



# TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

## Course Syllabus

### Fall 2012

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: INTERPRETING AND APPLYING THE BIBLICAL TEXT  
BIBL 0501

WEDNESDAYS 6:30 – 9:20 PM

INSTRUCTOR: DR. BARBARA LEUNG LAI, PhD

Telephone number: 416 226 6620

Email: [blai@tyndale.ca](mailto:blai@tyndale.ca)

Office Hours: Wednesday 5:30 – 6:15 PM (Other times by appointment: 2-week in advance sign-up sheet on office door)

To access your course material, please go to <http://mytyndale.ca>

## 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 advanced biblical research.

This foundational course on biblical interpretation combines the principles and practice of hermeneutics (i.e. the 'science' and the 'art' of biblical interpretation). It seeks to integrate discussions on the status of the Text (Bible), the dynamics and "empirics" of the interpretive process, and the role of the reader in the search for meaning. With respect to the current interpretive scene, newer and emerging approaches and reading strategies will be introduced and appraised from an evangelical perspective.

## II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to acquire a good knowledge of, and/or skills in the following:

1. The hermeneutical framework: what it meant → what it means to the Christian Church at large → What it means to individual members of the faith community (i.e. from exegesis → exposition → appropriation; from meaning → significance)
2. The principles of good exegesis (i.e. **"The World behind the Text"**)
3. The major literary genres of the Old and New Testaments and how an understanding of each genre impacts interpretation (i.e. **"The World of the Text"**)
4. The role of gender-culture-context-situatedness in biblical interpretation (i.e. **"The World in front of the Text"**)
5. Models for biblical interpretation including an introduction to the newer and emerging approaches
6. Analytical methods and tools (including arching and some basic diagramming); alternative reading/interpretive strategies
7. Directives towards the principles of proper appropriation (including the working out of an "appropriation theory", i.e. from "Text to Praxis")

8. Competence in discerning proper interpretation and in weighing the validity of alternate interpretations of any given passage/book in a mature, responsible and thoughtful manner

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### A. REQUIRED TEXTS

Klein, William W., Craig, L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. and exp. ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993. (ISBN: 0-7852-5225-8)  
(=KBH)

Osborne, Grant R. [\*The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation\*](#). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006.  
(ISBN: 10- 0-8308-2826-5) (=HS)

#### B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING:

(Those marked with “R” are on 2-hr reserve in the library).

(Those marked with e-R are online resources, with direct links provided).

(N.B. The abbreviated titles are in brackets).

Bartholomew, Craig, Collin Greene, and Karl Möller, eds. [\*Renewing Biblical Interpretation\*](#).  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Barton, John, ed. [\*The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation\*](#). Cambridge:  
Cambridge University Press, 1998. (= Barton)

Eagleton, Terry. [\*After Theory\*](#). London: Allen Lane, 2003. (= AT)

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand  
Rapids: Zondervan, 1993. (=Fee)

Fowler, Robert et al. eds. [\*New Paradigms for Bible Study: The Bible in the Third Millennium\*](#).  
New York: T & T Clark, 2004). R

Goldingay, John. [\*Models for Interpretation of Scripture\*](#). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.(=MIS)  
R

- Goeder, Paula. [Searching for Meaning: An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament](#). Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009. (= Gooder)
- Hunter, Alastair G., and Philip R. Davies, eds. [Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll](#). Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement 348. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002. (= S&S)
- Kaiser, Walter C. & Moisés Silva. [An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994. (= KS) **R**
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. and Richard D. Patterson, [Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology](#). Invitation to Theological Studies Series. Grand Rapids: MI: Kregel, 2011. (=Invitation) **R**
- Lundin, Roger, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton. [The Promise of Hermeneutics](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. (= LWT). **R**
- McCarthy, Dan and Charles Clayton. *Let the Readers Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Wheaton: BridgePoint Book, 1994. (=MC) **R**
- Silva, Moisés., ed. [Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation](#). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. (= Silva) **R**
- Tate, W. Randolph. [Interpreting the Bible: A Handbook of Terms and Methods](#). Peabody : Hendrickson, 2006. (= HB) **R**
- Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2008. (=Tate) **R**
- Thiselton, Anthony C. [New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading](#). London: HarperCollins, 1992. (=NHH)
- Thiselton, Anthony C. [Hermeneutics: An Introduction](#). Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009. (= HAI) **R**

## C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

### 1. Quiz 10% Tentative: Sept 26

A 45 min. quiz will be scheduled in the 3rd week of class after the introductory sections.

### 2. Assignments

Literature consulted in your assignments must be properly footnoted. Otherwise, it is considered as plagiarism. Citations and bibliographical data are to be formatted according to Patrick H. Alexander, et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999. This is available in the bookstore and library. All assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class on respective due dates. Marks for late assignments will be deducted 10% per week.

#### Assignment (A): 10% Due: Oct 3

Read Chapter Six of KBH (“The Goal of Interpretation”). Write a 3-5 pages (double-spaced) **reflective** essay on your reading. Include (1) a summary; and (2) your own appraisal/assessment. The objectives of this assignment are (a) to exercise reading intelligently and reflectively; and (b) to build up a conceptual framework that is crucial to this course.

#### Assignment (B): 10% Due: Oct 17

Write a 6-8 pages paper on (1) the Characterization of Abraham (Gen 12-25); OR (2) the Characterization of Joseph (Gen 37-50). You may use any version that is most familiar to you (French, German, Korean, or Chinese versions, etc.). The aims of this assignment are (a) to illustrate that different reading strategies/reading perspectives may yield different characterizations of the same biblical character, and thus God’s timeless truth speaks to us in a variety of ways; and (b) to exercise your skill in reading Hebrew narratives. Consultation with secondary resources is optional.

**Assignment (C):**                      20%                      **Due: Nov 7**

Write a 6-8 pages Exposition on (1) Proverb 31:10-31; OR (2) Psalm 73. Cover all three levels of the hermeneutical framework: What it meant → What it means to the Christian church at large → What it means to you as a contemporary interpreter/reader. The objective of this assignment is to exercise a proper way of interpreting and appropriating a given biblical text to contemporary ecclesiastical and personal life. Consult at least two exegetical/expositional commentaries (recommendation of commentary series will be provided at the beginning of class).

**Assignment (D):**                      20%                      **Due: Nov 28**

Write an “Analytical Outline” (with “Relevant Interpretive Notes”) on (1) Eph 5:15-6:9; OR (2) Phil 3:1-16. Consult at least two exegetical commentaries. The purpose of this assignment is to practice your skill in interpreting the Bible analytically.

**Reading Assignments:**                      20%                      **Due: Dec 5** (last class session)

(a) Use a log-sheet to report the reading assignments completed. (b) Write a one paragraph reflective summary for each assigned reading. Please note that knowledgeable understanding of your reading should be reflected in class discussion sessions and/or during class interaction. Weekly reading assignments are from the required texts, the recommended readings and the SR & e-R list (a confirmed list of all reading assignments will be provided by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of class).

#### **D. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK**

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 [www.tyndale.ca/registrar/calendar](http://www.tyndale.ca/registrar/calendar).

#### E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments

Class Participation	10%
Quiz	10%
Assignment A	10 %
Assignment B	10%
Assignment C	20%
Assignment D	20%
Reading Assignments	20%
Total Grade	100%

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

**(N.B.** This is only a general outline for the course. A detailed lecture outline will be provided for each class session with recommended reading and the reading assignment).

**Session 1      The Essential-Conceptual Framework: The Science and the Art of Biblical Interpretation:** The status of the Bible; the phenomenon of meaning-making; the criteria of the reader perspectives; the dynamics of biblical interpretation; ‘the meaning of meaning/where is meaning’; the role of gender, culture, context in biblical interpretation

**Session 2**     **(A) Principles of Biblical Interpretation:** From What it Meant to What It Means; the Merging of the Two Horizons; Basic Tools and Methods of Biblical Interpretation

**(B) The History of Interpretation:** An Introduction to the Paradigm Shift in Biblical Studies in the early 90s; An Introduction to the Current Interpretive Situation and Its Preliminary Assessment; Class Discussion on the External Shaping Forces of the Reader Perspective

**Session 3**     **(A) Quiz** (6:40 p.m. – 7:25 p.m.)

**(B) Interpreting OT Narratives:** Introduction to Narratology; Narrative Reading Strategies; Characterization of Biblical Characters; Demonstration of Worked-out Examples

**Session 4**     **Interpreting OT Wisdom Literature:** Guidelines for Interpretation; From What It Meant to the Original Audience/Recipients to What It Means to Us (the Christian Church At Large); Demonstration of Worked-out Examples (Prov. 8; Job 38-40); Reading/Interpretive Strategies for Job and Ecclesiastes

**Session 5**     **Interpreting OT Poetic Literature:** Introduction to Hebrew Poetry; the Use of Parallelism, Imagery and Metaphor and other literary forms; Examples from Psalms and Hosea 11

**Session 6**     **Analytical Interpretation of Biblical Texts (I)** – Worked-out Examples from OT and Acts 7:17-34 (Using NAS)

***Analytical tools: Outlining, Arching and Diagramming will be introduced with demonstrated examples***

**Session 7**     **Analytical Interpretation of Biblical Texts (II)** – Examples drawn from NT (Using NAS)

**Interpretation of NT Texts: (1) Epistles; (2) Synoptic Rhetorical Criticism**

***Demonstration of the employment of analytical tools: Outlining, Arching and Diagramming***

**Session 8**     **Interpreting Prophetic Literature:** Forms of Prophetic Literature; Principles of interpreting OT Prophecy; Demonstration of Worked-out Examples



- Session 9**     **Interpreting Apocalyptic Literature-- Daniel and Revelation:** Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature; Principles of Interpretation; Demonstration of Worked-out Examples
- Session 10**    **On Appropriation [1]: Towards an “Appropriation Theory” (Methodological Considerations—Globalization, Contextualization, and Appropriation/Relevance);** From What It meant → What It Means to Us (the Christian Church at Large) →What it means to me as a member of the faith community
- Session 11**    **On Appropriation [2]:** Appropriating the biblical message to the post-modern human and ecclesiastical life; A 2-step appropriation model: a) re-living; b) re-expression with demonstrated examples drawn from Daniel, Deut., and the Wisdom Books
- Session 12**    **Newer and Emerging Models of Interpretation:** An Introduction; Toward an Evangelical Engagement – Discernment and Assessment

#### V. Selected Readings (SR) & Online Resource (e-R) List—Fall 2012

(All SR folders will be available on 2-hr reserve in the library. Direct links for e-R will be provided).

- (1) McCartney, Dan. & Clayton, Charles. “Appendix A: Where Is Meaning?,” & “Appendix B: The Historical-Critical Method,” *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (BridgePoint, 1994), 275-292; 342-346.
- (2) Kaiser, Walter C. & Silvia, Moisés. “Chapter 2: The Meaning of Meaning,” & “Chapter 13: Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,” [\*An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning\*](#) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 27-45; 229-248.
- (3) [Glenny, W. Edward. “The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations,” \*JETS\* 38 \(4, 1995\): 481-500. e-R](#)
- (4) Goldingay, John. “How Far Do Readers Make Sense? Interpreting Biblical Narrative,” *Themelios* 18 (1993): 5-10. **SR**

- (5) Berlin, Adele. "Characterization in Biblical Narrative: David's Wives," [\*Beyond Form Criticism: Essays in OT Literary Criticism\*](#) (Vol. 2 of Paul House, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study; ed. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns), 219-233.
- (6) Hewitt, V. M. Kempton. "Guidelines to the Interpretation of Daniel and Revelation," ed. Carl E. Armerding & W. Ward Gasque, *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989), 101-116.
- (7) [de Hulster, Izaak J. "Imagination: A Hermeneutical Tool for the Study of the Hebrew Bible," \*Biblical Interpretation\* 18 \(2010\): 114-136. e-R](#)
- (8) Clines, David J. A. and Exum, J. Cheryl (eds.) "Introduction," [\*The New Literature Criticism and the Hebrew Bible\*](#) (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 11-25.
- (9) Holladay, Carl R. "Contemporary Methods of Reading the Bible," *NIB* 1: 125-149. **SR**
- (10) [Leung Lai, Barbara M. "Hearing God's Bitter Cries \(Hosea 11:1-9\): Reading, Emotive-Experiencing, Appropriation," \*Horizons in Biblical Theology\* 26 \(2004\): 24-49. e-R](#)
- (11) Leung Lai, Barbara M. "Making Sense of the Biblical Portrait: Toward an Interpretative Strategy for the 'Virtuous Wife' in Proverbs 31: 10-31," in *Teach Me Your Paths: Studies in Old Testament Literature and Theology* [Fs. Donald A. Leggett] (ed. John Kessler and Jeffrey P. Greenman; Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2001), 71-88. **SR**
- (12) Massey, James Earl. "Reading the Bible from Particular Social Locations: An Introduction," *NIB* 1: 150-153. **SR**
- (13) Osiek, Carolyn. "Reading the Bible as Women," *NIB* 1:181-187. **SR**
- (14) Lundin, Roger. Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton, [\*The Promise of Hermeneutics\*](#) (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1999), 107-131. **SR**
- (15) Scholz, Susanne. "Introduction," in *Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader* (ed. Susanne Scholz; Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), xv-xxvi. **SR**
- (16) Yee, Gale A. "The Author/Text/Reader and Power: Suggestions for a Critical Framework for Biblical Studies," in *Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader* (ed. Susanne Scholz; Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), 22-30. **SR**
- (17) Leung Lai, Barbara M. "'Surely, All are in Vain!': Psalm 73 and Humanity Reaching out to God," in *Text and Community: Essays in Memory of Bruce M. Metzger*, Vol. 2, ed. J. Harold Ellens (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 101-109.

- (18) [Greidanus, Sidney. "Detecting plot lines: the key to preaching the Genesis narratives."](#)  
[Calvin Theological Journal \(Ap 2008\): Vol.43, Iss.1, p.64-77.](#) **e-R**
- (19) Leung Lai, Barbara M. "Word Becoming Flesh [On Appropriation]: Engaging Daniel as a Survival Manual," in *Global Voices: Reading the Bible in the Majority World*, ed. Craig S. Keener and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers), 65-78. **SR**