

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

# Advanced Greek Exegesis

NT-611 DS (1, 2, or 3 units)  
Spring 2006 @ MBBS: Fresno  
Meet for 90 minutes each week  
at a time to be determined

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as a directed study. It introduces the theory and practice of textual criticism. Selected texts from the New Testament are read paying attention to text critical issues while continuing to master both the Greek language and the techniques of grammatical exegesis. *Prerequisite: NT-510 Elementary Greek 1, NT-511 Elementary Greek 2, and NT-608 Intermediate Greek Exegesis.*

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through a variety of activities (readings, exercises, assignments), students will build on the foundation of Elementary Greek (morphology) and of Intermediate Greek (syntax), in order to gain greater confidence and competence in exegeting the Greek New Testament. At the completion of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the major periods, text families, and witnesses in manuscript transmission history for the New Testament (*Knowledge Objective*).
2. Articulate the major principles (or assumptions) that guide contemporary textual criticism. (*Knowledge Objective*).
3. Apply the principles of textual criticism to any set of variant readings of a particular NT text and discern what was likely the original text (*Skills Objective*).
4. Recognize the English equivalents of all the Greek words that occur 20 times or more in the NT (*Knowledge Objective*).
5. Appreciate more deeply both the promise and the risk of translating the NT Greek into English (*Values Objective*).

## MBBS PROGRAM GOALS

This course contributes to the larger goals of the Seminary in that it will help the student to:

1. Discern with greater precision the subject matter to which the biblical text gives witness, both its foreignness as well as its power to draw, to claim, and to transform life (*Biblical Formation*).

2. Engage the theological issues involved in translating (i.e., interpreting) the biblical text so that it can inform, form, and reform the cultural norms that shape our present faith community (*Ecclesial Formation*).
3. Nurture healthy interpersonal relationships and effective communication patterns in the context of the classroom learning community (*Character Formation*).
4. Develop skills in sound biblical exegesis and interpretation for preaching, teaching, social advocacy, personal enrichment, and our life together (*Ministry/Mission Formation*).

## TEXTBOOKS AND RESOURCES

There are four textbooks necessary for this course:

Black, David Alan. *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide*. Baker Books, 1994.

*Greek New Testament* (with apparatus), 4<sup>th</sup> edition, eds. B. Aland, B. Metzger, et al. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993. (Note: You may also use *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27<sup>th</sup> edition, eds. E. Nestle, B. Aland, et al. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993).

Metzger, Bruce. M. and Bart Ehrman. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford, 1964, 1968, 1992, 2005.

Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. United Bible Society, 1971, 1994.

In addition to these four, I will distribute the following resources:

Aland, K. and B. Aland. "Transmission of the Greek NT," "Manuscripts by Category," and "Twelve Rules of Textual Criticism." In *The Text of the New Testament*, rev. ed. Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 67-71, 159-163, and 280-281.

Ehrman, B. "Manuscripts of the New Testament." In *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. Oxford, 1997, pp. 414-421.

Epp, E.J. "Textual Criticism." In *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters*, eds. E.J. Epp and G.W. MacRae. Scholars Press, 1989, pp. 75-126.

*External Evidence Pro (ver 1.5)* on floppy disc (MS Excel program for manuscript assessment).

Fee, G.D. "Textual Criticism of the New Testament." In *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*, eds. E.J. Epp and G.D. Fee. Eerdmans, 1993, pp. 3-16.

*New Testament* texts for translating each week along with underlined words to parse and analyze.

*Study Questions* keyed to textual commentary and Metzger/Ehrman textbook

*Supplements* to David Black's Intermediate Grammar (on prepositions and on noun cases)

*Textual Criticism Worksheet.*

*Word List* of Greek vocabulary occurring at a frequency of between 50 and 20 times in the NT.

We will also continue to draw on resources from Elementary Greek and Intermediate Greek:

Black, David Alan. *It's Still Greek to Me: An Easy-to-Understand Guide to Intermediate Greek.* Baker Books, 1998.

*Greek New Testament* on CD ROM (*Accordance, Gramcord, Logos, or Bible Works*).

*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., revised and edited by F.W. Danker (BDAG). The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979, 2000.

Mounce, William. *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar*, with CD Rom. Zondervan, 1993, 1999.

## COURSE DESIGN AND EXPECTATIONS

This course is designed as a directed study. During the week students will prepare some or all of the following: 1) textbook readings with study questions, 2) about 20 verses from the Greek NT (parse, analyze, assess variants, and translate), 3) analysis of a significant textual variation in the NT, and 4) vocabulary acquisition.

We will meet for eleven weeks (90 minutes each week) to check progress and to discuss findings/concerns.

In addition to the weekly preparations, there are two take-home exams and a twenty-page exegetical paper to be completed for 3 units of credit. See below for more details.

## COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

### Meeting #1 \_\_\_\_\_

- introduce course syllabus
- situate the discipline of textual criticism

#### -post-meeting assignment

- \*read and reflect on Ehrman's brief introduction to the NT manuscript tradition (to be distributed)
- \*read and respond to Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, "Introduction," pp. 1\*-16\* (*Study Questions* to be distributed)
- \*translate Mark 8.27-9.8 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger's commentary)

### Meeting #2 \_\_\_\_\_

- discuss and clarify readings

-post-meeting assignment

\*read and respond to Metzger/Ehrman, *Text of the NT*, pp. \_\_\_\_\_

\*translate Colossians 1.1-23 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger's commentary)

**Meeting #3** \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

-post-meeting assignment

\*read and reflect on Fee's chapter on Textual Criticism (to be distributed)

\*read and reflect on Epp's chapter on Textual Criticism (to be distributed)

\*compare and contrast the contributions of Fee and Epp

\*translate Romans 3.21-26 and 8.1-11 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger's commentary)

**Meeting #4** \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

-post-meeting assignment

\*read and respond to Metzger/Ehrman, *Text of the NT*, pp. \_\_\_\_\_

\*translate James 1.1-21 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger's commentary)

**Meeting #5** \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

-post-meeting assignment

\*read and respond to Metzger/Ehrman, *Text of the NT*, pp. \_\_\_\_\_

\*translate Philippians 1.21-2.13 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger's commentary)

\*select a pericope with significant textual variants to be translated and analyzed later for your exegetical paper

**Meeting #6** \_\_\_\_\_

-share text selections and explain why you are interested in them

-discuss and clarify readings

-post-meeting assignment

\*read and respond to Metzger/Ehrman, *Text of the NT*, pp. \_\_\_\_\_

\*translate 1 Peter 1.1-21 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger's commentary)

## Meeting #7 \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

### -post-meeting assignment

- \*review vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and *Study Questions* in preparation for the exam
- \*do “take-home” Mid-Term Exam (distributed and due next meeting)
- \*read Black, *NT Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide*, pp. 11-56

## Meeting #8 \_\_\_\_\_

-collect “take-home” Mid-Term Exam

-demonstrate *External Evidence Pro* (ver 1.5)

-distribute *Textual Criticism Worksheet*

-assess the major textual variants at Mark 1.1 (was *uiJou: qeou:* originally there or not?) using *Textual Criticism Worksheet*; compare with Metzger’s assessment only after we have done ours

### -post-meeting assignment

- \*read Aland, K. and B. Aland on “Transmission of the Greek NT,” “Manuscripts by Category,” and “Twelve Rules of Textual Criticism” (to be distributed).
- \*compare Aland and Metzger
- \*assess the major textual variants at Romans 5.1 (was *e[comen* or *e[cwmen* the original reading?) using *Textual Criticism Worksheet* (compare with Metzger’s assessment only after you have done yours)
- \*translate your identified pericope in preparation for your exegetical paper (parse and analyze the syntax of the main verbs, participles, and nouns; assess the variant readings)

## Meeting #9 \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

-share highlights of your text with respect to textual criticism

### -post-meeting assignment

- \*translate Acts 2.22-42 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger’s commentary)
- \*assess the major textual variants at John 1.18 (how was *monogenh;V* used in the original text?) using *Textual Criticism Worksheet* (compare with Metzger’s assessment only after you have done yours)

## Meeting #10 \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

### -post-meeting assignment

- \*translate Hebrews 5.11-6.12 (parse and analyze the syntax of the underlined words) and explain the variant choices made by the editorial committee—see Metzger’s commentary)

\*assess the major textual variants at 1 Corinthians 2.1 (was *musthvriion* or *martuvriion* the original reading?) using *Textual Criticism Worksheet* (compare with Metzger's assessment only after you have done yours)

**Meeting #11** \_\_\_\_\_

-discuss and clarify readings

-post-meeting assignment

\*review vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and textual criticism in preparation for exam

\*do "take-home" Final Exam (distribute and due next meeting)

**Apr.** \_\_\_\_

-“take-home” Final Exam due

-finish exegetical paper using the template provided in *Appendix B* (due April \_\_\_\_ )

**Apr.** \_\_\_\_

-exegetical paper due

**SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES**

Mid-Term Exam due Mar. \_\_\_\_

Final Exam due Apr. \_\_\_\_

Exegetical Paper due Apr. \_\_\_\_

**SUMMARY OF GRADING SCHEME**

Mid-Term Exam .....	33%
Final Exam .....	33%
Exegetical Paper .....	34%
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	100%

**NOTES**

1. Academic Policies. MBBS academic policies (as well as other school policies) are described at <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies>. These policies provide guidance on academic integrity and plagiarism, incomplete course work, extensions, dates for changing registration, non-discriminatory and inclusive language, appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with these policies and will be held responsible for adhering to them. If you have questions about how these policies relate to you or to a situation that you face in your studies, please speak to the professor or consult the Registrar or Academic Dean.

2. Evaluation. The Exegetical Paper will be assessed according to the following categories: appropriateness, clarity, comprehensiveness, creativity, argumentation, form, and care (see *Appendix C*).

All assigned work must be completed to be eligible to earn a passing grade.

Note also that “student work will be evaluated by two standards: a) by what is considered the appropriate level of graduate performance, and b) by comparison with work submitted in a given class” (<http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

The letter grade conversions follow the MBBS Grading Template: A (100-94%), A- (93-90%), B+ (89-87%), B (86-83%), B- (82-80%), C+ (79-77%), C (76-73%), C- (72-70%), and F (69-0%) (<http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

The performance expectations are as follows: “A ‘B’ grade is the baseline. A ‘B’ grade means the student is doing satisfactory work. The ‘B+’ or higher grade indicates that the student has exceeded the baseline performance standard. The ‘C’ grade indicates that the student has not achieved the baseline level” (<http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

Note: Students taking the course for 1 unit of credit are to complete the weekly assignments and to participate in the weekly discussion of readings, translations, and variant analysis. A final grade of “pass” (or CR) will be earned for satisfactory work.

3. Due dates. I expect the exams and the exegetical paper to be submitted on or before the due dates posted in the syllabus. Late work will be graded down 2% for each day (or part thereof) after the due date. The late penalty may not apply to students who have a documented emergency that prevents them from submitting the assignment on the due date. Check with me to see if alternative arrangements can be made. You may send your assignments to me by fax or email.

Graduating seniors must have all assignments in for grading on April 24.

4. Attendance. Students are expected to attend and participate in class. Our meetings together will be devoted largely to discussion of the textual analysis you prepared during the week. Your attendance assumes that you have done the required preparation. If an absence becomes necessary, students may propose various ways to “make it up” (taping, viewing, and reporting on missed lecture, doing extra reading and writing, etc.). Please see me about your proposal for how to “make up” an absence.

No “un-made-up” absences are permitted in order to earn a passing grade.

5. Formatting specifications for Research Paper. Any of the three standard citation styles is acceptable (Chicago, APA, MLA). Choose one and follow it consistently. Consult *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Hendrikson Publishers, 1999) which is the Reference section of the Hiebert Library (Ref PN 147.S26) or Slade’s, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000).

## APPENDIX A: WORKSHEET FOR NT TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Note: This worksheet is adapted from D.A. Black, *NT Textual Criticism*, pp. 67-71.

Step #1: *Gather the preliminary evidence relating to the textual variants.*

1. Biblical reference:
2. Greek text chosen by GNT-UBS (4<sup>th</sup> edition):
3. Literal rendering:

4. NRSV rendering:
5. NKJV rendering:
6. Delineation of the problem:
7. Use the following chart: to list the alternative readings, to identify possible reasons for the emergence of the variant reading (e.g., omission, transposition, addition, substitution, etc.), and to translate the alternatives, showing significance.

Alternative Readings	Kind of Variation	Translation

**Step #2: Assess the external evidence for the textual variants.**

1. Accumulation of the manuscript evidence. Use the following chart: to list the readings and to indicate the manuscript support for each reading.

Readings	Evidence

2. Distribution of the manuscript evidence. Use the following chart to categorize the manuscript evidence into their “text types” (see Black, *NT Textual Criticism*, pp.63-65 for a list “text type” groupings).

Readings	Alexandrian	Other	Western	Byzantine

3. Evaluation of the manuscript evidence. Use the following chart to arrange the readings in descending order of probability with the “better attested” reading at the top. Explain why each reading is assigned its particular position.

Readings	Rationale

**Step #3: Assess the internal evidence for the textual variation.**

1. Transcriptional probabilities: Use the following chart to record assessments as to the possible reason for the error in transcription (see Black, *NT Textual Criticism*, pp. 59-61 for a list of known types of scribal errors).

Readings	Possible error in transcription

2. Intrinsic probabilities: Use the following chart to assess each variant from the perspective of the author’s style, vocabulary, and theology.

Readings	Author’s style	Author’s vocabulary	Author’s theology

3. Evaluation of the internal evidence. Use the following chart to arrange the readings in descending order of probability with the “better” reading at the top. Explain why each reading is assigned its particular position.

Readings	Rationale

**Step #4:** *Decide which reading is likely the original.*

Consider both the external evidence and the internal evidence when making your decision (i.e., reasoned eclecticism). Indicate your level of certainty (i.e., very certain, almost certain, uncertain). Compare your decision with the one take by the GNT-UBS (4<sup>th</sup> edition) committee (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*).

**APPENDIX B: EXEGETICAL/HERMENEUTICAL TEMPLATE**

*Note: The following guidelines are an adaptation of those I learned from my mentors, Elmer Martens, Allen Guenther, Tim Geddert, Brevard Childs, and Richard Hays.*

**1. THE DESCRIPTIVE TASK: READING THE TEXT CAREFULLY**

a) *Define the text.*

- \*Read the text in its larger context (this may mean reading several chapters or the whole book).
- \*Identify the type(s)/genre(s) of literature represented in the text (e.g., narrative, discourse, exhortation, poetry, apocalyptic, gospel, law, wisdom, etc.).
- \*Identify the beginning and end of the text (i.e., textual unit or *pericope*) to be exegeted (clues: shifts in grammar, genre, scene, and theme; certain literary conventions; etc.).

b) *Establish the text.*

- \*Read the text in multiple translations or translate from the original language (parse key words and analyze syntax).
- \*If possible, assess manuscript variants (if any) and decide on the “best” reading (give rationale).
- \*Decide on a “working translation” that best coheres with the meaning of the text as it is emerging in your interpretation (give rationale).

c) *Analyze the structure of the text.*

- \*Identify and label the major subdivisions using literary and grammatical clues in the text (i.e., use functional labels like: introduction, rationale, assertion, illustration, instruction, warning, conclusion, etc.).

\*Outline the text, using indentation and spacing (etc.) to graphically show relationships at the “paragraph level” and, if possible, at the “sentence level” (i.e., grammatical and semantic diagramming).

d) *Exegete the text.*

\*Determine the meanings of key words and phrases (use Strong’s numbers, if necessary, along with concordances, lexicons, and theological wordbooks to find the meaning of the underlying Hebrew or Greek word in your text).

\*Determine the relationship of the parts to the whole (outline the flow of the argument or narrative).

\*Locate the text in its historical, literary, and social context (use a Bible dictionary).

\*State the central issue, message, or thrust of the text, in a sentence.

## 2. THE SYNTHETIC TASK: PLACING THE TEXT IN CANONICAL CONTEXT

a) *Explore the theology of the text.*

\*Compare with parallel canonical texts (i.e., other related texts in the Christian Bible) and note differences and similarities.

\*Discern the coherent theological message that holds together, but does not reduce, the canonical tensions.

\*State the underlying theological vision that drives the text, in a sentence.

b) *Test your theological interpretation with others.*

\*Consult commentaries, monographs, journal articles, dictionary articles, etc. (use ATLA’s “scripture search” feature to find publications on your text).

\*Discuss your findings and interpretation with others in your faith community.

\*Examine alternative interpretations and make revisions and modifications, as needed.

## 3. THE HERMENEUTICAL TASK: RELATING THE TEXT TO THE PRESENT

a) *Evaluate the temporal/cultural gap between the textual world and the contemporary world.*

\*Research the effect the text has had in other Christian communities over time and across cultures.

\*Explore ways to “bridge the gap” so that the text’s contemporary effect, while differing, could still bear a “familial resemblance” to its effect in other faith communities.

b) *Articulate the on-going message of the text.*

\*Decide on the text’s “mode of discourse” (e.g., rule, principle, paradigm, or symbolic world) and how it will function for contemporary appropriation. Give rationale.

\*Discern the role (if any) of other sources of authority (e.g., tradition, reason, experience, etc.) and how they will contribute to “building a bridge that spans the gap.”

\*Construct imaginative analogies and metaphors that could place your contemporary faith community within the theological vision expressed by the text. (Note: The aim here is not to make the text relevant to us, but to be “drawn into” the text so that it reshapes the norms of our present faith community.)

## 4. THE PRAGMATIC TASK: LIVING THE TEXT

a) *Appropriate the message of text in ways that resonate with its theological vision (i.e.,*

“walk over the bridge that spans the gap between the textual world and our own”).

b) *Identify spheres of life and particular circumstances where the theological truth(s) of the text (i.e., its subject matter) could be embodied and actualized.* (Note: While advocating for changed “actions” is good, these may be a sham or at most superficial, unless transformation is rooted at a deeper level—in a changed “way of seeing” ourselves, others, and God.)

c) *Develop and test pragmatic applications in your life and in your faith community so that the theological message of the text is proclaimed in an invitational and clear way.*

d) *Surround the whole process, from reading the text to its application, in prayer.*

## APPENDIX C: EVALUATION TEMPLATE

EVALUATION of *Exegetical Paper* for \_\_\_\_\_ (student)

_____ APPROPRIATENESS (re: compliance with assignment criteria)		
irrelevant/unrelated/improper	[1 <-----> 20]	suitable/fitting/apropos
_____ ARGUMENTATION (re: development of topic/arrangement of critique)		
rambles/disjointed/illogical	[1 <-----> 20]	reasonable/coherent/sequential
_____ CLARITY (re: style of writing)		
broken/obscure/repetitive	[1 <-----> 20]	flowing/lucid/succinct
_____ COMPREHENSIVENESS (re: coverage of topic or depth of analysis)		
superficial/sketchy/shallow	[1 <-----> 10]	thorough/extensive/deep
_____ CREATIVITY (re: reader reception)		
ordinary/average/routine	[1 <-----> 10]	novel/fresh/innovative
_____ FORM (re: spelling, grammar, diction, and citation conventions)		
incorrect/sloppy/inappropriate	[1 <-----> 10]	correct/accurate/appropriate
_____ CARE (re: quality of presentation)		
untidy/illegible/distracting	[1 <-----> 10]	tidy/legible/impressive

\_\_\_\_\_ /100 = \_\_\_\_\_ (reader)

Note: Late assignments will be penalized 2% for each day (or part thereof) after due date.