Course Syllabus
FALL 2015

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:
INTERPRETING AND APPLYING THE BIBLICAL TEXT
BIBL 0501

TUESDAYS, 8:15-11:05 AM

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Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00-3:00 PM,
Tuesdays, 2:00-3:00 PM, by appointment

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

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.
3. to assess and evaluate various approaches taken in interpreting Scripture.
4. to critically evaluate commentaries and articles written on the Bible.
5. 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


B. RECOMMENDED TEXTS


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 Sept 29, 2015; 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 Background Study of Biblical Books:** Due on October 13, 2015; 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: Nov 3, 2015; 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 William Webb’s Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Due: Nov 24, 2015 – 10 % of final grade.

On Nov 24, the students will divide into small discussion groups of four people where they will discuss and evaluate Webb’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 Webb’s book:

- Introduction, Chapters 1–3 (pages 13–70)
- Chapters 4–5 Criteria 1–6 (pages 73–134)
- Chapters 5–6 Criteria 7–16 (pages 134–206)
- Chapter 7–8, Conclusion and Appendixes (pages 209–278)
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 Webb’s views and arguments? Do you find Webb convincing or are there weaknesses in his arguments? How has his approach affected your understanding of biblical interpretation and appropriating biblical texts? 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 is 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 Webb’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 Dec 8, 2015; 45% of final grade.

Choose ONE of the following passages of Scripture and write your exegesis paper on it:

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

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. Please provide a pre-paid stamped addressed envelope so I can return the paper in the mail.

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, straightforward 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* for academic polices 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](http://tyndale.ca/registrar).

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.

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 18, 2015), 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. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment One: Bible Translations and Textual Matters</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment Two: Historical Background Study of Biblical Books</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment Three: Interpretation and Appropriation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Reading and Group Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exegesis Paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
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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.
IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Sept 15
Introduction

Sept 22
History of Biblical Interpretation
Before class read KBH, Chapter 1 (pp. 3–20),
Chapter 3 (pp. 63–101)

Sept 29
Textual Criticism and Bible Translations
Before class read KBH, Chapters 5–6 (pages 135–209)
Assignment # 1 due

Oct 6
Tools and Resources for Bible Study
Before class read KBH, Chapter 7 (pages 213–272)

Oct 13
Word Studies, The Interpretive Process, Interpretative Questions
Before class read Webb, (pages 13–122)
Assignment # 2 due

Oct 20
Appropriation of Biblical Texts
Before class read KBH, Chapter 11 (pages 451–475)

Oct 27
NO CLASS: Reading Week

Nov 3
Understanding Biblical Genre: Narrative
Assignment # 3 due
Before class read Webb, (pages 123–206)

Nov 10
Understanding Biblical Genre: Gospels
Before class read KBH, Chapter 12 (pages 477–504)

Nov 17
Understanding Biblical Genre: Epistles
Before class finish reading Webb, (pages 209–278)

Nov 24
Discussion of Webb’s textbook in class in small groups

Dec 1
Understanding Biblical Genre: Poetry
Complete the course evaluation online

Dec 8
Understanding Biblical Genre: Prophecy and Apocalyptic
Exegesis Paper due at the beginning of class

June 12, 2015
V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:


