

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

NT502 Interpreting the New Testament

Professor: Elizabeth Shively

Spring 2011
Wednesday 6-9 p.m.
Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description:

This course is concerned with the introduction of exegetical methods. We give special attention to developing the skills, tools and hermeneutical principles necessary to become conversant with New Testament texts. To learn exegetical methods is to approach the New Testament consciously and deliberately and skillfully. It is to learn tools that enable one to interpret biblical texts first-hand before turning to secondary sources, and to evaluate those sources critically. It is also to learn tools that deepen devotional habits. To exegete texts is a religious practice and a key practice of ministry that is connected to other pastoral practices. Indeed, very often it is a necessary precursor and foundation for such other practices.

This course is also concerned with the cultivation of exegetical thinking. Although the application of exegetical steps or methods to a text is foundational, students have not actually interpreted a text until they connect the parts of their research to illuminate the whole text in a meaningful way. A reader begins with an investigation of the parts of a text, by researching its form and function, grammar and vocabulary, and social and historical background. Displaying this research without connecting those parts, however, is not an interpretation but a data report. Interpretation requires a creative act of the imagination. The musician is not virtuosic until she combines tempo, rhythm, dynamics and intonation with a personal engagement of the piece she plays. Thus, in this course, we also give attention to engaging New Testament texts and synthesizing the results of exegetical methods in order to produce sound and meaningful interpretations.

Course Objectives:

Students who have completed this course will have:

- articulated the value of becoming deliberate, skillful interpreters of biblical texts by learning exegetical tools and methods (articles 1-2 of the GCTS mission statement).
- demonstrated the ability to use the tools and methods of exegesis presented in this course (articles 1-2 of the GCTS mission statement).
- demonstrated the ability to synthesize the results of their exegetical work into a sound and meaningful interpretation of a New Testament text (articles 1-2 of the GCTS mission statement).
- identified significant hermeneutical issues involved in reading ancient texts in a modern world, and articulated the contemporary application of a New Testament text (articles 1-3, 6 of the GCTS mission statement).

Required Textbooks:

Blomberg, Craig. *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Rev. and exp. ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006.

Nestle, E. and K. Aland, eds. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. 27th. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibel Stiftung, 1993.

Required Reading (on CAMS):

Epp, Eldon Jay, "Textual Criticism." Pages 75-107 in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*. Edited by E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae, S.J. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

"The History of Interpretation." Pages 23-61 in *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Edited by W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, R. L. Hubbard, Jr. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson: 1993).

Recommended Reading:

Barrett, C. K. ed. *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illuminate Christian Origins*. New York: Harper Collins, 1987.

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

Carson, D. A. and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

Fee, Gordon D. *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. 3d ed. Louisville: WJKP, 2002.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. Rev. expanded ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.

*Metzger, Bruce M. and Bart D. Ehrman. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stein, Robert H. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*. 2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.

*Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning in this Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

*Zerwick, Max and Mary Grosvenor. *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. (Rome : Biblical Institute Press, 1974-1979).

Course Evaluation:

1. Ten Study Questions – 20% of final grade

Students will prepare weekly written assignments based on the assigned readings. Each set of study questions should be answered in 1-2 typed, single-spaced page(s). Study questions will be posted on CAMS. Nos. 1-9 are worth 10 points each; no. 10 (on the Ferguson book) is worth 30 points.

2. Six Written Analyses – 35% of final grade

Students will prepare six written analyses of assigned texts that apply the exegetical tool learned in class. Each assignment will be explained in class and posted on CAMS.

Analysis 1 (15 points): Textual Criticism of 1 Cor 15:51 (due 3/2)

Analysis 2 (15 points): Historical Context Study (due 3/9)

Analysis 3 (15 points): Composition chart of Colossians (due 3/16)

Analysis 4 (25 points): Study of *μακροθυμία* in Colossians 1:11 (due 3/30)

Analysis 5 (15 points): Sentence Diagram Practice (due 4/13)

Analysis 6 (15 points): Discourse Analysis of Romans 7:4-6 (due 4/20)

3. Exegesis Paper (due by 4 p.m. on May 9) – 45% of final grade

Students will write an 8-10 page, double-spaced exegesis paper that applies the tools and methods learned in class to Colossians 1:9-14.

Guidelines for researching and writing the exegesis paper will be discussed in class and posted on CAMS.

Final semester letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A 93% and up	C 73.3%
A- 90	C- 70
B+ 86.6%	D+ 66.6%
B 83.3%	D 63.3%
B- 80	D- 60
C+ 76.6%	F below 60

All work for the course will be graded according to the policies outlining performance expectations in the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Catalog. In this class, grades are based on the student's actual performance in a course judged against the criteria for grading stated in the course syllabus. The following letter grades and the accompanying description are used:

- A Reserved for outstanding work of exceptionally high quality that reflects a creative appropriation of course material and practices.
- B Work that meets all of the stated course requirements and reflects a firm grasp of course material and practices.
- C Work that shows a basic grasp of the course materials and practices.
- D Work that shows serious deficiencies but meets the minimal requirements of the course.
- F Work that fails to meet the minimal requirements of the course. No credit is given.

A “minus” or “plus” indicates work that falls just short of the stated descriptions.

Course Requirements:

1. Each student is required to complete all reading, study questions and analyses as indicated on the syllabus. Instructor will assume knowledge of this material and draw on it during class.
2. Each student is expected to be present in class. Unexcused tardiness or absence from class will be reflected in the final grade for the course.
3. All written assignments must be turned in at the end of the class for which they are due.
4. All work must be submitted on time. Late assignments will receive a 10% drop in grade. All work for the course must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade.

Course Schedule

Understanding our Location

2/9

Introduction and Approach to the Course

History of Interpretation (the rise and fall of the historical-critical method)

Due Friday, 2/11 by 4 p.m.: - Study Question 1: Blomberg, xi-xvii; "The History of Interpretation" (on CAMS)

Investigating the Text

2/16

Textual Criticism, Translation and Translations

Due in class: - Study Questions 2: Blomberg, 1-61; Epp, "Textual Criticism" (on CAMS) + Read and annotate pages 44-83 of the NA²⁷
[Ferguson, 1-46]

2/23

READING WEEK - NO CLASS

3/2

Historical-Cultural Context

Due in class: - Analysis 1: Textual Criticism of 1 Corinthians 15:51
- Study Questions 3: Blomberg, 37-92; (see Osborne, 158-80)
[Ferguson, 48-147]

3/9

Lexical Analysis (Word Studies)

Due in class: - Analysis 2: Historical-Cultural Context Study
- Study Questions 4: Osborne, 82-112 (see also Blomberg, 117-42)
[Ferguson, 148-318]

3/16

Literary Context (including the use of OT in the NT)

Due in class: - Analysis 3: Composition Chart of Colossians
- Study Questions 5: Blomberg, 93-115; Osborne, 21-56; 323-44
[Ferguson, 318-95]

3/23

READING WEEK - NO CLASS

3/30

Genre, Form and Structure

Due in class: - Analysis 4: Word Study of *μακροθυμία* in Colossians 1:11
- Study Questions 6: Osborne, 181-83; 200-21; 275-322.
[Ferguson, 396-478]

4/6

Grammatical Analysis and Syntactical Analysis: Sentence Diagramming

Due in class: - Study Questions 7: Blomberg, 143-65 (see also 166-218); Osborne, 113-140.
- Read over Sentence Diagramming Handout [on CAMS]
[Ferguson, 478-582]

4/13

Grammatical Analysis and Syntactical Analysis: Discourse Analysis

Due in class: - Analysis 5: Sentence Diagram Practice
- Read over Discourse Analysis Handout [on CAMS]
[Ferguson, 583-620]

Reading NT texts with Peripheral Vision

4/20

Biblical and Theological Context

Due in class: - Analysis 6: Discourse Analysis of Romans 7:4-6
- Study Questions 8: Blomberg, 219-37; Osborne, 347-409.

4/27

Meaning, Application, and Preaching

Due in class: - Study Questions 9: Blomberg, 239-68; Osborne, 410-64.

Due Friday, 4/29 by 4 p.m.: - Study Questions 10: Ferguson (all)

5/9

Exegesis Paper and All Written Work Due by 4:00 p.m.