



Nipawin Bible College
Course: BT224 Hermeneutics
Instructor: Mr. David J. Smith
Fall 2018
3 Credit Hours
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

It has been rightly said that “every verbal utterance and every written document invites, even demands, interpretation. The need for principles of interpretation [particularly biblical interpretation] increases in proportion to the distance that the text is [removed] in time and culture from our own. A gap is to be bridged and obstacles to understanding removed.” (Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation*, p. 208.)

Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. This course is an introduction to that endeavour. As students will discover, competent interpretive method requires skills such as, developing a reliable exegetical process, understanding the nature and authority of the Bible, learning to appropriate Scripture through meditation and application and finally, formulating guidelines for a contemporary evangelical hermeneutic.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

The Bible (KJV, NKJV, ESV, NLT, RSV, NASB, NIV) Please bring this to class.

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word*. 3 ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. [Pages 9-442] The laminated guide is recommended.

THE BIG QUESTION

In approaching the hermeneutical task, how shall “the gap” between the biblical text and meaningful, contemporary understanding and application of the text, be bridged?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

With the successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify the obstacles that will be encountered in the process of interpreting and applying the Bible.
2. Deduce the place of the reader, or hearer, in communicating the Bible to others.
3. Develop reliable hermeneutical principles for interpreting the Bible.
4. Demonstrate a higher level of proficiency in applying the biblical text to decisions of conscience and morality in their own lives,

5. Critique the theological and/or biblical assumptions and assertions of others.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Collateral/Interpretive Reading (20%). For this assignment you will be provided with two scholarly journal articles. These articles concern themselves with biblical studies. Choose and read one (1) of these articles. Then, using the attachment provided in this syllabus complete the assignment according to the instructions given on that page. The articles being made available to you are:

Hackett, Jo Ann. "Violence and Women's Lives in the Book of Judges."
Interpretation (October 2004): 356-364.

Tabb, Brian. "Jesus's Thirst at the Cross: Irony and Intertextuality in John 19:28."
Evangelical Quarterly 85.4 (2013): 338-351.

Due Date: Fri. Sept. 7.

2. Textbook Reading (30%). Read the course text, Duvall/Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, in its entirety (pp. 9-442). Having done so, in 3 full pages provide an evaluation of the content read. Be aware that this critique is not about the authors' style, whether you liked, or didn't like the material, or decided it was a "good read". Rather, you are being asked to assess the value of what you read as a source of understanding the principles and processes of the hermeneutical task. Students are expected to exercise a good measure of Christian **and** academic charity and respect when disagreeing with scholars. An excellent critique will include the following components in the following order:

- Begin by providing the basic bibliographic data (in proper format) along with the total number of pages read.
- Your first paragraph should identify the author(s) and give their credentials for writing the book. This need not be extensive.
- Next, state the subject of the book as well as the intended audience. This can be done in one well-written sentence.
- Then, provide a *brief* (but adequate) summary of the material covered in your reading.
- Finally, carefully evaluate the clarity and organization of the material. In doing so, consider such questions as: Do the authors write in such a way as to explain concepts, principles, or facts clearly? Is the material well organized, balanced and comprehensive? Do the authors provide insightful analysis? How have your presuppositions been affirmed or challenged? Has the material shaped your understanding of the hermeneutical task? And would you recommend this book as a serious resource on the subject of hermeneutics? Why or why not?
- A title page.

Due Date: Thurs. Sept. 13.

3. **Exegetical Paper (40%)** Here is an opportunity for you to exercise the hermeneutical principles and processes that you have gleaned from your reading, interpretive assignments and classroom instruction.

From the list of biblical passages provided below, choose one (1) and try to explain the critical phrase or word that is *italicized*. You will want to read the passage in other versions. That should give you a broader insight into what the phrase or word might mean and the context in which it is located. You will be expected to consult theological wordbooks and dictionaries. And, you will need to familiarize yourself with what other biblical scholars have said by engaging in at least 3 *exegetical* commentaries and drawing on several (4 or more) scholarly journals. Passages for consideration/interpretation:

1. Isaiah 7:14 "...Behold, a *virgin* will be with child...."
2. Revelation 2:5 "...*Remove your lampstand out of its place....*"
3. 2 John 10 "... *Do not receive him into your house....*"
4. John 10:16 "And I have *other sheep* which are not of *this fold*."

Your paper must include:

- A proper title page (1 page);
- A sufficient introduction that gains the reader's attention, clearly states the actual/entire biblical verse in which your word or phrase appears, and then summarizes the main idea of your text, optimally in one good sentence (1/2-1 page);
- An adequate discussion of the context in two parts. Part one is a discussion of the historical-cultural context in which you explain what your reader needs to know about the original audience and their world in order to grasp the meaning of the text. Part two is a discussion of the literary genre and context in which you describe the biblical author's flow of thought and how your word, or phrase relates to the whole chapter in which it is found (2 pages);
- Explain what your word/phrase means in its context. Be sure to synthesize significant discoveries from your research *and* your own observations/insights which will include suggestions as to why the explanations by others are/are not reasonable (5 pages);
- Point out how your word, or phrase *applies* to you ***and*** the church today (1 page);
- Appropriate documentation in footnotes and bibliography.

This exegetical paper will be 9 pages of written text, excluding title page and bibliography. In addition to the Bible, a minimum of 7 sources will be used. Apart from our library, the only Internet sources you are permitted to use come from the Galaxie journal link. And because this is a relatively short paper, you will want to write concisely and precisely. Be aware, there are **no** extensions for this assignment.

Due Date: Tues. Sept. 18.

4. Contribution (10%) Your active participation in this class is essential. It will be evaluated based on a clear demonstration of the following:

- Attendance, including punctual arrival;
- Interaction with the material through insightful discussion, questions and comments. The key here is thinking, not simply talking;
- Attention to the class material as displayed through alertness.

All written assignments are to be word-processed on a computer in accordance with the prescribed requirements in the *NBC Student Handbook*. Assignments will be graded on the basis of content, clarity, grammar, spelling and the student's ability to follow instructions. Optima or Times New Roman (preferred) font is required. Pagination is a must. All assignments will be due **no later than 5:00 PM** on the day indicated.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Refer to the *NBC Student Handbook 2018-2019*.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Refer to the *NBC Student Handbook 2018-2019*.

In addition to these please be aware that electronic technology (laptops, tablets, cell phones etc.) is not to be used to play games, web browse, email or text messages during class time. Since technology can be used to enhance learning, discretion is left to the individual faculty whether they allow devices in the classroom. If such devices become a distraction the student may be marked absent from class and/or no longer permitted to bring their electronic device to class.

One further important word. If you are hindered in any way because of a learning disability please speak with the course instructor as soon as possible. It is their desire to develop strategies that accommodate your need and make your learning experience as rewarding as possible.

Course Reading: 450+ pages (textbook/journals)

Course Writing: 13 pages

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brauch, Manfred T. *Abusing Scripture: The Consequences of Misreading the Bible*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009.
- Carson, D. A. and John D. Woodbridge, eds. *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Pub., 1986.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006.
- Kaiser, Walter C. and Moises DeSilva. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. 2nd Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 2007.
- Osborne, Grant. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *Thiselton on Hermeneutics: Collected Works and New Essays*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Virkler, Henry A. and Karelynn Gerber Ayayo. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Zuck, Roy B. *Basic Bible Interpretation*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991.