

FIRST YEAR
Perkins Course of Study School Satellite Program at McMurry University
Pre-Class Assignments
Fall 2019

COS 121 Bible 1: Introduction

Instructor:

Rev. Dr. John B. F. Miller
jbmiller@mcm.edu
(325) 793-3896

Class Sessions:

September 7, 2019
October 5, 2019
November 2, 2019

Required Texts:

- Bernhard Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (4th ed.; ISBN-13: 978-0-8006-3560-2)
- John Hayes and Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (3rd ed.; ISBN-13: 978-0-664-22775-3)
- Beverly Gaventa and David Peterson, eds., *The New Interpreter's Bible One-Volume Commentary* (ISBN-13: 978-0687334117)
- *Mark Powell, ed., *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (ISBN-13: 978-0061469060)
- *Harold Attridge, ed., *HarperCollins Study Bible* (NRSV) (ISBN-13: 978-0060786854)

(*These two HarperCollins volumes are not specifically essential, but you will need a good study Bible [in NRSV] and a good Bible dictionary.)

Recommended Texts:

- Michael Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* (revised and expanded edition; ISBN-13: 978-0801046407)

Course Description:

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.

3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.¹

Pre-Class Assignments (please send all assignments as e-mail attachments to the instructor at the e-mail address noted above by the date indicated)

Responses should be double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with one inch margins. Please adhere to the specified length for each response. Headers and footers should not be factored into the estimated length of each answer. When you use information from an assigned reading in your response, use footnote citations that include the author's last name and page number (for example, Berg, 949). (Such abbreviated citations are acceptable because the assignments will specify the title of the author's work.)

The assignments, and the exercises within each assignment, proceed in a very deliberate order. You are free to complete the assignments at any time prior to the deadline, but please do them **in order**.

Written assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized 10% for each 24-hour period they are late. Using the first assignment as an example, work submitted from 12:00AM through 11:59PM on Saturday, August 31 will be penalized 10%. Work submitted from 12:00AM through 11:59PM on Sunday, September 1 will be penalized 20%, and so forth.

Along with the writing assignments, you will see two categories of additional readings for each class session: readings for **in-class quizzes** and readings for general class discussion. The quizzes will aim at ensuring a basic understanding of the material covered in the specified reading, and will be administered at the beginning of each class.

SEPTEMBER 7 Exploring the Processes of Scripture: Inspiration, Composition, Canonization, and Exegesis

Pre-Class Assignment (DUE by 11:59PM, Friday, August 30):

1. Before the most recent revision of the Course of Study curriculum, the title of this course was "The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible." How do you feel about playing this role in your congregation(s)? To what degree have you found that y/our congregation(s) expects you to have expertise in the area of interpreting Scripture? Is interpretation/exegesis of Scripture a part of your calling that you relish? Does it make you uncomfortable? Does it scare you? Finally, how open are you to learning new ways of reading and understanding the Bible as the word of God? Please be candid in your response. (1/2 to 3/4 of a page)

¹ The Course Description and Course Objectives are drawn directly from the GBHEM web site (http://www.gbhem.org/sites/default/files/documents/licensing-cos/COS_Course_goals_revised.pdf [accessed 5/27/19]).

2. Scripture holds a prominent place in Christian faith and worship. We read it devotionally as a way of understanding our relationship with God and as a way of drawing closer to God; we discuss Bible passages in Sunday school; the biblical text provides the basis for our sermons. With this prominence in mind, and taking into account all of your various experiences in church, reflect on the ways in which you have been encouraged to explore this question: **How did we get the Bible?** (1/2 to 3/4 of a page)

3. Read the three selections below with this question in mind: **By what process did the texts that we now regard as sacred Scripture come to be regarded as Scripture?** In other words, how did we get our Bible? Summarize what you learned from these readings² about the formation of what we now call the Old Testament and about the formation of what we now call the New Testament. (3 pages)

- Hayes and Holladay, “Textual Criticism” (*Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*, pp. 34-52)
- Schuller, “Canon of the Old Testament” (*New Interpreter’s Bible One-Volume Commentary*, pp. 944-947)
- Berg, “Canon of the New Testament” (*NIBOVC*, pp. 948-950)

Reading for the **in-class quiz** on September 7:

- Hayes and Holladay, “Historical Criticism” (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 53-71)
- Hayes and Holladay, “Grammatical Criticism” (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 72-89)

Additional Reading for Class Discussion on September 7:

- Hayes and Holladay, “Introducing Exegesis” (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 1-33)

OCTOBER 5: Old Testament – Background and Exegesis

Pre-Class Assignment (Due by 11:59PM, Friday, September 27):

Genesis:

Step 1:

- Read the entire text of Genesis (NRSV translation). Keep track of questions that arise as you read (you can mark your text or keep a separate list). At this point, it is vitally important that you NOT read the notes in your study Bible; at this stage, you are developing your own connection with the text. (If you find it difficult not to look at the

² Specifically, please avoid internet resources. When it comes to biblical studies, there are some good resources on the web, and many more that are horrendous. For this course, please use only the assigned reading material to answer assigned questions.

study Bible notes as you read, consider reading the text in a non-study Bible, or read it online.)

- When you are finished reading, go back through your questions. Did your reading of the entire text serve to answer some of your questions? Did reading the text as a whole generate new questions?
- Now, go back through the passages that raised questions and read the notes in your study Bible. What questions do the notes answer? What new questions arise?
- Now, read the entry on Genesis in the *New Interpreter's Bible One-Volume Commentary*. Which of your questions are answered in the commentary? What new questions arise?
- **Keep all of your notes from this process; you will need them if called upon to lead discussion of this text in class.**

Step 2:

- Based on your reading experience in Step 1, what are the most important questions for which you were able to find satisfactory answers? What are the most important questions that remain unanswered? Which of the unanswered questions would you most like to explore further?
- Summarize your reflection (2 pages).

Follow the same process (both Step 1 and Step 2) with the texts of Hosea and Amos; your final written reflection for each of these texts should be roughly 1 page.

Reading for the in-class quiz on October 5:

- Hayes and Holladay, "Literary Criticism" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 90-103)
- Hayes and Holladay, "Canonical Criticism" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 152-166)

Additional Reading for Class Discussion on October 5:

- Hayes and Holladay, "Tradition Criticism" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 115-126)
- Hayes and Holladay, "Structuralist Criticism" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 139-151)

NOVEMBER 2: New Testament – Background and Exegesis

Pre-Class Assignment (Due by 11:59PM, Friday, October 25):

Gospel of Mark:

Step 1:

- Read the entire text of Mark (NRSV translation). Keep track of questions that arise as you read (you can mark your text or keep a separate list). At this point, it is vitally important that you NOT read the notes in your study Bible; at this stage, you are

developing your own connection with the text. (If you find it difficult not to look at the study Bible notes as you read, consider reading the text in a non-study Bible, or read it online.)

- When you are finished reading, go back through your questions. Did your reading of the entire text serve to answer some of your questions? Did reading the text as a whole generate new questions?
- Now, go back through the passages that raised questions and read the notes in your study Bible. What questions do the notes answer? What new questions arise?
- Now, read the entry on Mark in the *New Interpreter's Bible One-Volume Commentary*. Which of your questions are answered in the commentary? What new questions arise?
- **Keep all of your notes from this process; you will need them if called upon to lead discussion of this text in class.**

Step 2:

- Based on your reading experience in Step 1, what are the most important questions for which you were able to find satisfactory answers? What are the most important questions that remain unanswered? Which of the unanswered questions would you most like to explore further?
- Summarize your reflection (3 pages).

Follow the same process with the text of Philippians (1 page)

Reading for the in-class quiz on November 2:

- Hayes and Holladay, "Form Criticism" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 104-114)
- Hayes and Holladay, "Redaction Criticism" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 127-138)

Additional Reading for Class Discussion on November 2:

- Hayes and Holladay, "Exegesis with a Special Focus," "Integrating Exegetical Procedures," and "Employing the Fruits of Biblical Exegesis" (*Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 167-212)
- Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*

GRADING RUBRIC FOR WRITTEN PRE-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS:

75% Effort and Engagement

Has the student read the assignment, and any assigned reading, carefully? Has the student engaged the assignment thoughtfully? Has the student engaged the work of others (especially in the assigned readings) respectfully? (As these questions suggest, I am not expecting perfect answers. Instead, I want to see that you have taken the assignment seriously.)

25% Presentation

Has the student shown care in proofreading and editing her/his work? Does the student communicate clearly? (Clear communication is usually the difference between being understood or misunderstood. No one should expect his/her first draft to be a suitable finished product. Please take the time to read your work out loud. This simple process will help remarkably. If you really struggle with your writing, have someone else read your work out loud to you. You'll be surprised how many rough spots become apparent when you do.)

PERCENTAGE EQUIVALENTS FOR LETTER GRADES:

A = 90 – 100%

B = 80 – 89%

C = 70 – 79%

D = 60 – 69%

F = less than 60%