OT 511 Interpreting the Old Testament
Summer 2014
GCTS-Charlotte

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

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Phone (704) 527-9909 x5838
*email is the best way to contact the professor

Course Description
This course is an introduction to interpreting and applying God’s word in the Old Testament. The goal is to prepare students for 600 and 700 level Hebrew exegesis courses and for faithfully preaching and teaching God’s word. Attention will be given both to hermeneutical and critical issues in Old Testament studies and to the exegetical process.

Prerequisites
Students must have passed IS 502, OT 500, NT 501, and OL 502 in order to register for OT 511. If you have not passed IS 502, OT 500, and NT 501 at Gordon-Conwell (or received an exemption from the registrar), you cannot take OT 511 for credit. Further, if you have not passed OL 502 at GCTS in Spring 2014, you must pass a Hebrew competency test no later than May 30, 2014 in order to register for OT 511. (The course begins on June 2, although we do not meet until June 13.)

Relation to Curriculum
OT 511 is a required course in the MDiv, MABS, MAOT, and MANT degrees. It is a prerequisite for all 600 level Hebrew exegesis courses.

Course Learning Objectives
Students who successfully complete this course will
1. learn exegetical skills which will enable them to interpret God’s word in its historical, literary, and theological contexts.
2. become conversant with current trends in hermeneutics and Old Testament
interpretation, and competent in assessing and evaluating these trends.

3. learn to apply Scripture faithfully in a postmodern world.

4. become trained in using quality library resources related to hermeneutics and biblical studies (both hard-copy and electronic).

5. 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.

**Class Dates and Times**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri June 13</td>
<td>6:30 pm – 9:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat June 14</td>
<td>9:00 am – 5:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri July 18</td>
<td>6:30 pm – 9:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat July 19</td>
<td>9:00 am – 12:00 pm, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri Aug 15</td>
<td>6:30 pm – 9:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat Aug 16</td>
<td>9:00 am – 5:00 pm</td>
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Students are responsible for attending class. Valid excuses for missed class time do not include attending weddings, going on mission trips, or family holidays, but might include bereavement or illness. However, students are not permitted to take the course for credit if a total of 1/3 of the classroom hours will be missed. Class attendance is expected and, if anyone arrives late or leaves early, it is appropriate to notify the instructor why this was necessary.

**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).

**Office Hours**

I will hold office hours on campus before class on June 13, July 18, and Aug 15 from 3:00 – 6:00 pm. For other times to talk by phone or Skype please do not hesitate to email me to set up an appointment. I am happy to speak with you.

**Late work**

Late work is not accepted except in the case of genuine illness or serious emergency (“serious” as deemed by the professor). Please contact the instructor immediately if you will not be able to submit your work on time.
Plagiarism
Plagiarism for any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course, and the Seminary will hold a judiciary enquiry into the matter in accordance with the Student Handbook. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Please be aware that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism. For a refresher, see the following: http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k70847&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup106849

Internet Usage
This course will use the Seminary’s internet resource, Sakai, for posting resources, announcements, and contacting students. Students should be sure that their email addresses are correctly registered with the Seminary for these purposes, and they should access Sakai and their GCTS email accounts several times a week.

Students are asked to refrain from accessing the internet at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. “Surfing the web,” checking email, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor, and they prevent the student from fully participating in the class session.

Refrain from using your cell phone during class for any reason. This includes answering calls and texting. You may check your messages during the breaks.

Fonts
For Hebrew and Greek use the SBL Hebrew and Greek fonts which can be downloaded for free at http://www.sbl-site.org/educational/biblicalfonts.aspx. You should also use SBL’s BibLit font for diacritical marks. If you have any technical trouble, read their FAQ page. For further technical assistance email sblfonts@sbl-site.org. The fonts in Bibleworks, Logos, and Accordance are also acceptable.

Style
Proper citation of sources according to the SBL Handbook of Style is required. Do not use endnotes. Hard copies of the SBL Handbook of Style are available on the reference shelf in the GCTS-Clt library at PN147 .S26 1999. There are also non-checkout copies in the Cooley and Witherington collections in the GCTS-Clt library. A student (condensed) version of the SBL Handbook of Style is available online at http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/SBLHRevised2_09.pdf
Required Textbooks


Vanhoozer, Kevin, Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge. (Deluxe/Anniversary Edition) ISBN 978-0310324690 (blue/purple cover w/ foreword by Craig Blomberg)


*Other Required Reading is in Sakai under Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Additional Reading.

Course Wiki
I have posted in Sakai a list of 60 terms from Wegner’s A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible. On June 2 you will be assigned a few terms which you will define/identify for your classmates (see the “OT 511 Wiki Assignments” sheet in Sakai, available June 2, for the terms assigned to you). Post your entries in the Course Wiki by noon on Wed June 25 by 9:00 pm. I have done “Codex Leningradensis” for you as an example. You will then be assigned a few additional entries to edit (entries which have been posted by your classmates) in the Wiki based on Wegner and the sources listed in the Wegner Study Guide in Sakai. The edits are due July 6 at 10 pm. The quiz on these terms will take place in class on Saturday July 19 from 9:30 am – 10:00 am.

UNIT I INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>June 2-7</td>
<td>Learning to Read Intelligently</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>June 9-13</td>
<td>The Need for Hermeneutics</td>
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<td>The Canon</td>
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The Interpreter & the Goal of Interpretation

**CLASS JUNE 13-14**

Week 3       June 16-21       History of Interpretation; Modern Approaches to Interpretation

**UNIT II ESTABLISHING THE TEXT**

Week 4       June 23-28       Textual Criticism

**UNIT III INTERPRETING LANGUAGE AND FORM**

Week 5       June 30-July 5   Translation
Week 6       July 7-12        Syntax & Grammar
Week 7       July 14-18       Semantic Analysis: Discovering the Meaning of Significant Words and Concepts

**CLASS JULY 18-19**

Week 8       July 21-26       Literary Forms (Genre) & Features

**UNIT IV THREE KEY CONTEXTS**

Week 9       July 28-Aug 2    Historical, Cultural & Geographical Contexts; Authorship, Audience, Setting
Week 10      Aug 4-9         Literary Context
Week 11      Aug 11-15       Biblical-Theological Context: Interpreting the Parts in Light of the Whole

**CLASS AUG 15-16**

**UNIT V LIVING OUT THE TEXT**

Week 12      Aug 18 – 23      A Transformed Life as a Living Gospel “Text”
Assignments and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Viewing Log (12 entries, 1 point each)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each week under “Assignments” (in Sakai) submit an accurate and honest percentage, as a decimal, of assigned reading (and video watching, when applicable) you have completed. For example, if you completed 75% of the reading (and video watching, when applicable), enter .75. If you completed 100%, enter 1. The submission is due each Saturday no later than 11:55 pm. <strong>On the weekends we have class, the reading is due on Friday at 6:30 pm when class begins.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparedness for Class and Participation in Discussion (this includes the Textual Criticism Wiki)</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Hebrew quizzes (translation, parsing, vocabulary, paradigms) and 1 Text Critical Terms &amp; Sigla Quiz (5 points each)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Exegetical Exercises (#A-G) (8 points each)</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Forum Discussion (3 points)</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
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<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, I will respond to questions or messages within 24-48 hours, excluding Sundays. I will return graded assignments within 7-10 days of submission.

**How to submit your Exegetical Assignments:** Before turning in your exegetical assignment, use the VeriCite tool in Sakai to check for plagiarism. When you are ready to turn in your work, post it in Sakai (note: when you post your work in Sakai it will automatically be scanned by VeriCite to check for plagiarism, so please do this beforehand. If plagiarism is detected, your work will be sent to the judicial committee.) Then save it **as a PDF** and email it to me at
Hebrew Quizzes: Students will take three short Hebrew quizzes (15-20 minutes), one each time the class meets. Quizzes will cover translation, parsing, and vocabulary, most of which is simply review of OL 501 and OL 502. A study guide is available in Sakai under Resources > Study Guides.

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
For additional seminary policies that may pertain to this course, please refer to the Syllabus Addendum.

UNIT I INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

Week 1       June 2-7
Learning to Read Intelligently

"Cultural literacy is crucial for those who are not content simply to be carried along by cultural winds and waves (cf. Eph 4:14) but who want critically and constructively to engage culture for the sake of the gospel."  
K. Vanhoozer, Everyday Theology, p. 18

"...if we are disposed to go on learning and discovering, we must know how to make books teach us well."  
M. Adler, How to Read a Book, p. 15

Welcome to OT 511! I chose this particular reading for Week 1 for two reasons: 1. in order to get the most out of what you read, every graduate student should know and employ the reading strategies Adler promotes and 2. we want to keep the end goal in sight: effective communication (through both proclamation and by "living out the text") of God’s word to God’s world. This will demand that we become literate in the exegesis of both texts and culture.

Objective
To become more intelligent readers of both texts and culture so that we can ascertain the meaning of what we read (specifically in this course, the Old Testament), and communicate that meaning effectively to our world.
**Read**
Adler and van Doren p. 3-20, 31-136
Vanhoozer, *Everyday Theology* p. 7-60 (in Sakai)

**Assignment**
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Assignment Week 1

**Week 2 June 9-13**

**The Need for Hermeneutics; The Interpreter & the Goal of Interpretation**

This week is an introduction to biblical interpretation. Pray for God to give you a sense of excitement at learning how to interpret his word, and to open your mind that you may understand the Scripture, the written revelation of God himself. Interpretation is demanding work, but it is well worth the reward of understanding God’s word, knowing Him through it and, as a result, living a transformed life.

**Objectives**
- to understand the need for and the rewards of skilled biblical interpretation, as well as the challenges we face.
- to be introduced to the OT and NT canon and the major English translations.
- to understand further how one’s own presuppositions about the nature of Scripture and the task of interpretation shape his or her work.

**Read**
KBH Introduction and Chpt. 1, 5-6
Carson, *The Gagging of God* p.57-137 (in Sakai under Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Additional Reading > Gagging of God – Carson)

**Assignment**
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Exegetical Exercise A

**CLASS JUNE 13-14** (*Hebrew Quiz #1 on Sat June 14 from 9:00-9:20 am*)

**Week 3 June 16-21**

**History of Interpretation; Modern Approaches to Interpretation**

Week 3 is designed to give students a brief overview of the history of biblical interpretation, including a survey of modern approaches. Special attention will be given to the hermeneutical challenges evangelicals face in a postmodern world.
Objectives
● to gain an appreciation for the lengthy history of biblical interpretation that has preceded us.
● to be introduced to and learn to evaluate some of the recent literary and social-scientific approaches to biblical interpretation.
● to consider in what ways postmodernism has had a beneficial impact on hermeneutics.
● to understand what is at stake if we abandon an author-oriented approach to hermeneutics.

Read

KBH Chpts. 2-3

“The SBJT Forum: Evangelical Responses to Postmodernism” (in Sakai as sbjt_2001summer8.pdf)

Stein, “The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics” (in Sakai)

Hoffmeier, “These Things Happened”: Why a Historical Exodus is Essential for Theology” (in Sakai as “Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith Chpt 4”)

Assignment
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Assignment Week 3

UNIT II ESTABLISHING THE TEXT

Week 4 June 23-28
Textual Criticism

This week we will “meet the manuscripts” on which our modern translations are based and become acquainted with the discipline known as “Old Testament textual criticism.”

Objectives
● to introduce us to the ancient biblical sources and the world of textual criticism
● to learn some of the basic text critical terminology and criteria for evaluating the ancient witnesses
● to apply what we’ve learned to a text critical problem in Exodus
UNIT III INTERPRETING LANGUAGE AND FORM

Week 5 June 30 - July 5
Translation

Translation is a far trickier business that we realize after just one year of Biblical Hebrew. This week we will learn more about what translating a text from one language to another actually involves.

Objective
To become aware of key issues in Bible translation so that we may be better and more faithful translators of God’s word.

Read
Fairbairn “Understanding Language” (in Sakai as “Understanding Language chpt 1”)
KHB Chpt. 4

Vanhoozer, Meaning p. xiii-32*

*This week we begin reading K. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text?, one of the most significant books on hermeneutics published in the last 20 years. This is not an easy book to read and understand – keep a dictionary (I recommend the Oxford English Dictionary free online at http://www.oed.com/) nearby to look up words or references with which you are not familiar. The hermeneutical issues it addresses and raises, however, are extremely important for us to consider. Further, they are highly relevant to our understanding of Scripture and to our desire to articulate the gospel faithfully in a postmodern world. You will not be tested on this book, but it will serve as the basis for several classroom discussions (discussion questions will be posted in Sakai under Resources > OT 511 Resources > Vanhoozer Discussion Questions) that you need to prepare for in advance. I have spaced the reading out over eight weeks and I strongly
recommend, for your personal benefit and for the benefit of our class discussions, that you discipline yourself to read a shorter section each day, for 5-6 days a week, rather than trying to cram in the bulk of the reading on a weekend. The effort will be well worth it. Note that reviewer Scot McKnight commented (on the back cover), “Evangelical students who are nurtured on this book will change the church.” It is indeed a book worth reading and pondering deeply, so that is what we will do – together.

**View/listen to**
Dr. Bill Mounce’s 5 mini-lectures on translation at
https://www.biblicaltraining.org/seminar/translations/bill-mounce

*no written assignment this week.

**Week 6 July 7-12**
**Syntax & Grammar**

Week 6 introduces us to grammatical and syntactical relationships necessary for understanding the author’s intention.

**Objective**
to improve our understanding of Hebrew syntax and grammar so that we may interpret and communicate God’s word accurately and effectively

**Read**
KBH p.257-272
Carson Chpt. 2 (most of Carson’s examples are from the NT but the principles still apply)

Vanhoozer, _Meaning_ p. 98-140

**Assignment:**
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Exegetical Exercise C copy.

**Week 7 July 14-18**
**Semantic Analysis: Discovering the Meaning of Significant Words and Concepts**

"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."

*Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland*
Week 6 introduces us to the importance of interpreting words and phrases *in the context of the larger discourse in which they are embedded*.

**Objectives**

- to learn to do word and phrase studies to determine what a word or phrase means in its context.
- to learn how to avoid common word-study fallacies.

**Read**

KBH p. 240-257
Carson Chpt. 1

Vanhoozer, *Meaning* p. 37-90

**Assignment**

See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Exegetical Exercise D copy

**CLASS JULY 18-19**

Hebrew Quiz #2 on Sat July 19 from 9:00 - 9:20 am
Text Critical Terms & Sigla Quiz on Sat July 19 from 9:30 - 10:00 am

**Week 8 July 21-26**

Literary Forms (Genre) & Features

"All things in nature have a shape, that is to say, a form, an outward semblance, that tells us what they are... ."

famous Chicago architect Louis Sullivan, 1896

What Sullivan said of architecture is equally true of texts, including the various literary genres in the Old Testament. This week we will learn about the relationship between the form and function of a biblical text and how that relationship informs interpretation.

**Objective**

To introduce us to the various literary genres in the Old Testament and principles for interpreting them.

**Read**

KBH Chpt 9
UNIT IV: THREE KEY CONTEXTS

Week 9 July 28-Aug 2
Historical & Cultural Context (ANE, History of Israel, Archaeology, Geography, Authorship, Audience, Setting)

Week 9 introduces us to the role historical and cultural contexts play in determining the meaning of a text.

Objectives

- to understand the importance of the historical and cultural background of a passage or book for its proper interpretation.
- to learn how to determine the historical background and cultural context of a given passage or book and to become familiar with some of the best resources available (both hard copy and electronic)

Read
KHB p.229-240
Hallo (in Sakai as “Hallo Contextual Approach to Biblical Lit”)
Hoffmeier, Israel in Egypt p. 135-155 (in Sakai as “Israel in Egypt – Hoffmeier”)

(Vanhoozer, Meaning not assigned this week but read ahead if you like)

Assignment
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Exegetical Exercise E

Week 10 Aug 4-9
Literary Context

As with individual words and phrases, passages of Scripture must be interpreted within their literary context if we want to understand the author’s intent.
Objectives
● to understand how to determine the various levels of literary context for a biblical passage
● to understand the significance of determining a passage’s literary context for its proper interpretation

Read
KBH p. 213-229
Vanhoozer, *Meaning* p. 197-265

Assignment
See Sakai: Resources > Resources OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Exegetical Exercise G

Week 11 Aug 11-15

Biblical & Theological Context: Interpreting the Parts in Light of the Whole

Every passage of scripture is not only part of an individual biblical book – it is part of *The Book*. Each passage contributes to the larger narrative of God’s redemptive acts in history. If we want to understand a biblical text, we must understand its relationship to the Bible as a whole.

Objectives
● to learn how to interpret a passage of Scripture within three “layers” of biblical-theological context.
● to apply what we have learned to determining the biblical and theological context of Exodus 40:34-38.

Read
Blackburn, Chpt 3 (p. 63-81), in Sakai

Vanhoozer, *Meaning* p. 281-350

Assignment
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Assignment Week 11

CLASS AUG 15-16 (*Hebrew Quiz #3 on Sat Aug 16 from 9:00-9:20 am*)
UNIT V: LIVING OUT THE TEXT

Week 12 Aug 18 – 23
A Transformed Life as a Living Gospel “text”

“These days people are looking for authenticity, not valid arguments…words and lives they can believe in. It is hard to refute an authentic life well lived.”

K. Vanhoozer

We have returned to the topic with which we began the course – how to engage our world with the gospel – but now much better equipped for the task of interpretation. The ultimate goal, however, is not the interpretation of a text, but the application of the text’s meaning to our lives. For many of us, “applying Scripture” refers to extracting principles from the text by which, if we can live them out, we become “a good Christian.” That is not the approach we will take in this course. Our goal, rather, is to understand both the text and our culture, so that we communicate the gospel effectively – not only by proclamation, but by the way we live our lives, day in and day out. Rather than focusing on external behavior, the application of God’s word involves being transformed inwardly by the Holy Spirit, so that our lives become a “living gospel text” for our world to “read”.

Objectives

● to avoid a purely (or largely) behavioristic approach to applying Scripture
● to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in applying scripture
● to begin to learn what it means to embody the message of a biblical passage and the Bible as a whole.

Read (*due date extended to Aug 31 for Week 12 reading log)
KHB p. 103-119, Chpts 11-12
Carson Chpts 3 & 5
Bauckham, Bible and Mission
review Vanhoozer, Everyday Theology p. 7-60 (in Sakai)

Vanhoozer, Meaning p. 367-441, 455-467

Assignment
See Sakai: Resources > Resources for OT 511 Assignments > Assignment Information > OT 511 Assignment Week 12