Interpreting the Bible
NT 4313—Course Syllabus
Spring 2019

R. Mark Shipp
11912 Rosethorn Dr.
Austin, TX 78758
(512) 476-2772
shipp@austingrad.edu

Office Hours: Mon. 11:00-12:00 AM, Tues. 10:00–12:00 AM; Wed., Thurs., 1:00–3:00 PM.

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.

BA Course Goals:
The student will show mastery of the biblical story and familiarity with various genres of biblical literature (law, wisdom, prophecy, poetry, etc.) and basic methods and principles of biblical exegesis.

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.

Long, Thomas. *Preaching and the Literary Forms of the Bible.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

In addition, there will be occasional readings which will be made available to you.

Recommended Text:

Fee, Gordon and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth*. latest 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.

Exegesis Paper: In addition, each student will prepare one five to seven page term paper. The paper will be an exegesis of one approved passage from the Bible. 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.

Sermon (grads. only): Graduate students will prepare a five page sermon manuscript, based upon their exegesis paper. Information will be provided later in the semester relative to the preparation of the sermon.

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: Students will do a final exam, which will include the evaluation of a Bible search software program, due the day of the final. The final will also include either an exam over the second half of the semester, or a timed exegesis writing project in the library (3–5 hours).

reflection papers:	25%
exegesis paper:	25%
Mid-Term:	25%
Final:	25%
(Grads. only) *Sermon:*	20% (and all the above 20% each for graduate students)

Software, Database, and Internet Resources:

All students in NT 4313 are expected to become familiar with a *Bible search software* program and utilize this tool 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* 12, Original Languages package (Oak Tree

Software), *Bible Works* 10 (Hermeneutika Software), Logos 8, Bronze package (Faithlife Corp.), and Olive Tree Software *Bible Study,* version 6 (free, unless you purchase the Greek and Hebrew dictionary modules). In addition, StepBible is a free Bible search engine you can use on the web or download to your computer.

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 the librarian for training and access to this database.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 (1/22):
    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 (1/29):
    Getting Started; Analyzing Words and Contexts.
    Step One: Verbal Analysis. **Reflection #1**. Text Criticism. Matt. 15:21–28, Romans 8, and 2 Sam. 23:1–7.
       Readings:
           Gorman, pp. 7–64.
               Fee, pp. 133–140.

Week 3 (2/05):
    Getting Started; Analyzing Words and Contexts.
    Step One: Verbal Analysis (continued). **Reflection #2**. Limits of text, Romans 8.

Week 4 (2/12):
    Analyzing Words and Contexts (continued).
    Step Two: Setting the Limits of the Text. **Reflection #3**. Contexts and passages. Matt. 15:21-28.
       Readings:
           Fee, pp. 144–148.

Week 5 (2/19):
    The World Behind the Text: Analyzing historical backgrounds.
    Step Three: Historical Considerations, literary comparisons, etc. **Reflection #4**. Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, or Saul's conversion in Acts.
       Readings:

Gorman, pp. 65–74.
Fee, pp. 149–151.

Week 6 (2/26):
The World Behind the Text (continued): analyzing historical backgrounds.

Week 7 (3/5):
The World Behind the Text (continued): analyzing historical backgrounds.
Reflection #5. *The Gilgamesh Epic*.

Week 8 (3/12): Mid-Term Exam.
The World Within the Text: Analyzing the Bible as literature.

Week 9 (3/19): Spring Break, no class.

Week10 (3/26):
Types of Literature in the Bible: Literary Structure, Poetics, Style, etc.
Step Four: Types of Literature in the Bible.
Readings:
Gorman, pp. 75–114.
Long, pp. 43–126.

Week 11 (4/02):
The World Within the Text: analyzing the Bible as literature (continued).
Step Four: Types of Literature in the Bible (continued). **Reflection #6**. Comparing Matt 15:21–28 to Mark 7:24–30.

Week 12 (4/09):
The World Within the Text: Analyzing the Bible as literature (continued). **Reflection #7**. Analyzing laments or epistles.
Step Four: Literary Structure and Style.

Week 13 (4/16):
The World in Front of the Text: Hermeneutics, theological interpretation, beginning work on the sermon.
Step Five: Theological Analysis. **Reflection #8**. Theological analysis of Matt. 15:21–28.
Readings:
Gorman, pp. 115–122.

Week 14 (4/23):
The World in Front of the Text (continued).
Moving from Text to Sermon (continued).

Step Six: "So What"? (application). **Reflection #9**. Application of Matt. 15:21–28.
 Readings:
  Gorman, pp. 123–194.

Week 15 (4/30):
 Moving from Text to Sermon (continued). **Reflection #10**. My personal hermeneutic or outline of sermon.
 Readings:
  Long, pp. 1–-39; 127–135.
   Fee, pp. 151–154.

Week 16 (5/7):
 Moving from Text to Sermon (continued).
 Exegesis papers due; e-mail to shipp@austingrad.edu.

Week 17 (5/14):
 Final Exam, including analysis of a Bible search software program.