Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Charlotte
OT/NT517: Interpreting the Bible
Syllabus for Summer 2012

Course Instructor: Dr. Catherine McDowell
cmcdowell@gordonconwell.edu

Class Meetings: Fri 6:30–9:00 pm & Sat 9:00 am – 4:30 pm (lunch from 12:00 - 1:30 pm):
June 1-2; June 29-30; July 27-28

Office Hours:  Fridays 4-6 pm before class, Saturdays immediately after class, and by
appointment (in person, by phone, Facetime or Skype). Please contact me via email to make an appointment, even if you plan on meeting during my
office hours.

Syllabus Date: May 2012

I. Course Description

This course introduces students to the issues and tools involved in interpreting the Bible in
English. It is designed for those who will not be taking Greek and Hebrew or other courses in
OT and NT interpretation. Prerequisites: OT 500 and NT 501 or successful completion of
Bible competency exams.

II. Relationship to the mission of GCTS

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’ ability to become skilled in ministry (Article 3) and to develop a
vision for God’s redemptive work in the world and to formulate strategies that will lead to
effective missions, evangelism, and discipleship (Article 6). It all starts with being rooted in
God’s word and knowing how to interpret and apply it.

III. Relation to the Curriculum of GCTS

OT/NT 517 is a required course for students in the MTS-Ministry/MA-Christian Leadership or
MTS/MA – Christian Counseling degree programs. It introduces the basic tools necessary for
the proper use of Scripture in Christian life and ministry. Prerequisites: OT 500 and NT 501
or successful completion of Bible competency exams.

IV. Course Objectives

For students to:
1. learn to understand texts of Scripture in their original literary and historical contexts by the
critical use of appropriate reference tools.
2. learn to apply texts of Scripture in contemporary contexts by using sound principles of interpretation.

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

V. Course Requirements

Class time: Attendance is required. Please bring to class a Bible and a copy of your assignments for that weekend. Contribution to class discussion regarding the tools and concepts introduced in the text and in class is required.

Assignments: There are 17 exercises due over the course of the summer semester, noted accordingly on the schedule below. These will each take an average of 2 or more hours to complete, when done well. The initial assignments will take less time those in the second half of the book are more complex and time-consuming. Please do not work together on these assignments. Observations should always be listed on separate paper rather than on a photocopy of the passage. Identify your observations according to the categories explained in the early chapters. All assignments must be typed unless otherwise stated by the professor. For most of the exercises where research is expected, you should use at least two or three standard, recommended reference works (listed in Grasping God’s Word p. 460-466, 468 and for individual books of the Bible see p. 469-490) and provide an annotated bibliography (noting each source’s relative usefulness) on each assignment. It is important that you use different resources during the semester. Your evaluation of them is an important part of your learning. Do not use internet resources unless you first obtain the professor’s approval. As you develop more skills, remember to continue doing original work first, then consult secondary sources when applicable. Please name and staple each assignment separately and keep copies of each until your graded assignment is returned. I recommend keeping electronic copies, as well – save them on your hard drive and scan handwritten material and email it to yourself.

A 15 page exegesis paper (double spaced, 1” margins, 12 pt. font) is due on Wed Aug 29, 2012. This paper provides the opportunity to engage all of the tools you have learned in order to interpret a single passage. The specific expectations for this paper are outlined in Grasping God’s Word p. 455-457. Please use Turabian or APA style guides consistently in your papers. (If you use APA, indent paragraphs, and include page numbers in your citations.) Use footnotes, not endnotes. Students will choose from a list of passages provided by the professor.

The paper will be assessed based on the evidence of skills taught in the textbook and class, and in the use of and interaction with quality resources read and recommended throughout the semester and those listed in GGW.
Achievement of the course objectives will be measured through a variety of assignments and activities as described below. The successful completion of these activities will require each student to spend approximately 135 hours devoted to coursework, both in class and out of class. The following chart indicates how these hours are distributed across the various course assignments. Descriptions of the assignments are listed below.

**WORK TO BE DONE PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS MEETING ON JUNE 1:**
Read the Burge article first, then the article by Silva (available on the course website in Sakai on May 2). Read *Grasping God’s Word* p. 21-104 and do Assignments 1-1, 3-2, 4-4, and 5-2 as listed in the chart below. Be prepared to discuss your findings for each assignment and to turn them in for a grade. Class participated is required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Assignment</th>
<th>Expected Time Commitment (hrs)</th>
<th>Student’s actual time on task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1-1 p. 38 in GGW. <strong>Use Exodus 1:8-21 as the text for this assignment.</strong> I suggest using an electronic Bible with multiple translations, such as <a href="http://www.biblegateway.com">www.biblegateway.com</a>, to cut and paste the verses into a chart or spreadsheet rather than writing it out by hand.</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments 3-2 in GGW p. 65-66. <em>Rather than photocopy the assignments from the textbook always do them on a computer. You can cut and paste verses from <a href="http://www.biblegateway.com">www.biblegateway.com</a>.</em></td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments 4-4 in GGW p. 87.</td>
<td>45 min</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 5-2 in GGW p. 108-109.</td>
<td>45 min – 1 hr</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 6-2 in GGW p. 136.</td>
<td>1 hr – 1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 9-3 in GGW p. 187.</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments 10-1, 10-2 and 10-3 in GGW p. 202.</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Assignment 13-3 in GGW p. 247.</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 14-2 on Hebrews 4:12-13 in GGW p.268.</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td>Time Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 16-1 on Acts 17:16-34 in GGW p. 307</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
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<td>Assignment 17-1 in GGW p. 330.</td>
<td>2 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Assignment 18-1 in GGW p. 352.</td>
<td>2.5-3 hrs</td>
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<td>Assignment 19-1 in GGW p. 371.</td>
<td>2-3 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Assignments 20-1 and 20-2 in GGW p. 394-395.</td>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
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<td>Assignment 21-2 in GGW p. 416, 418.</td>
<td>2-3 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 22-2 in GGW p. 442.</td>
<td>2-3 hrs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exegesis paper</td>
<td>25 hrs (?)</td>
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Students will keep a record of time spent on each course-related task, and will submit a final report, as above, with their actual hours spent on each task listed in the last column of the table.

VI. **Required Textbooks and Materials**

**Required:**


J. S. Duvall, and J. D. Hays, Grasping God’s Word, 3rd edition (Zondervan, 2012). I will refer to this in the syllabus as “GGW”.


Also useful but not required:

D. Stuart and G. Fee, How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth (Zondervan, 2003).


Dockery, David S., Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation, Broadman and Holman, 1995.

VII. Web-Enhanced Features

The course syllabus, the articles listed under “required reading” will be available on the course webpage in Sakai. Throughout the semester course announcements will be posted in Sakai.

VIII. Grading Scale

Exegesis paper:
Form and Style (spelling, grammar, consistency): 10%
Research (selection breadth/depth, critical use): 15%
Main Idea & Outline: 5%
Context (Literary & Historical-Cultural): 25%
Analysis (quality/quantity of observations) & synthesis: 35%
Application (strength & thoughtfulness of parallels) 10%

Other Grading
The final grade for the course will be an average of the grades for the 17 assignments (40%), the grade for the exegesis paper (50%), and a grade for classroom participation and contributions (10%). Letter grades for all work assume the following standard guidelines:
IX. Late Work

Due Dates and Late Penalties
Assignments will be handed in at the beginning of the class sessions during which they will be discussed (be sure to make a copy as reference for class discussions). Because these assignments are the basis for class discussion, late work cannot be accepted from students who attend class. In such cases, students will be expected to do alternative assignments, due one week later (with a full letter grade penalty assessed on each). When unexpected and unavoidable circumstances prohibit students from coming to portions of class, alternative assignments will be added to the ones assigned in the syllabus. These will also be due one week later (but without a penalty). All work handed in later than due dates will have a letter grade per week penalty. Please do everything in your power to be in class and to hand in assignments on time.

Learning Disabilities
If you have a learning disability or any other special needs that require classroom or syllabus modifications, please notify the professor before the course begins.

For the course extension policy consult the registration office.

X. Syllabus Addendum

For other seminary policies refer to the Syllabus Addendum posted in Sakai under the “Syllabus” tab.

XI. Course Schedule

Weekend I:

Friday 6:30-7:00 pm chapel
7:10-9:00 pm Course Introduction: Why interpret the Bible?

English Bible Translations
In-class discussion of Assignment 1-1 on Exodus 1:8-21.

Saturday 9:00 am -10:30 am The Interpretive Journey
10:30 am-10:45 am break
10:45 am-12:00 pm How to Read the Book – sentences
In-class discussion on Assignment 3-2.
12:00 pm -1:30 pm lunch

All incompletes (I) and withdrawals (W) must meet the deadlines and guidelines of the Registrar’s office and the school catalogue.
1:30 pm -2:45 pm  How to Read the Book – Paragraphs  
In-class discussion on assignment 4-4.
2:45 pm -3:00 pm  break
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm  How to Read the Book – Discourses  
In-class discussion on Assignment 5-2.

Weekend II: Contexts – Now and Then (GGW Chpts 6-9) and Meaning and Application (Chpts. 10-13)

Assignments 6-2, 9-3, 10-1, 10-2, 10-3 and 13-3 due Friday June 29.
Reading Due on Friday June 29: GGW Chpts 6-13, Stein, Bauckham, and Strom.
Class schedule for Weekend II will be posted in Sakai on June 4.


Reading Due on Friday July 27: GGW Chpts. 14-22.
Class schedule for Weekend III will be posted in Sakai on July 2.
**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 cancelation 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 “last day to submit written work,” as noted on the seminary’s *Academic Calendar*, are made between the student and professor. Formal petition to the Registration Office is not required at this time. This includes arrangements for the rescheduling of final exams.

However, course work (reading and written) to be submitted after the publicized calendar due date, must be approved by the Registration Office. An extension form, available online, must be submitted to the Registration Office prior to the “last day to submit written work.” 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.