

Interpreting the Bible
NT 4313—Course Syllabus
Spring 2009

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Class Meeting Times: Monday/Wednesday 9:00–10:30 A. M.

Office Hours: Th, Fri 9:00–11:00 A.M., Mon., Tues., Wed. 1:00–3:00 P.M.

Course Goals:

Exegesis (Greek for “interpretation”) is the art of interpreting a literary text, in this case the Bible. For the purposes of this course, we will be distinguishing between *exegesis*, or the attempt to uncover the original meaning of a text (“what the text meant”) and *hermeneutics* (the application of the text, or “what the text means”). We will be doing some of both in this course.

- 1) The student will demonstrate familiarity with the methods, terminology, and practice of biblical exegesis.
- 2) The student will be able to articulate literary, historical, and theological perspectives found in select biblical passages.
- 3) The student will manifest awareness of the characteristics of some of the genres of biblical literature (law, poetry, narrative, etc.).

Course Objectives:

- 1) The student will acquire a working knowledge of the methods and practice of exegesis.
- 2) The student will be able to take these methods and apply them to select passages of scripture in the Old and New Testaments.
- 3) The student will be able to distinguish between various literary genres in the Bible and be able to articulate important distinctives of each.
- 4) The student will be able to relate the practice of exegesis to the life of faith and practical ministry today.

By the end of the course, the student will be acquainted with the tools and terminology related to biblical interpretation. He or she will be able to apply these tools to specific biblical passages in order to understand them in their historical and literary contexts and to make application both personally and for the life of the church.

Required Texts:

A good modern translation study Bible, such as the *Oxford Annotated Bible of the New Revised Standard Version*, or a study Bible of the New International Version or New American Standard Version; scripture readings as assigned.

Gorman, Michael. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001.

In addition, there will be readings from an “Interpreting the Bible” handbook which will be made available to you.

Recommended Text:

Fee, Gordon and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Means of Assessment:

Reflection Papers: Because exegesis is an art which must be learned by doing, we will be working on weekly assigned scripture passages. You will come prepared each week to discuss your passage/method in the form of a 1/2 to 1 page reflection on the assigned passage and topic. Each week, particular methods, approaches, and questions will be assigned which will be the focus of that week’s study and lectures. Also, you will be asked to learn and evaluate one Bible search software program (see below).

Exegesis Paper: In addition, each student will prepare one five to seven page term paper. The paper will be an exegesis of one passage we have studied in class during the semester or another, approved passage. It will be due the last day of class before the final. You will use the “Guide to Writing an Exegesis Paper,” found on the Faculty Resources page of www.austingrad.edu.

Mid-Term: There will be a mid-term covering the readings and the terminology and tools we have studied up to the time of that mid-term.

Final Exam: There will also be a final exam, either covering the tools, methods, and procedures we have studied from the mid-term on, or a reflection paper on hermeneutics.

<i>reflection papers and evaluation of software:</i>	25%
<i>exegesis paper:</i>	25%
<i>Mid-Term:</i>	25%
<i>Final:</i>	25%

Software, Database, and Internet Resources:

All students in NT 4313 are expected to become familiar with *Bible search software* and utilize these tools especially in the research and preparation of papers. You need to select one of the following Bible search programs for evaluation also. The best available Bible programs are *Accordance Bible Search* software (Oak Tree Software), *Bibloi* (Silver Mountain Software), *Bible Works for Windows* (Hermeneutika Software), *OnLine Bible* (Ken Hamel), *Libronix* (Logos Software), and *Gramcord* for Windows (Gramcord Institute). *Accordance*, *OnLine Bible*, and *Libronix* are available for the Macintosh; all except *Accordance* have PC versions, but *Accordance* will work on a PC running in emulation.

Online Periodicals: Through EBSCO, Austin Graduate School has access to over 200 full-text journals on the web. See the librarian for access.

ATLA Database: The American Theological Library Association maintains a massive bibliographic database of theological journals and books. You must use this resource for identifying important books and articles for writing the exegesis paper (see above). See the librarian for training and access to this database.

In addition, there are numerous *Bible and Bible-related internet sites* which may help your research. The Bible Gateway is one such site. Please see the librarian for a list of other sites.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 (1/20):

Syllabus and Introduction to the Course: general comments.

Exegesis and Interpretation: definition of terms, historical development of exegetical methods; exegesis and hermeneutics, basic principles.

Week 2 (1/25 and 27):

Exegesis and Interpretation (continued);

Analyzing Words and Contexts.

Step One: Verbal Analysis.

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 7–64, 91–114.

Fee and Stuart, pp. 1–134.

Week 3 (2/1 and 2/3):

Analyzing Words and Contexts (continued).

Step One: Verbal Analysis (continued).

Step Two: Setting the Limits of the Text.

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 65–74.

Week 4 (2/8 and 10):

Analyzing Words and Contexts (continued).

Step Two: Setting the Limits of the Text.

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 65–74.

Week 5 (2/15 and 17):

The World Behind the Text: Historical methods of interpretation.

Step Three: Historical Considerations, literary comparisons, etc.

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 65–74.

Fee and Stuart, pp. 1–134.

Week 6 (2/22 and 24):

The World Behind the Text (continued): Historical methods of interpretation.

Week 7 (3/1 and 3):

The World Behind the Text (continued): Historical methods of interpretation.

Week 8 (3/8 and 10):

Mid-Term Exam.

The World Within the Text: Literary methods of interpretation.

Types of Literature in the Bible, Literary Structure, Poetics, Style, etc.

Step Four: Types of Literature in the Bible.

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 75–90.

Fee and Stuart, pp. 135–245.

Week 9 (3/15 and 17): Spring Break, no class.

Week 10 (3/22 and 24):

The World Within the Text: Literary methods of interpretation (cont.).

Types of Literature in the Bible (cont.).

Week 11 (3/29 and 3/31):

The World Within the Text: Literary methods of interpretation (continued).

Step Four: Types of Literature in the Bible (continued).

Week 12 (4/5 and 7):

The World Within the Text: Literary methods of interpretation (continued).

Step Four: Literary Structure and Style.

Week 13 (4/12 and 14):

The World in Front of the Text: Hermeneutics, theological interpretation, etc.

Step Five: Theological Analysis.

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 115–122.

Week 14 (4/19 and 21):

The World in Front of the Text (continued).

Step Five: Theological Analysis (continued).

Week 15 (4/26 and 28):

The World in Front of the Text (continued).

Step Six: “So What”? (hermeneutics).

Readings:

Gorman, pp. 123–194.

Week 16 (5/3 and 5/5):

Final Exam and exegesis papers due; e-mail to shipp@austingrad.edu.