

Biblical Interpretation (BI500; 3 credit hours)
Trinity School for Ministry, fall 2017

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Course Description

This course aims to provide students with a basic introduction to the doctrine of Holy Scripture and the practice of biblical interpretation. Special attention will be paid to the history of Christian engagement with the Bible, beginning with the apostles' own reading of Israel's Scriptures, as well as the contemporary renewal of theological exegesis and the "tools" of the exegetical craft.

The general set of outcomes Trinity desires for each of our graduates includes the following:

1. The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.
2. The student will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.
3. M.Div.: The student will be able to effectively communicate the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.
M.A.R.: The student will be able to effectively teach the Christian faith.
S.T.M.: The student will demonstrate the ability to carry out research from original sources.
4. M.Div.: The student will be prepared to effectively lead in a variety of Christian communities.
M.A.R.: The student will be equipped to apply scholarship to the life of the church in his or her chosen theological discipline.
S.T.M.: The student will be equipped to successfully pursue further independent research and post-graduate study in his or her chosen theological discipline.

This course is one of the core courses in the curriculum that provide an understanding of Scripture and biblical theology, thereby grounding this curriculum as a whole (outcome 1). Such attention to biblical theology is at the heart of a classic Anglican approach to Scripture (outcome 2; see Article XX of *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*), and an understanding of the Bible is a pre-requisite for both effectively communicating the Christian message and offering effective leadership (Outcomes 3 and 4). So this course contributes to each of these general outcomes, doing so through the following specific objectives:

1. To explain some basic ingredients in a Christian doctrine of Holy Scripture, such as inspiration, infallibility, and authority.
2. To explore some chapters in the history of biblical interpretation.
3. To introduce students to a two-testament approach to biblical theology and the distinctive contribution each testament makes to our understanding of the Bible as Christian scripture.
4. To facilitate the development of interpretive skills for reading Scripture.

For discussion of how I will assess whether these outcomes have been met, see the discussion below of the course requirements.

Required Texts

1. A “standard,” “literal” Bible translation (e.g., RSV, NRSV, ESV, etc.).
 - a. Recommended: *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, student edition (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006). (ISBN: 978-0060786847)
2. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, *Holy People, Holy Land: A Theological Introduction to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005). (ISBN: 978-1587431234)
3. N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013). (ISBN: 978-0062212641)
4. J. Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). (ISBN: 978-0802862358)
5. Michael Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*, revised and expanded edition (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2010). (ISBN: 978-0801046407)

Course Requirements

Attending lectures and class participation. This is the basic minimum requirement. Each Thursday afternoon class will conclude with our attending Evening Prayer in the chapel; this is part of the course requirements. According to the *TSM Student Handbook*, “Students who miss more than three classes in one term may forfeit credit for the class and may be in danger of failing the course. As a matter of courtesy, students who must miss any classes should notify their professors, ahead of class if possible.” (A word about taking an “Incomplete”: Incompletes are given only in the most serious of cases. They are not granted as a way to extend the semester due to unfinished work. In order to request an incomplete, you must obtain the necessary form online and bring it to me so that I can list the specific assignments to be completed along with due dates. The revised due date will not extend beyond six weeks from the last day of class. The form will then be submitted to the Academic Dean for final approval and will only be granted in the most serious of cases.)

Hermeneutical/exegetical assignments. There will be six assignments that will cover the basic skills (e.g., word study, literary analysis, etc.) taught in this course. More information about these assignments will be provided at the beginning of the course.

Two short review/reflection papers. Twice in the semester, students will submit papers of 1200 words’ length each, one being a critical interaction with Michael Dauphinais and

Matthew Levering's *Holy People, Holy Land* and the other being a similar critical engagement with N. T. Wright's *Scripture and the Authority of God*. More information will be provided at the beginning of the semester on this assignment.

Final exam. There will be a final exam given at the end of the semester consisting of "short answer," multiple choice, "true or false," and "matching"-type questions, covering key terms and concepts from the Bartholomew textbook as well as the course lectures.

Course Evaluation

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows: Six homework assignments = 40% of final grade; review/reflection papers = 20% each; and the final exam = 20% of final grade.

Your written work will be evaluated according to the following criteria: clarity and charity of thought and expression, accuracy of information, and breadth and depth of discussion. I will use letter grades or their equivalent to mean the following:

B (80-89): The thought and expression are clear and the information is accurate. The discussion is broad and deep enough to indicate a solid understanding of the issue. By "broad" I mean that sufficient aspects of the topic are covered, and by "depth" I mean that enough supporting and illustrating material is offered to flesh out the basic thought.

C (70-79): The material shows an adequate grasp of the topic, but at points the discussion is unclear, inaccurate, narrow or shallow.

D (60-69): The material shows something close to an adequate grasp of the topic but is notably defective according to one or more of the criteria.

F (below 60): The material does not indicate that the student has an adequate grasp of the topic, or it is severely defective according to the criteria.

A (90-100): The material is exceptional. Usually this means that it is not only clear and accurate but also develops the topic in breadth and depth beyond what is necessary for a good understanding of it. Such material is often, though not always, marked also by creativity, exceptional insight, and/or relatively extensive research.

The school's grade scale is as follows: A = 100-95; A- = 94-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D = below 70; F = below 60. As per The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) requirements, several samples of student work may be randomly selected and used as a class artifact as part of an on-going assessment of courses and degree programs. Students' names will be removed from any work used for this purpose.

Computer Policy

Use of computers or other electronic devices such as mobile phones or tablets is not permitted during class.

For information about how note taking on laptops can hinder rather than help your retention of what you hear in the classroom, see Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* (April 23, 2014). As Ruth Graham summarizes, “Note-taking is a two-part action: creating the notes (‘encoding’) and reviewing them later (‘storage’), both of which confer learning benefits. When the encoding becomes too easy, that first opportunity to learn is wasted, particularly when it comes to absorbing concepts rather than rote facts.... Taking notes by hand, by contrast, forces students to grapple with the material enough to summarize it, since they aren’t physically capable of writing down every word. The constraints enforced by the rudimentary technology of pen and paper force a deeper engagement with the material, the paper concludes” (“Taking Notes? Bring a Pen, Skip the Computer,” *Boston Globe* [May 25, 2014]).

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS (readings should be completed by the date listed in the left hand column)
TBA	Apostolic biblical interpretation I	
TBA	Apostolic biblical interpretation II	Chapters 1-2 of Billings textbook; First homework assignment due
TBA	Patristic biblical interpretation	Chapters 3-4 of Billings textbook; Second homework assignment due
TBA	The Quadriga	Chapters 5-6 of Billings textbook; Third homework assignment due
TBA	Luther and the Law/Gospel contrast	
TBA	Calvin, the Reformed tradition, and biblical theology	First reflection paper on Dauphinais & Levering due
TBA	The rise of historical criticism	Chapters 1-2 of Gorman textbook; Fourth homework assignment due

TBA	Postmodern biblical criticism	
TBA	A theology of Scripture, canonical biblical theology, and the theological interpretation of Scripture	Second reflection paper on Wright due
TBA	Tools I: Genre and literary analysis	Chapters 3-5 of Gorman textbook; Fifth homework assignment due
TBA	Tools II: Word studies	Chapters 6-7 of Gorman textbook
TBA	Tools III: Using a Gospels Synopsis	Chapters 8-10 of Gorman textbook
TBA	Putting the pieces together: Genesis 22 as a test case	Sixth homework assignment due
TBA		Final exam