

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

Biblical Interpretation 1

BI-505 (2 units)

Spring 2007 @ MBBS: Fresno

Tuesdays 8:30 – 11:30 AM on the
following dates (only): Jan. 9, 16, 30
Feb. 6, 20, 27; Mar. 27, Apr. 3, 17, 24

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NOTE:

- This is a tentative syllabus, subject to some revision.
- This course is heavily based on the course as taught by Jon Isaak, who is on sabbatical this semester and whose material I am borrowing.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the student to the inductive method of reading the Bible. Special attention is given to the following exegetical topics: context, grammar, semantics, genre, contextualization, and appropriation. Students will do a series of exegetical and hermeneutical exercises applying the inductive method to the study of selected biblical texts. *This course is recommended prior to all other NT and OT courses, except language courses.*

COURSE ASSUMPTIONS

In the Christian tradition, the nature of the Bible is closely related to the notion of divine inspiration. Fundamentally, inspiration suggests that the biblical text has a special character. However, this uniqueness is not found at the literary level—as a literary product, the Bible is just like any other. Instead, the uniqueness is epistemological. Christians understand the Bible to be ultimately God's message to the People of God and to all of creation. The Christian confession is that Scripture gives unique witness to God's people-gathering interventions through the course of human history, culminating in Jesus of Nazareth, in whom the face of God is most clearly seen. For the Christian community, this confession implies that the Bible functions as the church's authoritative guide for life and practice. Thus, the Bible is the most valuable text ever produced. Troubling and comforting, the Bible remains worth listening to, worth asking questions of, and worth being shaped by. Given this special character, I believe that developing sound principles and practices of biblical interpretation should receive our primary attention.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through a variety of exegetical/hermeneutical activities, textbook readings, presentations, and class discussions, students will interact personally and critically with the inductive method of Bible study. At the completion of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Articulate and explain: a) the four basic tasks of biblical exegesis/hermeneutics, b) the exegetical and hermeneutical guidelines for studying each of the nine literary genres represented in the Bible, and c) the different kinds of language used in the Bible (*Knowledge Objective*).
2. Confess and appropriate: a) a greater appreciation for the artistry and significance of the biblical text as literature (human) and as Scripture (divine), and b) a deeper sensitivity to the

challenge that God's people in every generation have to discern together the always-present Word of God as revealed in the ancient prophetic and apostolic witness (*Values Objective*).

3. Perform and execute: a) careful biblical exegesis—establishing the parameters (beginning and end) of the textual unit (*pericope*), attending to the character of its genre and language, outlining its grammatical and logical structure, exploring the semantic range of its key words, determining its central thrust, discerning the theological vision that drives it, appreciating the “symphonic effect” as its voice plays in concert with the other voices of the Christian Bible, and b) creative biblical hermeneutical reflection—evaluating the temporal and cultural gap between the biblical world represented by the textual unit and our own, considering what effect it has had in other Christian communities over time and across cultures, developing imaginative analogies and metaphorical bridges that can place our contemporary faith community within the theological vision articulated by the biblical text (*Skills Objective*).

MBBS PROGRAM GOALS

This course contributes to the larger goals of the Seminary program 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 in the hermeneutical task of exploring ways that the symbolic world of the ancient text can inform, form, and reform the cultural norms which 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

A contemporary translation of the Bible that aims at “dynamic equivalence” (e.g., *NRSV*, *TNIV*, *NIV*) is required. For comparison, it is often useful to consult more literal translations (e.g., *NASB*) as well as the single-translator versions that are more paraphrastic (e.g., Peterson's *Message*). This kind of comparative study can be facilitated by the use of either a “parallel” Bible (e.g., *The Precise Parallel New Testament* [Oxford, 1995], *The Contemporary Parallel New Testament* [Oxford, 1998]) or a Bible software program (e.g., *Bible Works*, *WordSearch*, *Logos*, *Quick Verse*, *PC Study Bible*, *Accordance*).

Reading the following textbooks is required. They are available for purchase @ Pacific Bookshop and on two-hour Reserve @ *Hiebert Library*.

Ewert, David. *How to Understand the Bible*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2000.

Fee, Gordon D. & Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981, 1993, 2003.

Wald, Oletta. *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1956, 1975, 2002.

Besides the above textbooks, I have used numerous other resources in developing this course. The following items are listed to enable you to read further on the ideas I present.

Barr, James. *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Brueggeman, Walter. *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.

Caird, George B. *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1980.

Carson, D.A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984.

Dyck, Elmer, ed. *The Act of Bible Reading*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991.

Schertz, Mary & Perry Yoder. *Seeing the Text: Exegesis for Students of Greek and Hebrew*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.

Shillington, V. George. *Reading the Sacred Text: An Introduction to Biblical Studies*. London: T & T Clark, 2002.

Yoder, Perry. *From Word to Life: A Guide to the Art of Bible Study*. Scotdale, PA: Herald Press, 1982.

* **NOTE:** The following is based on meeting 13 times. Since we will meet only 10 times, the division of material into class sessions will be revised. The due dates, however, have already been assigned.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

(Meeting #1) *Introduction to Biblical Studies for a Missional Church—Part 1*

-study Matthew 6.24-34

-outline the concept of inductive Bible study and the basic procedures

-discuss the philosophical challenges of doing biblical studies in an increasingly postmodern world

-library tour (online catalogue, ATLA, and Reference Section)

-post-meeting assignment:

*read Fee & Stuart chpts 1 and 2, Wald chpts 1 thru 4, and Ewert pp 15-37

*respond to study questions (to be distributed)

*skim all Scripture text options (see learning activity #2 below) and send me an email noting your top two choices

Jan. 15 Top two Scripture selections due

(Meeting #2) *Introduction to Biblical Studies for a Missional Church—Part 2*

-study Matthew 4.1-11

-explore the challenges of discerning a normative interpretive method (is there one?)

-locate the “meaning center” of a text (is it located with the author? text? or audience?)

-set out an epistemology of “inspiration”—clarity, sufficiency, authority—and the roles of teacher and community

-confirm texts for study and discussion groups

-post-meeting assignment:

*skim the whole epistle in which your text is located (genre = Letter)

*read Fee & Stuart chpts 3 and 4 with Ewert pp 175-180, and Ewert pp 38-46

*respond to study questions

(Meeting #3) *How to Determine the Parameters of a Textual Unit*

-define a textual unit or *pericope*

-list clues to watch for when determining the parameters of a textual unit

-practice establishing the textual units in Gen 12 and Amos 2

-note: *Readings Review Lab #1* (5:00-6:00 PM) Optional

-post-meeting assignment:

*skim Ruth 1-4 (genre = OT narrative)

*read Wald chpts 5 thru 8, Fee & Stuart chpt 5 with Ewert pp 140-144, and Ewert pp 47-59

*respond to study questions

*establish parameters of your *pericope* and list observations

(Meeting #4) *How to Make a Structural Outline*

-define literary structure

-list clues to watch for when determining the structure of a *pericope*

-outline the steps involved in making structural outline

-practice identifying “subsections” of the textual unit and giving them “functional” labels

-practice outlining the structure of Genesis 12 and Amos 2

-discuss/share in groups the rationale for the delimitation of your textual unit

-post-meeting assignment:

*skim Acts 1-9 (genre = Greco-Roman history)

*read Fee & Stuart chpt 6 with Ewert pp 169-175, and Ewert pp 60-69

*respond to study questions

*prepare draft of structural outline with functional labels for your textual unit

(Meeting #5) *How to do a Word Study—Part 1*

-give rationale for doing word-studies

-outline the basic steps in doing a word-study (see *Appendix B*)

-practice selecting and doing word-study research in Genesis 12 and Amos 2

-discuss/share in groups the structural outline of your textual unit

-post-meeting assignment:

*skim Mark 1-16 (genre = Greco-Roman biography)

*read Fee & Stuart chpt 7 with Ewert pp 154-162, and Ewert pp 70-84

*respond to study questions

*complete final draft of *Text Profile*

*identify several key words for further study in your textual unit

Jan. 23 Text Profile due

(Meeting #6) *How to do a Word Study—Part 2*

-review fallacies common to Word-Study research

-introduce the challenges of sorting out the manuscript tradition (textual variants)

- discuss/share in groups your Word-Study research
- note: *Readings Review Lab #2* (5:00-6:00 PM) Optional

-post-meeting assignment:

- *skim Luke 12.13-21; 15.11-32; 16.1-13; 18.9-14 (genre = Parable)
- *read Fee & Stuart chpt 8 with Ewert pp 163-169, and Ewert pp 85-98
- *respond to study questions
- *prepare draft of Word-Study

(Meeting #7) *How to Locate a Text in its Literary/Historical Context—Part 1*

- explore the role of literary genre for interpretation
- outline the steps for locating a pericope in its literary context
- locate Gen 12 in its larger literary context
- discuss/share in groups your draft of Word-Study

-post-meeting assignment:

- *skim Ex 19-24 (genre = Law)
- *read Fee & Stuart chpt 9, Wald chpts 9 thru 12, and Ewert pp 187-223
- *respond to study questions
- *complete final draft of *Word-Study*
- *prepare a draft of a Horizontal Chart of your text's larger literary context

Feb. 13 Word-Study due

(Meeting #8) *How to Locate a text in its Literary/Historical Context—Part 2*

- explore the role of a text's socio-historical context for interpretation
- outline the steps for locating a *pericope* in its historical context
- locate Amos 2 in its historical context
- discuss/share in groups draft of Horizontal Chart of your text's literary context
- distribute copies of three chapters from Caird, *Language and Imagery of the Bible*

-post-meeting assignment:

- *skim Micah 1-7 (genre = Prophecy)
- *read Fee & Stuart chpt 10 with Ewert pp 150-153, Caird pp 201-218, and Ewert pp 125-139
- *respond to study questions
- *begin library research on the historical setting of your text (dictionary readings, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* and *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, ATLA search, journal articles)

(Meeting #9) *How to Bridge the Temporal Gap from Then to Now—Part 1*

- explore the problem/promise of the temporal gap between then and now
- outline steps for bridging the temporal gap
- develop imaginative analogies and bridges in order to access a text's theological idea
- practice determining the underlying theological idea in 1 Cor 14
- discuss/share in groups your research findings on the historical setting
- note: *Readings Review Lab #3* (5:00-6:00 PM) Optional

-post-meeting assignment:

- *skim Psalms 3, 138, 8, 135, 2, 36, 11 (genre = Poem/Hymn)
- *read Fee & Stuart chpt 11 with Ewert pp 148-149, Caird pp 219-242, and Ewert pp 99-124
- *respond to study questions
- *complete final draft of *Literary/Historical Context*

*make preliminary attempt to articulate your textual unit's underlying theology

Feb. 27 Literary/Historical Context due

(Meeting #10) *How to Bridge the Temporal Gap from Then to Now—Part 2*

- determine the “modes of discourse” in which the text speaks (i.e., rule, principle, paradigm, and symbolic world) and decide how it will function for contemporary appropriation
- determine what role (if any) other sources of authority (e.g., tradition, reason, and experience) play in the text's application
- discuss/share in groups your preliminary reflections on your text's driving theology and strategies for bridging the temporal gap

-post-meeting assignment:

- *skim Song of Songs 1-8 (genre = Wisdom)
- *read Fee & Stuart chpt 12 with Ewert pp 144-148, and Caird pp 243-271
- *respond to study questions
- *prepare draft of Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections

(Meeting #11) *How to Design Scenarios for Living the Text*

- examine the particular challenges of thinking theologically in the emerging postmodern context
- explore the missional church's task of proclaiming the biblical text as “counterdrama” in which we hear old material freshly voiced that continues to challenge the cultural status-quo
- design scenarios for pragmatic implementation and actualization (i.e., “walk on the bridge”)
- discuss/share in groups several pragmatic implementation scenarios for your text
- note: *Readings Review Lab #4* (5:00-6:00 PM) Optional

-post-meeting assignment:

- *skim Rev 4-15 (genre = Apocalyptic)
- *read Fee & Stuart chpt 13 with Ewert pp 180-186, and Wald chpts 13 and 14
- *respond to study questions
- *complete final draft of the *Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections*
- *prepare for in-class exam on course readings

Apr. 3 Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections due

(Meeting #12) *Exam on Course Readings*

- do in-class exam on course readings (Bible, Fee & Stuart, Wald, Caird, and Ewert)

-post-meeting assignment:

- *revise and edit draft of Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper (see *Appendix B*)

(Meeting #13) *Conclusion to Biblical Studies for a Missional Church*

- reflect on insights and learnings from the course and your paper
- complete course evaluation

-post-meeting assignment:

- *complete final draft of *Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper*

Apr. 24 Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper due

LEARNING ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS/EXPECTATIONS

The assignments are designed to promote the course and degree objectives listed above. There are seven learning activities, described below. The second through the sixth combine to yield by the end of the course an exegetical/hermeneutical study of a selected biblical text. The minimum time requirement and the percentage of the final grade for each activity are listed below. If the following assignment descriptions look overwhelming, please be assured that they will be carefully explained in class as we go through the semester. First, I list my expectations of you and then, second, I list what you can expect from me.

I expect that each student will:

1. Prepare for, attend, and participate in class discussions. Consult the *Course Schedule* (above) for the texts to be read and the exercises to be completed (as well as the assignment due dates). Be prepared to contribute to the class discussion with your discoveries, evaluation, and reflection. This is an important part of the learning experience. After all the assignments have been graded, your final score will be adjusted down 3% for each “un-made-up” absence.

Keep up with the weekly Bible readings. On the final exam you will be asked whether you completed the weekly Bible readings. These readings are coordinated with the treatments of the nine biblical genres by Fee & Stuart and Ewert.

Compile a set of textbook study notes. Each week several questions will be emailed to you that aim to guide your reading and check your mastery of the key points presented by the textbooks. I suggest that you print out these email questions and jot down your answers in the space provided as you read the textbook selections each week. These pages should become good study notes. They will help you prepare for the final exam. Be sure you can answer each of the textbook study questions; the multiple-choice section of the final exam is based on these questions.

I will offer four *Readings Review Labs* immediately following our regular class time (see *Course Schedule* for dates). These will be devoted to reviewing the textbook questions that you found difficult and discussing any concerns arising from our class meetings. Attendance is optional.

Class participation time requirement = 13 mtgs × 2 hrs/mtg = 26 hrs

Textbook reading time requirement = 635 pp × 2 min/p = 21 hrs

Weekly Question preparation = 11 question sets × 30 min/question set = 6 hrs

Attendance Deduction (3% for each un-made-up absence)

2. Begin the exegetical process on a selected biblical text (see choices below) by making a three-page Text Profile. Page #1 is devoted to *Observations*. List observations resulting from a close reading of the unit in several different translations. Include in your observations a note regarding your rationale for delimiting the parameters of your textual unit as you have (i.e., where it begins and where it ends). Page #2 is for the *Structural Outline*. Make a structural outline showing the flow of the argument of the textual unit. Attach functional labels to the left of each sub-section that indicate just what each sub-section is doing (e.g., the label “assertion” indicates that the sub-section “asserts” something). Page #3 is designated for *Questions*. List questions that probe for meaning, significance, and implications. These questions are the first steps toward interpretation and appropriation. The three pages combine to make a “chart” or “profile.” Note: The *Text Profile* is not a “finished product,” but rather a “working draft” that provides a “space” where

everything can be seen at once and from where further reflection can continue (see samples distributed in class).

Choose two of the following text fragments and rank them as to your 1st and 2nd choice. In the interests of equity and pedagogy, I have selected texts from Paul's epistles that are all somewhat controversial and theologically challenging (Note: we will work on OT texts during our class sessions). On the basis of your choices, I will assign you to study groups where you will share, listen, challenge, and help each other work through the same text. Hopefully, I will be able to give each of you your 1st choice.

1Thes 5.2; 1Cor 7.26; 1Cor 11.10; 2Cor 5.16; Col 3.18-19; Rom 1.26-27; Rom 11.29; Rom 14.3

The above text selections are NOT textual units. Each one is merely an isolated fragment of a verse or two, which must still be located within its larger textual unit. Your task is to establish the beginning and end of the textual unit. Remember, you cannot automatically use the chapter/verse divisions or paragraph breaks in your English version. While often helpful, these are decisions made by the translators/editors and must be tested. The reasons for the divisions are not always clear or defensible. You must be able to defend the parameters of your textual unit, even if you decide to go along with the paragraph division in your English version.

Text Profile research and writing time requirement = 9 hrs

Value of final grade = 10%

3. Prepare a Word-Study of a key word in your textual unit. Select a word that is potentially significant for understanding the thrust of the unit (e.g., a word that is repeated, translated differently in various English versions, theologically important, ambiguous, or debated). You may need to begin researching several words before settling on the most promising one. Consult a concordance that has a mechanism (like Strong's numbering system) to identify every occurrence of the underlying Hebrew/Greek word (e.g., *The Word Study Concordance* 1978 [BS 2305.W53 REF] or *The Hebrew-English Concordance of the OT* 1998 [BS 1121.K65 REF]) or a Computer Bible Software program with search engine (e.g., *WordSearch* by NavPress, *Scholar's Library* by Logos, *PC Study Bible* by BibleSoft, *QuickVerse* by Parsons, or *BibleWorks* by Hermentika). Carefully examine and classify every occurrence of the Greek word in the NT. Write up your findings following the template given in *Appendix A*. Suggested length is 2 pages (see sample distributed in class).

Word-Study research and writing time requirement = 6 hrs

Value of final grade = 10%

4. Compile a study of the literary and the historical context of your textual unit. Do library research that is devoted to placing or to locating your textual unit within its larger context—both on a literary level and on a historical level. This assignment has two parts.

a) The literary context. Below, I have provided a larger literary context for each isolated text fragment. 1Thes 5.2 within the larger context of 1Thes 4.1-5.28; 1Cor 7.26 within the larger context of 1Cor 7.1-9.27; 1Cor 11.10 within the larger context of 1Cor 11.2-14.40; 2Cor 5.16 within the larger context of 2 Cor 4.1-6.13; Col 3.18-19 within the larger context of Col 3.1-4.18;

Rom 1.26-27 within the larger context of Rom 1.18-3.31; Rom 11.29 within the larger context of Rom 9.1-11.36; Rom 14.3 within the larger context of Rom 12.1-14.23

Your task is to determine how your textual unit (which you established in your first assignment) relates to the other blocks of text in the larger literary context that I've provided. Begin by establishing the beginning and the end of each of the other textual units within the larger literary context. Remember, you cannot automatically use the chapter/verse divisions or paragraph breaks in your English version. You must be able to justify the delimitation of each textual unit, even if you decide to go along with the divisions provided in your English version.

Identify the thrust of each textual unit and give it a title. Then attach functional labels to the left of each sub-section nested within each textual unit. Record your decisions by setting out the larger literary context in a horizontal chart, complete with all the textual units identified and sub-divided (see sample distributed in class). In order to fit it all on one page, you may omit the actual text and instead insert brief summaries of the content of each sub-section. Be sure to include your assessment of the Characteristics and Lessons that emerge when the unit is viewed within its larger literary context.

b) The historical context. Consult the articles in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1992 (BS 440.A54 REF) and *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* 1993 (BS 2650.2.D53 REF) that address the Epistle in which your text is found. Summarize the essential elements of the historical context. Make note of good quotes. Copy them exactly. Note the page numbers and the author's name (see end of dictionary article). Then use *American Theological Library Association* (ATLA) on-line database at the Hiebert Library to locate five recent journal articles on your textual unit. Note the bibliographic information and be sure to select ones that are part of the Hiebert Library collection. Read three articles that appear to relate most to the text's historical context (you may need to go back to the ATLA to get more titles). Summarize and assess the author's argument. Make note of good quotes. Copy them exactly. Note the page numbers.

Organize your research discoveries and write a short report describing the historical context of your text. Be sure to give evidence of consulting the two dictionaries and three journal articles noted above by citing them appropriately in your paper. Suggested length is 2 pages (see sample distributed in class).

Literary/Historical Context research and writing time requirement = 14 hrs
(both *Horizontal Chart* and *Historical Context Report*)
Value of final grade = 10%

5. Write a theological/hermeneutical reflection that wrestles with the contemporary appropriation of your textual unit. Up to this point, the exercises and activities have been geared to reading the text "closely" or describing what the text "says." This is the Descriptive Task (i.e., defining the textual unit, establishing the text, analyzing the structure of the text, and exegeting the text). It is now time to begin the "constructive" stage—what the text "means" in the context where it is being appropriated. This includes three tasks—the Synthetic, the Hermeneutical, and the Pragmatic tasks (this last one is part of the final assignment).

In this fifth activity, you will address both Synthetic Task and the Hermeneutical Task. Begin by

identifying the theme, principle, or idea that drives or undergirds your textual unit and try to put it one sentence. Be especially aware as to how the voice of your text plays in concert with other related voices in the Christian Bible. Consult at least the two commentaries on *Reserve* at the *Hiebert Library* in order to test your thinking with the larger community. Organize your findings and write a short report (no more than a page) using proper citation form. This concludes the Synthetic Task.

Begin the shift to the Hermeneutical Task by assessing the cultural/world-view gap between the biblical world and your own time. Determine what kind of hermeneutical translation is necessary in order for your faith community to be “gripped” by the text and the theological message to which it gives witness. Decide on the text’s “mode of discourse” (e.g., rule, principle, paradigm, or symbolic world) and decide how it will function for contemporary appropriation. Give your rationale. Discern the role of other sources of authority (e.g., tradition, reason, experience) in sorting out the text’s contemporary significance. Finally, explore imaginative analogies and metaphorical bridges that could place your contemporary faith community within the theological vision articulated by the text. Organize your reflections and write a short report (no more than a page) using proper citation form.

Note: this step is not to be confused with *Application* (that is still coming!). In Hermeneutical step we are “constructing the bridge” from the ancient text to our world. In the Pragmatic Task (or Application) we plan how to “walk over the bridge.” Suggested length for the whole assignment is 2 pages (see sample distributed in class).

Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections research and writing time requirement = 6 hrs
Value of final grade = 10%

6. Write an exegetical/hermeneutical paper on your textual unit. This assignment provides an opportunity to bring together all of the exegetical and hermeneutical skills learned through the term. Begin your paper with an autobiographical introduction that raises a vocational, social, ministry, or personal issue of significance to you. Then work through the four basic tasks of biblical exegesis as outlined in *Appendix B* in order to address this particular issue from the standpoint of the selected text.

The exegetical/hermeneutical template (*Appendix B*) is a generic one that can be used with any text and for any application (e.g., teaching, preaching, personal study, etc.). Note: It is unlikely that you will be able to complete Step 1. b) ii), which is to assess the manuscript variants and decide on the “best” reading, until after you have completed your biblical language study. However, all the other steps you should now be able to do.

Organize your paper as follows: Introduction (½ page), Descriptive Task (6 pages), Synthetic Task (1 page), Hermeneutical Task (2 pages), Pragmatic Task (1 page), and Conclusion (½ page), briefly summarizing your findings, referring to the context described in your Introduction.

For this final assignment there should not be new library research required. You are encouraged to use your previous assignments for writing the final paper (i.e., *Text Profile*, *Word Study*, *Literary/Historical Context* combine for the Descriptive Task and *Theological/Hermeneutical Reflection* is the source for the Synthetic Task and the Hermeneutical Task). See the document

called, *Visual guide to final Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper* (to be distributed), for a picture of how the final paper is to be constructed.

Note: to earn top grades (i.e., “A” range), it will *not* be acceptable to simply “stitch” together your four previous assignments and turn it in. The final exegetical/hermeneutical paper must be a re-working and synthesis of the material you have collected, written, and processed over the semester in the interaction with your group. You will likely have to discard material that is less relevant for the final paper. Plus, you will have new material to add, as you have not yet written on the Pragmatic Task. I will be grading you on the overall impact of the paper. See the Evaluation Template (*Appendix C*) for grading criteria. I will distribute a copy of a sample student paper so that you can see how one person completed the task. Suggested length is 10 pages (single spaced) or 15 pages (at 1.5 lines).

Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper editing and writing time requirement = 12 hrs
Value of final grade = 30%

7. Write an in-class exam to gauge your grasp of the course readings. The purpose of the exam is to check your comprehension of the course readings. The exam includes two parts:

Part A: Bible readings. I will ask you to indicate how much of the assigned Bible readings you have completed (12.5% of the exam).

Part B: Textbook readings. I have prepared a series of 49 multiple-choice questions designed to test your mastery of the content developed in Fee & Stuart, Wald, Ewert, and Caird. All questions are drawn from the study questions (87.5% of the exam).

In-class exam date = Wednesday, Nov. 29
Value of final grade = 30%

Total activity/assignment load = 100 hrs

It is only fair and right that you have equally high expectations of me as well. My commitment to you is that I will endeavor to:

1. Join you in our mutual aim of encountering more deeply the disturbing and inspiring presence of God to which Scripture gives witness. While I function as “supervisor” in guiding your reading and writing, I am committed to participate with you as a “co-journeyer” in our common quest to bring/nourish life and healing in a broken world—which is the mission of God.

2. Foster a learning community atmosphere during our sessions where ideas can be discussed and explored freely without fear of ridicule or attack. Many people have thought deeply on the subject of biblical interpretation. While each of these “visions” or “constructions” is not equally valid or defensible, each deserves to be heard and explored within the evaluative process.

3. Provide careful and helpful feedback. I believe that it is pedagogically most helpful to have constructive criticism throughout the learning process. Therefore, I am open to visiting with you about your writing projects so that you can test, clarify, and expand your ideas. Stop by my office and let’s talk. I also aim to give useful feedback on the papers that you turn in and to do so in a timely fashion.

SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT DATES

Monday	Jan. 15	Text selection due
Tuesday	Jan. 23	Text Profile due
Tuesday	Feb. 13	Word-Study due
Tuesday	Feb. 27	Literary/Historical Context due
Tuesday	Apr. 3	Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections due
Wednesday	Apr. 17	In-Class Exam on course readings
Wednesday	Apr. 24	Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper due

SUMMARY OF GRADING SCHEME

Text Profile	10%	} 100%
Word-Study	10%	
Literary/Historical Context	10%	
Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections	10%	
In-Class Exam	30%	
Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper	30%	
Deduction for un-made-up classes (see “notes” below).....		

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 first four assignments (i.e., Observation Chart, Word-Study, Literary/Historical Context, and Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections) will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Work that does not meet expectations is considered “incomplete” and will be returned for reworking until it is acceptable. The final paper will be assessed according to the following categories: appropriateness, clarity, comprehensiveness, creativity, argumentation, form, and care (see *Appendix C*).

The final exegetical/hermeneutical paper will not be graded until all the four previous assignments have been satisfactorily completed. In other words, the final paper is not considered “submitted” until I’ve “signed off” on your previous work. Please realize this could result in a late penalty for your final paper (see below).

All assignments must be completed to be eligible to earn a passing grade for the course.

Please note 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>).

3. Credit/No Credit. Students who apply and are approved to take the course on a “Credit/No Credit” basis and expect to earn a “pass” must complete each assignment as described above, earn an overall average of $\geq 70\%$, and have no un-made-up absences (see notes below on Attendance).

4. Due dates. Students are expected to submit written assignments on time. Late credit/no credit assignments will be graded down $\frac{1}{2}$ a point (out of the 10 allotted) for each day (or part thereof) after the due date. Late exegetical/hermeneutical papers 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, which 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.

5. Attendance: Students are expected to attend and participate in class. In this sequential, skill-building course, each class is important. Each absence will result in a 3% deduction from the final grade. However, students may propose various ways to “make up” an absence (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.

6. Formatting specifications. Any of the three standard citation styles is acceptable (Chicago, APA, MLA). Choose one and follow it consistently. Consult *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Hendrickson, 1999) which is in the Reference section of the *Hiebert Library* (Ref PN 147.S26) for examples of how to cite dictionary articles, journal articles, monographs, commentaries, books in series, websites, etc. An online version of the *SBL Handbook* is available at http://www.sbl-site.org/Publications/Publications_PublishingWithSBL.aspx (click on *Student Supplement for SBL Handbook of Style* under the “Resources” section). Slade’s, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses*, 11th ed. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000) is also a useful guide.

APPENDIX A: WORD-STUDY TEMPLATE

Note: Adapted from the template prepared by Allen Guenther and used with permission.

1. WORD IDENTIFICATION

a) Give the *English transliteration* of the Hebrew/Greek word and cite the textual unit in which it is found.

b) *Parse the word* (as completely as you can) giving its grammatical characteristics (e.g., part of speech, root, tense/aspect, voice, mood, person, number, etc.).

c) *Note implications (if any) for the meaning in this context* drawn from the parsing data.

2. FREQUENCY AND DISTRIBUTION

a) *Indicate the number of times the word occurs in Scripture.* Count all the occurrences of the root word, including all of its cognate forms (i.e., as a verb, noun, or adjective). Are there any patterns? Comment.

b) *Note the distribution of the word in Scripture.* Are there specific genres where the word appears more/less often? Comment.

3. MEANING

a) *Prepare a “working draft” listing each occurrence along with its meaning.* Work your way through the list by reading each occurrence in its biblical context. Infer the meaning of the word as it is used in each particular context. Do not automatically copy the translation from one English version. Compare various translations and decide on the word or phrase that best captures the meaning of the Hebrew/Greek word in English. Are there distinct groupings of meaning emerging?

b) *Rearrange your working draft list by grouping the meanings into similar usage categories.* Select several representative examples for each category from your exhaustive list.

c) *Organize the meaning categories with representative examples* for presentation in the final draft form of your word-study. Sometimes the semantic field of a word can be arranged using categories that can be plotted at various points on a continuum from literal to figurative. Sometimes other arrangements are more suitable. Determine which presentation form is best for your semantic analysis.

d) *Summarize in a few sentences various meanings of the word within Scripture.*

4. MEANING IN CONTEXT

a) *Select the most appropriate meaning for the textual unit you are studying.* Be careful to consider both the immediate and larger literary contexts.

b) *Justify your decision using the contextual clues* (literary and historical) as well as the grammatical clues noted above in the parsing of the word.

5. VERIFICATION

a) *Compare your decision with the one taken in other translations.* Check those that are more literal as well as those that are more paraphrastic. Note agreements and disagreements. Comment

b) *Compare your decision with the one taken by the standard lexicons* (e.g., *Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and other Early Christian Literature* 2000 [PA 881.D27 REF]) and theological wordbooks (e.g., *Theological WordBook of the OT* 1980 [BS 440.T49 REF] or *Theological Dictionary of the NT* 1964 [PA 881.K513 REF] or *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament—Abridged in One Volume*, ed. G.W. Bromiley [PA 881.T4713 REF]). Note agreements and disagreements. Comment.

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 and contemporary worlds.*

*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/Hermeneutical 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.