Course Syllabus
Gordon College
Dept. of Biblical and Theological Studies
Spring, 2011

Biblical Hermeneutics
BCM 335

Course Prerequisites: The student is expected to have completed both the OT and NT core requirements and BI 220, Introduction to Biblical Studies.

Course Description: “Studies selected critical problems relating to origin, transmission and interpretation of the biblical books” (Academic Catalog)

Course Objectives:
1. The student should be able to intelligently discuss issues related to inspiration, authority, and the transmission and translation of the OT and NT. The student will begin to formulate his/her views regarding these crucial areas.
2. The student will exhibit an appreciation for the historical and philosophical roots of interpretation.
3. The student will become familiar with various modern methods of criticism and interpretation of the biblical text, including literary criticism, canon criticism, reader response criticism, deconstructionism, etc. The student should also be familiar with the major practitioners of these methods.
4. The student will begin to develop a healthy attitude toward critical methods of interpretation.
5. The student will begin to develop a critical methodology for studying and interpreting the biblical text.

Course Requirements
1. The student will complete all the reading assignments consisting of both textbooks and library reserve material. The readings will form the basis for class discussion and some of the assignments. The student should also take notes on the reading.
2. Students will complete ten (4) written assignments related to various topics. They are to be 2-3 pages (3 pp. is the absolute max!), double-spaced and word-processed (no hand written). These will require the use of your textbooks, as well as additional reading.
3. The student will complete a research project on one of the topics covered during the semester. For your project you have two options. 1) You can work on a topic in a group consisting of three (3) members and you will make a presentation of your research to the class. You will actually serve as the Instructor for the entire class that day, and will serve as a springboard for class
discussion and perhaps some of my supplemental comments. At the time of the presentation, you will hand in a detailed typed outline of your class presentation to me (2-3 pp). You must also provide documentation of dates and times that the group met and the “division of labor” amongst the members of the group. Finally, you will hand in a bibliography of the works you consulted (collectively and individually). It is expected that you will put in as much work and research as you would for a major research paper. 2) For those who would rather work individually, you will produce a research paper of 10-12 pages. Your research paper or class presentation should cover at least the following: describe the method or criticism you are researching; tell me what the method or criticism is and does; describe the assumptions that underlie the use of the method; give at least one example from the OT and from the NT of how this method or criticism works in interpretation; evaluate the contribution of this method or criticism for interpretation. 4. The student will complete a midterm and a final exam over the contents of the entire course.

Course Textbooks:
Required

Sparks, Kenton, God’s Words in Human Words (Baker)

Treier, Daniel. Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture (Baker)

Vanhoozer, Kevin, Is There a Meaning in this Text? (Zondervan)

Any additional reading will be handed out or will be handed out, found on reserve in the library, or on the internet.

Course Evaluation:

100-93 = A – distinguished work of excellent quality
100 = A+; 99-95 = A; 94-93 = A-
92-85 = B – above average work of more than satisfactory quality
92-90 = B+; 89-87 = B; 86-85 = B-
84-78 = C – average work of satisfactory quality
84-83 = C+; 82-80 = C; 79-78 = C-
77-70 = D – below average work of less than satisfactory quality
77-76 = D+; 75-73 = D; 72-70 = D-
Below 70 = F – does not meet the satisfactory requirements

PLEASE NOTE: To me an “A” is given for above average work of distinguishable character. An “A” (or even a “B”) is NOT given for merely completing the course requirements (that would be a “C”). Such a grade is reserved for those whose work is of the highest quality and is conspicuously distinguished from the work of everyone else. I
start with the assumption that everyone does “C” work. You must prove to me that you are able to exceed this level of work in order to merit a “B” or an “A.”

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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Written Assignments</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Research project</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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LATE WORK: I will accept late work for up to one week from the due date (with a significant grade reduction—at least one letter grade). After one week, absolutely NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED!!! PERIOD!

**Learning Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should follow this procedure:

1. Contact Ann Seavey in the Academic Support Center (Jenks 412 x4746) to make sure documentation of your disability is on file in the ASC. (See Academic Catalog Appendix C, for documentation guidelines.
2. Meet with an ASC staff person to discuss the accommodations for which you are eligible and the procedures for obtaining them.
3. Obtain a **Faculty Notification Form** from the ASC and deliver it to your professor *within the first full week of the semester*.
4. Set up a follow-up appointment to discuss your needs with your professor.

Your failure to register in time with your professor and the ASC may compromise our ability to provide the accommodations, so please follow the above procedure. Questions or disputes about accommodations should be immediately referred to the ASC.

**Attendance:** Your consistent and regular attendance is expected; failure to attend will noticeably affect your class participation grade and your ability to grasp and discuss the topics covered throughout the semester. If attendance becomes a problem at any time during the semester, the professor reserves the right to implement a stricter policy.

**Electronic Equipment:** Please make sure that all cell phones are turned OFF before entering class (or better yet, leave them in your rooms).

**Course Schedule:**

Jan 21  Intro; The Nature of the Interpretive Task; Thinking Critically.

Jan 24  The nature of Scripture; The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture; Sparks, chaps. 1-3

Jan 26  The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture; Sparks, chaps. 4-6
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 28</td>
<td>Inspiration and Authority of Scripture; Sparks, chaps. 7-10</td>
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<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>Transmission and Translation; B. M. Metzger, “Theories of Translation Process” (Ted Hildebrandt’s Website); <strong>Assignment #1 due (see below)</strong>.</td>
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<td>Feb 2</td>
<td>Transmission and Translation; D. L. Bock, “Do Gender-Sensitive Translations Distort Scripture?” <em>JETS</em> 45.4</td>
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<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Gender Issues in Translation; Blomberg, “The Untold Story of a Good Translation (Denver Seminary website)</td>
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<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>Textual Criticism of the OT and NT; “Textual Criticism, OT” in <em>The Anchor Bible</em></td>
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<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>Textual Criticism of the NT; “Textual Criticism, NT” in <em>The Anchor Bible</em></td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Early Biblical Interpretation – the Dead Sea Scrolls; Assigned reading from the Habbakuk Pesher; Isaiah Pesher.</td>
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<td>Feb 14</td>
<td>Early Biblical Interpretation – Apostolic Interpretation; Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, <em>Introduction to Biblical Interpretation</em>, ch. 2 pp. 23-52</td>
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<td>Feb 16</td>
<td>The Church Fathers and Origin; Treier, chap. 1 “Recovering the Past;” Origin, <em>On First Principles</em>, 4.2.1-5</td>
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<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>Our Hermeneutical Roots; Vanhoozer, chap. 1</td>
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<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>The Historical-Critical Method; Find an article on the internet that explains the Historical-Critical method as it relates to biblical studies. Be prepared to report on your finding.</td>
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<td>Feb 23</td>
<td>Source, Form, and Redaction Criticism; Gospel studies; “Form Criticism” “Redaction Criticism” “Synoptic Problem” in <em>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</em> IVP</td>
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<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Existential (Bultmann); Neo-orthodox (Barth) approaches to interpretation; Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, ch. 2 pp. 52-62</td>
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<td>Feb 28</td>
<td>Backgrounds – Jewish and Greco-Roman; Richard Bauckham, <strong>Assignment #2 due (see below)</strong></td>
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<td>Mar 2</td>
<td>Cultural Contexts and Hermeneutics</td>
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<td>Mar 4</td>
<td>Globalization of Hermeneutics; C. Blomberg, “The Globalization of</td>
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Mar 7  Author, Text, and Reader; Vanhoozer, part 1, chap. 2; Review for midterm exam

Mar 9  Mid-Term Exam

Mar 11  NO CLASS – Quad Finals

Mar 14-18  NO CLASS – Spring Break

Mar 21  Author’s Intention; Vanhoozer, chap. 5

Mar 23  Author’s Intention; Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, chap. 6 “The Goal of Interpretation”

Mar 25  Text Centered Approaches; Vanhoozer, chap. 3

Mar 28  Text Centered Approaches; Vanhoozer, chap. 6; Assignment #3 due (see below)

Mar 30  Reader Centered Approaches; Vanhoozer, chap. 4

Apr 1  Reader Centered Approaches; Vanhoozer, chap. 7

Apr 4  Deconstructionism; Vanhoozer, chap. 7

Apr 6  Postmodern and ideological approaches to hermeneutics; Klein, Blomberg, Hubbard, pp. ch. 3 “Recent Literary and Socio-Scientific Approaches to Interpretation”


Apr 11  The Use of the OT in the NT; “Old Testament in Paul” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (IVP)

Apr 13  The Use of the OT in the NT; Dave Mathewson, “Assessing Old Testament Allusions in the Book of Revelation,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 74 (2003), pp. 311-25; Assignment #4 due (see below)


Apr 20  Class will not meet – work on research projects!!! (Required)

Apr 22  NO CLASS – Easter Recess

Apr 25  NO CLASS – Easter Recess

Apr 27  Student Presentations

Apr 29  Student Presentations

May 2  Student Presentations; Research Papers due

May 4  Recent Issues in Theological Interpretation; Treier, pp. 11-36, 57-100

May 6  Recent Issues in Theological Interpretation; Treier, pp. 103-205

May 9  Putting it all together.

May 11  Wrap-up and Review for Final

May 13, 16 -18  Finals Week

**Assignments**

**Assignment #1**: In light of your understanding of Scripture as the word of God, what role do more critical methods play in interpretation? Do they have any place at all? If not, why not? If so, how does this fit with an understanding of the bible as the inspired word of God? Interact with Sparks.

**Assignment #2**: What historical/cultural background lies behind the parable of the Unjust Steward in Luke 16.1-13? How does it serve to illumine the meaning of the passage?

**Assignment #3**: What is the justification for pursuing author’s intention in interpreting the biblical text? What are some of the shortcomings of this method?

**Assignment #4**: Apart from the explicit citations of the OT in Matthew 2, what other OT texts play a role by way of allusion? Be specific. How do they help you understand the meaning of this text?