approaches and perspectives taken to the biblical text. Through doing the practical exercises, the student will learn various ways of interpreting and applying the biblical text, and deepen their knowledge of the process of doing biblical interpretation.

#### **1. Assignment One: Bible Translations and Textual Matters: Due on September 27, 2011; 15 % of final grade.**

Read the preface and translators' preface in the ESV, NIV, NKJV, NLT, and NRSV Bibles (photocopies on reserve in the library) and then compare 1 John 5:1-12 in each translation. In light of your reading, discuss the following questions: 1) How is the approach of each translation distinctive? 2) What manuscripts form the basis of each translation? 3) What differences are evident in the way each translation renders 1 John 5:1-12? 4) What are the strengths and weaknesses of each translation and in what ways or contexts may they be useful or not so useful?

Length: 3-4 pages typed, double-spaced, 750-1000 words.

#### **2. Assignment Two: Historical/Cultural Background Study of Biblical Books: Due on October 11, 2011; 15% of final grade.**

Choose either the book of Ruth or Philippians and do a study of the historical background of either book. First, try to determine the historical and cultural context inductively from clues given in the book itself. Support your conclusions with Scripture references from the book. Then you should consult secondary resources like commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc which consider the historical background to the book. Comment on how these secondary sources helped you understand the historical context of the book, in a way which you could not by simply reading the book inductively without the

aid of secondary sources. How much of the historical background did you understand before reading the secondary sources? Please include a bibliography with a minimum of three secondary sources.

Length: 3–5 pages typed, double-spaced, 750–1250 words.

**3. Assignment Three: Interpretation and Appropriation:** Due on November 1, 2011; 15% of final grade.

The purpose of this exercise is to move from the question of ‘what it meant’ in its original context to ‘what it means’ for us in our 21st century context. Examine Isaiah 1:10-20 and consider how this passage is relevant to today. First consider the question of how the text was applicable in its original context. Second, outline any principles arising from the text which can be appropriated at all times. Here you need to consider the question whether there are issues/events discussed in the text which were only applicable for its original audience? Third, consider how this passage is relevant for today. Here you should list appropriate meaning and application for the community of faith as a whole, as well as individual and personal application. In doing this, you need to identify your own social location and consider how this context influences your interpretation and application. In giving personal application, include specific examples and a suggested implementation plan. Please include a bibliography with a minimum of three secondary sources.

Length: 3–5 pages typed, double-spaced, 750–1250 words.

**4. Required Reading and Group Discussion of Randolph Tate’s *Biblical Interpretation*:** Due: November 22, 2011 – 10 % of final grade.

On November 22, the students will divide into small discussion groups of four people where they will discuss and evaluate Tate’s book. Each student will be responsible in leading the discussion from a section of the book, but everyone has to have read the whole book and come prepared to discuss the whole book. (If for some reason someone has not completed reading part of the book, they need to tell the members of the group and then the students need to take that into consideration when they assign someone a grade). After having completed the discussion of the book, each student will evaluate the others in the group for how they did and submit the grade to the professor.

One student will be responsible for leading one of the following sections of Tate’s book:

Prefaces, Introduction, Chapters 1–3 (pages xi–85)

Chapters 4–6 (pages 89–186)

Chapters 7–8 (pages 189–242)

Chapter 9, Conclusion and Appendixes (pages 245–342)

This discussion group has five purposes:

- A. to challenge students to develop their critical, thinking skills.
- B. to enable students to improve their skills in developing and expressing theological arguments in a group context.
- C. to empower students to foster ability in leading fellow students in discussion.
- D. to have students take responsibility for their fellow students' education by mutually supporting one another.
- E. to encourage students to listen respectfully to views not their own.

*Responsibilities of the student as group participant*

Having read the book, each student in the group should come prepared with some questions arising from their reading as well as some thoughtful reflections on the material. Some possible questions to ponder are: What struck you about the reading? What new and helpful insights did you find in the reading? Do you agree with Tate's views and argument? Do you find Tate convincing or are there weaknesses in his arguments? How has his approach affected your understanding of biblical interpretation? The student can come up with his or her own questions as well. Each section of the book has study questions. Discussion of these questions are optional. Some study questions may be more helpful than others. Each student also needs to report to the group whether they have read all or only some of the assigned chapters for that day.

*Responsibilities of the student as leader*

For each section of Tate's book, one student will lead the group discussion. During the group discussion, the leader's responsibility is to guide the discussion and keep it on track. The leader should develop some leading questions as well as guide the discussion so that each person has a chance to contribute.

After the discussion, each student will assign a participation grade for each member of the group and submit the grade to the teacher by emailing it to her (grade from zero to ten, with ten being highest). Base the grade on the following criteria:

If the student's comments during the discussion reflected an informed reading of assigned material, allocate a higher grade.

If the student has contributed their fair share (not too much, not too little), allocate a higher grade.

Consider a grade of 8.5-9.5 if the individual has excelled with respect to the above two criteria.

Consider giving a grade of 7.5-8 if the individual has contributed capably with respect to the above two criteria.

If the student has dominated discussion in inappropriate ways, reduce their grade.

If the student has not contributed or contributed only minimally, reduce their grade.

If a student has contributed but their contributions were not informed by a careful reading of the material, reduce their grade.

Has the discussion led to a better understanding of the textbook and to a critical interaction with it? If not, reduce the grade.

If the student has not completed reading all the chapters of the book, reduce their grade.

The average grade should be between 6.0-8.6. If the student has excelled, give a 9-9.5. If their contribution is outstanding, give a 10. If the student's contribution is less than adequate, give a grade of 5 or below.

All grades are confidential (you may give fraction grades: e.g., 7.7).

#### **5. Exegesis Paper:** Due on December 6, 2011; 45% of final grade.

Choose ONE of the following passages of Scripture and write your exegesis paper on it: Genesis 18:16–33; Genesis 45:1–15; 1 Samuel 3:1-21; Mark 2:1–12; Acts 3:1-10; 1 Peter 4:12–19.

This paper is due **in class** (at the beginning of class). If the student hands in the paper after class, then it will be considered late.

Specific instructions for doing the exegesis paper will be given out in class.

Length: 12–15 pages, 3000–3750 words.

Please NOTE: Going over the allowable page limit by more than one page (or word count by 250 words) will result in a reduction in the grade.

#### **D. General Guidelines for the Submission of Written Work**

##### 1. Your work should demonstrate the following characteristics:

**Accuracy** (a fair and accurate presentation of scholarly judgment on the issues) – Is what I say correct? Is it valid? Have I understood the topic or question?

**Critical Analysis** – Have I understood the main issues? Have I done sufficient research on the topic? Does my paper show critical reflection, interaction and dialogue with the biblical text and with authors writing on the subject?

**Organization** – Does my paper follow a clear outline? Does my paper have a thesis statement? Is there a clear progression and development of an idea or an argument in the paper? Does my argument have a meaningful order?

**Clarity** – Does what I say make sense? Will others clearly understand what I am seeking to express?

**Good Grammar and Writing** – Is my paper clean of spelling mistakes? Is the text punctuated correctly? Does the sentence structure consistently adhere to basic rules of good grammar? Do I use inclusive language?

**Well Documented** (thorough) – Is my work complete? Does my bibliography reflect sufficient research. Have I fully and accurately documented where I have relied upon the work of others? Have I provided complete information about my research sources? Will others be able to locate these sources on the strength of my documentation?

## 2. Matters of Style

You should submit written work in a style consistent with either the model outlined in [The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies](#) (P. H. Alexander, et al, eds. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) or the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#). 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. Written work ought to be free of spelling mistakes, punctuated correctly, and adhere to basic rules of grammar. It is expected that written work will be submitted in a clear, straight-forward style of academic prose (cf. the guidelines in Strunk and White, [Elements of Style](#)). Written work ought to betray clear organization, argument and coherent thought. The use of inclusive language is expected.

## 3. Plagiarism and Honesty

Students should consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) current for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

In all work, you are obliged to pay careful attention to matters of intellectual property, honesty and integrity. Plagiarism is to be avoided at all costs and will not be tolerated in any form whatsoever. Plagiarism, by definition, is the use of the work of another person without proper acknowledgement. Examples of plagiarism include (but are not limited to) the following: copying a sentence or part of a sentence from a book or article without using quotation marks and citing the source; rephrasing another person's words without giving credit for the idea that you have borrowed by citing the source; copying the work of someone else and handing it in as your own. It is assumed that each assignment required for this course will be written independently. Please note that plagiarism in any form on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "F" for the assignment with no opportunity for resubmission.

## 4. Title Page and Documentation

The title page for all written work ought to include the following:

The title of the paper, name of the course, name of the professor, date of submission, and your name (if you have a Tyndale Campus mailbox, this must also appear on the title page).

Ensure that you have accurately and fully documented sources used in your paper (footnotes are preferred, endnotes or, in the case of a review. parenthetical references may be used). Documentation and notes should be consistent with the model provided in [\*The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies\*](#) (P. H. Alexander, et al, eds. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999) or the [\*Chicago Manual of Style Online\*](#).

## 5. Late Assignments

The assumption is, of course, that all written work will be submitted on and before the corresponding due dates. Should this not occur, the following policy will govern the evaluation of your work. For every week late, the grade will be reduced by 5 %, a half a letter grade (i.e. one week late: 82 % A- becomes 77 % B+; two weeks late, 82 % becomes 72 % B-, etc.). Please note that the deduction is accumulated weekly, not daily, and so a student will receive the same penalty whether the assignment is one or six days late.

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.

Requests for extensions must be submitted in writing using the Tyndale Extension Forms, explaining the reason why the extension is needed. Such requests need to be submitted prior to the due date.

All assignments must be handed in by the last day of exams. No assignments will be accepted after that date (Friday, December 16, 2011), unless the student has a valid reason for an extension. In that case, the student must apply for an extension to the Registrar and not to the professor.

## 6. Criteria for the Evaluation of Written Work

Your work will be evaluated on whether you answered the specific questions given and whether you followed the general guidelines for submitting written work. For example, the evaluation of your inductive study will be based on whether you followed the specific instructions for doing an inductive study.

## 7. Submission of Written Work



See the 'Guidelines on Written Work' above.

Students are required to retain a copy of all assignments (hard copy or electronic version). If a student wishes to submit written work by mail, they must be mailed directed to the Professor, c/o Tyndale Seminary. Alternatively, work may be given directly to the Professor in class or in her mailbox on the due date. If the student does not have a Tyndale Campus mailbox and wishes to have all written work returned to them, they must submit written work with a self-stamped, self-addressed envelope.

#### D. A SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Assignment One: Bible Translations and Textual Matters                 | 15%  |
| Assignment Two: Historical/Cultural Background Study of Biblical Books | 15%  |
| Assignment Three: Interpretation and Appropriation                     | 15%  |
| Required Reading and Group Discussion                                  | 10%  |
| Exegesis Paper   | 45%  |
| Total Grade  | 100% |

#### IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

- Sept 13 Introduction
- Sept 20 History of Biblical Interpretation  
Before class read KBH, Chapter 1 (pp. 3–20),  
Chapter 3 (pp. 63–101)
- Sept 27 Textual Criticism and Bible Translations  
Read KBH, Chapters 5–6 (pages 135–209)  
**Assignment # 1 due**
- Oct 4 Tools and Resources for Bible Study  
Read Wald, *The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study* (all of it)
- Oct 11 Word Studies, The Interpretive Process, Interpretative Questions  
Read KBH, Chapter 7 (pages 213–272)  
**Assignment # 2 due**
- Oct 18 Appropriation of Biblical Texts  
Read KBH, Chapter 11 (pages 451–475)
- Oct 25 Understanding Biblical Genre: Narrative  
Read KBH, Chapter 12 (pages 477–504)

- Nov 1            Biblical Narrative continued  
Read Tate, Prefaces, Introduction, Chapters 1–3 (pages xi–xv, 3–85)  
**Assignment # 3 due**
- Nov 8            Understanding Biblical Genre: Gospels  
Read Tate, Chapters 4-6 (pages 89–186)
- Nov 15          Understanding Biblical Genre: Epistles  
Read Tate, Chapters 7-8 (pages 189–242)
- Nov 22          Read Tate, Chapter 9, Conclusion, Appendixes, (pages 245–342)  
**Discussion of Tate’s textbook in class in small groups**
- Nov 29          Understanding Biblical Genre: Poetry
- Dec 6            Understanding Biblical Genre: Prophecy and Apocalyptic  
**Exegesis Paper due**

## V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Achtemeier, Paul J. *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999.
- Adam, A. K. M. [\*What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?\*](#) Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.
- Baker, David, W., and Bill T. Arnold, eds. *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.
- Bartholomew, Craig, Collin Greene, and Karl Möller, eds. [\*Renewing Biblical Interpretation\*](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Barton, John. [\*Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study\*](#). London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1984.
- Barton, John. ed. [\*The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation\*](#). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

- Bray, Gerald. *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Brueggemann, Walter. [\*Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination\*](#). Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Countryman, L. William. [\*Biblical Authority or Biblical Tyranny? Scripture and the Christian Pilgrimage\*](#). Revised Edition. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Dyck, Elmer, ed. [\*The Act of Bible Reading\*](#). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Goldingay, John. [\*Models for Interpretation of Scripture\*](#). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Green, Joel B., ed. [\*Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation\*](#). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Kaiser, Walter C. and Moisés Silva. [\*An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning\*](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- Longman III, Tremper. *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 3. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987.
- Lundin, Roger, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton. [\*The Promise of Hermeneutics\*](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- McCarthy, Dan, and Charles Clayton. *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Wheaton: BridgePoint Book, 1994.
- McKenzie, Steven L. and Stephen R. Haynes, eds. [\*To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application\*](#). Revised and Expanded. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.
- Osborne, Grant R. [\*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation\*](#). Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991.
- Porter, Stanley E., ed. [\*Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament\*](#). New Testament Tools and Studies 25. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997.
- Rohrbaugh, Richard, ed. *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996.
- Silva, Moisés, ed. [\*Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation\*](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

- Soulen, Richard N. [\*Handbook of Biblical Criticism\*](#). Second Edition. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981.
- Stenger, Werner. *Introduction to New Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Tate, W. Randolph. *Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. [\*New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading\*](#). London: HarperCollins, 1992.
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. [\*Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge\*](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Webb, William J. [\*Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis\*](#). Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001.
- Yoder, Perry B. *Toward Understanding the Bible*. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press, 1978.