NT/OT 517 Interpreting the Bible
Summer 2015
May 18 - August 22

“Apply yourself wholly to the text; apply the text wholly to yourself.”
Johann Albrecht Bengel
18th c German Lutheran pastor and Greek scholar

Course Description
This course introduces students to current hermeneutical issues as well as basic tools and methods designed to help students interpret the author’s intent. Special emphasis is given to "living out the text" (application). The course is designed for those who will not be taking Greek and Hebrew or other courses in OT and NT interpretation. Prerequisites: OT 500, NT 501 and IS 502. If you have not passed all three of these courses at GCTS or received an exemption from the registrar's office you cannot take NT/OT 517 for credit.

Instructors and Contact Information
Dr. Catherine McDowell, Professor
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Dr. David Schreiner, Professor
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Mr. Eric Dill, Teaching Assistant
MA-Biblical Studies student @ GCTS-Charlotte
mdill@gordonconwell.edu

Office Hours
Office hours will be scheduled individually. Please do not hesitate to email Dr. Schreiner, Dr. McDowell, or Eric Dill for an appointment. We are happy to speak with you by phone or Skype.

Relationship to the Mission of Gordon-Conwell
This course, which seeks to maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship (GCTS Missions Statement, Article 2), helps students to become knowledgeable of God’s word and competent in its interpretation (GCTS Missions Statement, Article 1). This will contribute to the students' development
of a vision for God’s redemptive work in the world and to formulate strategies that will lead to effective missions, evangelism, and discipleship (GCTS Missions Statement, Article 6). *Being rooted in God’s word and knowing how to interpret and apply it is essential to these tasks.*

**Relation to Curriculum**
NT/OT 517 is a required course for students in the MA-Christian Leadership, MA-Christian Counseling, MA-Christian Ministries, the MAR, and the hybrid MAR degree programs.

**Course Learning Objectives**
Students who successfully complete this course will

1. be able to interpret the English Bible in its historical, literary, and theological contexts by the critical appropriate reference tools and secondary sources.
2. learn to apply Scripture in a postmodern world.
3. become trained in using quality library resources related to hermeneutics and biblical studies (both hard-copy and electronic).
4. refine his or her skills in graduate level thinking, discussion, research and writing.

These objectives will be measured by the course requirements (assignments, reading, and participation), as listed below.

**Course Schedule**

**UNIT I: INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS**

- **Week 1** Learning to Read Intelligently; The Need for Hermeneutics
- **Week 2** The Canon and Translations; The Interpreter & the Goal of Interpretation
- **Week 3** History of Interpretation; Modern Approaches to Interpretation

**UNIT II: INTERPRETING LANGUAGE AND FORM**

- **Week 4** Logical & Grammatical Analysis of the Text
- **Week 5** Interpreting Key Words and Phrases
Week 6  Literary Genres of the Bible, Part I (OT Narrative & Law)

Week 7  Literary Genres of the Bible, Part 2 (Prophecy)

Week 8  Literary Genres of the Bible, Part 3 (Wisdom, & Poetry)

Week 9  Literary Genres of the Bible, Part 4 (Gospels, Parables & Acts)

Week 10  Literary Genres of the Bible, Part 5 (Epistles, Apocalyptic)

UNIT III: THREE KEY CONTEXTS

Week 11  Historical, Cultural & Geographical Contexts; Authorship, Audience, Setting

Week 12  Literary Context

Week 13  Biblical-Theological Context

UNIT VI: LIVING OUT THE TEXT

Week 14  A Transformed Life as a Living Gospel “Text”

Required Materials*


*PDFs of additional reading assignments are available in Sakai in the “Resources” folder.

For those in the Charlotte area these books are on reserve at the GCTS-Charlotte campus library.

**Discussion Forums**

There are 8 required forum posts and responses to one other student post. *These discussions are an important part of the course (they count for 35% of the final grade).* They provide an opportunity for us to engage in thoughtful discussion on various topics related to interpretation, and for us to get to know each other a bit better. *Your posts and responses must demonstrate critical thinking and significant interaction with the course material.* When you respond to a student post, be specific and avoid comments such as, “I like what you said.” Rather, *engage, interact, and respectfully evaluate* the content and thinking of the student’s post. You only have to respond to one each week – choose one that invites this kind of interaction (and be sure to submit posts that invite interaction!). Keep in mind that “forum post” does not mean “casual discussion”. This is graduate school. I expect to see graduate-level thinking, interaction, evaluation, and analysis that draws from the assigned reading and course lectures.

*The deadline for submitting your forum post is Saturday of that week at 5 pm.* You then need to respond to one other student post for that module within 24 hours - by Sunday at 5 pm. This way, all posts and responses are submitted before the next week’s topic begins.

**Written Assignments**

Submit all written assignments on Colossians by uploading them into Sakai. *Do not email them to your professors nor TA.* Information and directions for each written assignment are located in Sakai under “Resources” > “Assignments”.

**Plagiarism** (this section on “Plagiarism” is taken from Dr. Bob Mayer’s IS 502 course)

“According to Joseph Gibaldi, “using another person’s ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source constitutes plagiarism.”¹ Plagiarism, according to the current edition of the GCTS student handbook, “involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether

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published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source” (16). Plagiarism, according to those two handbooks, occurs in two ways:

1. “Restating someone else’s ideas and presenting them as your own without giving credit to the person from whom you got them.” If you do not credit the source via footnote, you are stealing the idea.

2. “Taking someone else’s actual words and presenting them as your own without giving credit to the person from whom you got them. If you don’t give credit (by quotation marks, or indentation and isolation, as well as footnotes and bibliographic entry) to show you are borrowing someone’s actual words, you are stealing the actual words.”

The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* describes well the ethical responsibility that all students and researchers have in terms of research materials:

> Researchers do not claim the words or ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due...Quotation marks should be used to indicate exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you need to credit the source in the text.2

Students and researchers do not present the words or ideas of other writers as if they were their own. In addition, students should be aware of self-plagiarism, meaning “that they do not present their own previously published work as new scholarship.”3 This includes student papers as well as professional research.

It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism. Please review the information on plagiarism from IS 502, as well as the section from IS 502 on when to use quotes, and when to use them. *Excessive quoting is also a form of plagiarism* – your work must be your own and express your own thoughts. *Do not submit assignments that are simply a compilation of secondary sources, even if they are cited correctly.* Please also read “Common Mistakes in Student Writing” in Sakai > Resources.

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3 Ibid., 16.
VeriCite Plagiarism Checker
A tool called VeriCite has been added to Sakai to check for plagiarism. If you find that a part of your assignment has scored highly in VeriCite’s review (these sections will be highlighted in red), that means your content is very similar to content in another source and is probably a quote or paraphrase that should be cited. Please use this as a tool to make sure you have cited everything you need in your assignment, before you submit it. Not everything this service highlights will be a violation, so use your best judgment.

Due Dates
Whatever time zone you are in, all due dates for this course are set to Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), that is, the date and time in Charlotte, N.C. If you live or will be traveling in a different time zone, please note that you must submit your work according to the EDT time zone. For example, if the due date for an assignment is June 12 at 10 pm and you are in Chicago, you must submit the assignment on June 12 by 9 pm Chicago time, since Chicago is one hour behind Charlotte. For help determining date and time differences, see http://www.timeanddate.com. Late work is not accepted except in the case of a legitimate emergency (in which case you should contact me via email). Whether or not you have an extension, please do not email your work to me. I cannot accept it via email. It must be loaded into Sakai. If you miss the deadline but did not have an emergency, illness, nor extenuating circumstances (“I simply forgot” or “I was so busy”) please do not email your professors asking us to accept the late work.

Comment on the Course Schedule
The weekly schedule is designed for maximum flexibility without compromising the course learning objectives. For those who want Sunday off, you can finish the weekly work by Saturday night. If you want the weekend free, finish all the work by Friday. If you need the weekend to complete most of the work, you can take off some time from the course during the week, etc. What I hope you can avoid is working on this course every day. I recommend taking one 24 hour period each week to do something fun and/or relaxing, and to be with the people you love. This will have a positive impact on your studies.

Tips for Success
• Forum responses should be the result of serious thought that takes into account the course material for that week. They should represent your well thought out conclusions on the matter, not your initial musings. You have a fairly strict word limit, so get straight to the point. Choose your words carefully and submit a tightly constructed response that doesn’t contain any “fluff.” Do not include the question itself in your response.
• Compose your forum postings in a Word document, then cut and paste into the forum.
• Edit your responses before submitting them. After editing, be sure to use the spell check tool.
• There are 12 modules in this course, each one lasting one week. Familiarize yourself with all the activities at the beginning of each module and create a study schedule to ensure that you use your time wisely.
• Set aside time for completing the assigned reading and viewing early in each module to allow time to reflect on the content, participate in forum postings, and to complete written assignments.

Before You Begin Module 1
Before beginning the first module, become familiar with the entire course through the syllabus and the course webpage in Sakai, which will be available on May 1, 2015. Add due dates to your calendar. You might want to print a copy of the Course Schedule to keep near your computer or study space. Be sure to use the syllabus that is posted on the course webpage in Sakai.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Viewing/ Listening Log (in Sakai)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Each week submit in the Assignment log an accurate and honest % of assigned reading &amp; viewing/listening you have completed by the deadline. The submission is due each Saturday by 5:00 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Discussion Forums &amp; Responses</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Forum discussion questions are due on Saturday of that week by 11:00 pm. Post a response to at least one other student’s post within 24 hours, by Sunday of that week at 11:00 pm. The weeks requiring a forum post and response are: Weeks 1, 3, 6-10, 12. There are no additional written assignments on those weeks.</td>
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<td>5 exegetical assignments based on Colossians 2:8. These written assignments are on Weeks 4, 5, 11, 13, and 14. There are no forum posts on those weeks. Be sure to stay within the word limit for each assignment.</td>
<td>50</td>
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*Note: even if you are taking this course Pass/Fail, the assignment on historical and cultural context (Week 11) is required in order to pass the
Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>66-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>65 and below</td>
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Instructor Feedback
Barring an emergency, your professors will respond to questions or messages within 24-48 hours, excluding Sundays. We will return graded assignments within 2 weeks of submission.

Late Work
Late work is not accepted except in the case of an emergency or extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances will be considered as appropriate. Questions about formal extensions should be directed to the registrar’s office. If you anticipate a problem, contact me as soon as possible. If you do not have an emergency or extenuating circumstances ("I forgot" or "I was so busy" is not an emergency nor extenuating circumstances), please do not email your professors asking us to accept your late work. Planning ahead and staying organized is imperative.

Netiquette
Gordon-Conwell does not tolerate disruptive or disrespectful behavior in the online communications in any course. Students should review the netiquette policy in the Student Handbook and this website: http://www.albion.com/netiquette.

Additional Seminary Policies
Be sure to read the Syllabus Addendum posted in Sakai for additional seminary policies that may pertain to this course. You are responsible for knowing the information in the Syllabus Addendum.

The course officially begins on May 18. The Sakai site will be open on May 4 and the full course syllabus will be posted there. From May 4 on, be sure to use the syllabus posted in Sakai. Please obtain the required materials in advance so you can begin on May 18. If you would like to start reading early, the reading for
Weeks 1-3 is as follows:

**Week 1:**
Adler and van Doren p. 3-20, 31-136  
Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology*, p. 7 - 60 (in Sakai)  
KBH Chpt. 1  
Carson, *The Gagging of God* p.57-137 (in Sakai)

**Week 2**
KBH Chpts. 4 – 6  

**Week 3**
KBH Chpts 2 – 3  
“The SBJT Forum: Evangelical Responses to Postmodernism” (in Sakai as sbjt_2001summer8.pdf)

**Syllabus Addendum**

**Academic Standards**
Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious breaches of personal and academic integrity. Cheating involves, but is not necessarily limited to, the use of unauthorized sources of information during an examination or the submission of the same (or substantially same) work for credit in two or more courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors. Plagiarism involves the use of another person’s distinctive ideas or words, whether published or unpublished, and representing them as one’s own instead of giving proper credit to the source. Plagiarism can also involve over dependence on other source material for the scope and substance of one’s writing. Such breaches in academic standards often result in a failing grade as well as other corrective measures. For more information, please consult the Student Handbook.

**ADA Policy**
The seminary complies with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. A student with a qualifying and authenticated disability who is in need of accommodations should petition the seminary in accordance with the stated guidelines in the Student Handbook.

**Cancellation of Class**
In the event the seminary has to cancel a class meeting (impending storm, professor illness, etc.), the Registration Office will send out an email (via the GCTS email account) notification to all students registered in the respective course. If the cancellation occurs the day of the scheduled meeting, the Registration Office will also attempt to contact
students via their primary phone contact on record. The professor will contact the students (via GCTS account) regarding make-up. If a weekend class is cancelled, the class will be made up during the scheduled Make-Up weekend (see the academic calendar for the designated dates). For more info, consult your Student Handbook.

**Extension Policy**

Arrangements for submission of late work at a date on or before the end date for the semester as noted on the seminary’s Academic Calendar are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required in this case. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized end date for the semester must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the stated date. Requests received after this date will either be denied or incur additional penalty. For a full discussion of this policy, please consult the Student Handbook.

**Grades**

Faculty have six weeks from the course work due date to submit a final grade. Grades are posted on-line within twenty-four hours of receipt from the professor. Students are expected to check their CAMS student portal in order to access posted grades (unless instructed otherwise). Those individuals who need an official grade report issued to a third party should put their request in writing to the Registration Office.

**Returned Work**

Submitted hard-copy course work will be returned to the students if they provide a self-addressed and postage-paid envelope with their final work. Work submitted without the appropriate envelope will be destroyed after the grade has been assessed and issued.

**Virtual Writing Center**

Free assistance in writing papers is available to students through the Virtual Writing Center at Gordon Conwell. The Virtual Writing Center is staffed by Gordon Conwell graduates, or writing tutors with specialized knowledge in writing and/or ESL. Generally, this service is available to students who have completed or are currently enrolled in one of the following three classes:

- CT500 (Introduction to Theological Research)
- CO501 (Introduction to Counseling Research)
- IS502 (Theological Research and Writing)

If you enrolled in GCTS before Fall 2008, you were not required to take one of the three pre-requisites above, and you may request access to the Virtual Writing Center. Also,
ESL writing tutors are available to ESL students even if they are not currently enrolled in a degree program. If you do not meet one of these qualifications, but feel you would benefit from using the Virtual Writing Center, contact us and we will evaluate your status. Email writingcenter@gordonconwell.edu for more information.