

“The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.”

Course	BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION BIBL 0501 1A
Date, Time, and Delivery Format	JANUARY 8 – APRIL 8, 2023 ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
Instructor	WILLIAM J. WEBB, Ph.D. Email: bwebb@tyndale.ca
Class Information	This course is web-based asynchronous with no fixed class time. Office Hours: You are welcome to post questions in the appropriate forums online. For other matters where more direct communication is helpful, we can set up a phone call, Zoom or, if possible, meet at any Starbucks in Waterloo, ON (where I live).
Course Material	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One . Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A foundational course on biblical interpretation which will provide students with the basic exegetical tools required to interpret and appropriate the biblical text. The student will learn to recognize and work with the different literary genres of the Bible and will gain an overview of various hermeneutical approaches to Scripture. In the process, the student will be introduced to various research tools, methods, resources, and practical skills for interpretation in order to appropriate the Bible well in our contemporary context.

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 to explore their value and limitations.

II. LEARNING 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 will be able to:

1. Explain the dynamics involved in reading and understanding texts.
2. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of competing approaches within the spectrum of interpretive methods.
3. Formulate a “personally adopted” hermeneutical philosophy—not necessarily the professor’s perspective—that integrates all three areas of author, text, and reader.
4. 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.
5. Articulate how the Bible has been interpreted in the past, both within Scripture itself and within second-temple Judaism and church history.
6. Explore approaches to re-reading and “hearing” the ancient text that foster a healthy understanding of biblical authority.
7. 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 READING AND RESOURCES

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard Jr. [*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*](#). Third edition. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2017. [ISBN: 978-0-7852-5225-2].

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

Tyndale recommends www.stepbible.org – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

B. RECOMMENDED READING (OPTIONAL)

Tate, W. Randolph. [*Biblical Interpretation. An Integrated Approach*](#). 3rd ed. Peabody, MA: 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].

C. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to “Guidelines for Interactions” on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

D. DISCUSSION FORUMS, EXPECTATIONS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Discussion Forums. Discussion forums are a key aspect of this course. They are your opportunity to wrestle with the assignments/relevant issues under consideration, to share your ideas with your peers, and share the evolving group consensus. There are two types of forums in this Biblical Interpretation course: (a) research-based forums and (b) fun forums. You will discover the difference between these two forum types as you read through the assignment section (below) and in the “Forum Rules” posted online.

Forum Expectations and Responsibilities. As you know, the course is being offered online. An online course, by its very nature, is different from one presented using traditional classroom methods. Thus, it is important for you as a student to approach this course differently than you might approach a classroom course.

You have more personal responsibility in a course such as this. We are an online community building our knowledge and understanding together. Doing your readings and regularly showing up online by collaborating in discussions, asking questions, and providing feedback to your learning cohort are important community responsibilities. Additionally, in order to keep up in the course it will be important for you to work consistently throughout the semester. You will need to be disciplined and take the initiative to participate.

You are also expected to complete the anonymous course evaluation in the final week of the course.

The role of your instructor is different as well. In an online course, the main role of the instructor, at least as I will assume it here, is to function as a coach. I will be striving in various ways to fulfill that function. I will be presenting information in various formats along the way, but my main role will be to help guide you through the course so that you can get as much from the course as possible. Throughout, I will be encouraging you to think critically about the course content and the views of others, mine included. *I will be online regularly, but I will not be responding to every post in the discussion forums. Rather, I will make intermittent contributions, summarizing, challenging, and at times suggesting new directions.*

One last thing, make sure that you read the documents related to forums that you will find in the opening/general section of the course (the main window just before the numbered weeks start). In other words, kindly read (a) the Forum Rules, (b) the specific instructions for each forum, and (c) the grading rubrics with charted assessment levels that relate to each forum. These resources provide more detailed direction for about your course requirements.

E. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Attendance in this course is demonstrated by regular log-ins and up-to-date participation in forums.

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 α on the alphabet list, you say “alpha” (without peeking at the English word “alpha” next to the letter α —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 Chicago Manual of Style for font size, title page, headings, paragraph spacing, margins, block quotes, footnotes, bibliography, etc. (see General Guidelines below for links). Also, see grading rubric posted in the opening section of the course.

Due date: **Wednesday April 10th, 2024**. 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.

F. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

G. 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%
<u>Fun Forums [bonus added to EP grade]</u>	<u>*5% bonus (maximum)</u>
Total Grade	100%

H. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Submissions. Forum assignments during the semester are posted online and not sent to the professor. Only the final/exegetical paper is sent to the professor as an attached file (either MSWord or PDF format) via email: 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 in 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 Registrar’s Office (see below). If a 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 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 workload, other assignments, professional or ministry obligations or holidays do not constitute legitimate grounds for an extension.

For proper citation style, consult the [tip sheet, “Documenting Chicago Style”](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially ch. 14. For citing scripture texts, refer to sections 10.44 to 10.48 and 14.238 to 14.241 from the *Chicago Manual of Style* or reference the [tip sheet, “How to Cite Sources in Theology”](#).

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 (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the [Academic Integrity website](#) for further details.

Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#). Citation and other [tip sheets](#).

Students should also 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.

Research Ethics

All course-based assignments involving human participants requires ethical review and may require approval by the [Tyndale Research Ethics Board \(REB\)](#). Check with the Seminary Dean's Office (aa@tyndale.ca) before proceeding.

I. 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 link can also be found in the left column on the course page. 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, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

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"

II. Text-centered Approaches/Genre

Week 5	A Text-Centered Approach: a rationale INTRO TO GENRE NARRATIVE RITUAL TEXTS	KBH (chps. 9a-c narrative, law)
Week 6	GOSPELS EPISTOLARY (reading; no lecture) POETRY PROVERBS & WISDOM	KBH (chp. 10a) KBH (chp. 10c) KBH (chp. 8; 9d) KBH (chp. 9f)

READING WEEK:

Feb 19—25th. This week does not count within the 12-week course schedule.

Week 7	PROPHECY APOCALYPTIC	KBH (chp. 9e) KBH (10d)
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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 Spiral ² • Never Ending Story • The Bible & God’s Will	KBH (chps. 11, 12)

EXEGETICAL PAPER: Due Wednesday April 10th, 2024.

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).

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

([Tyndale Library](#) supports this course with [e-journals, e-books](#), and the [mail delivery of books](#) and circulating materials. See the [Library FAQ page](#).)

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