

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

# Biblical Interpretation 1

BI-505 (2 units)

Spring 2008 @ MBBS: Fresno

Wednesday 9:30-11:30 AM

Jan. 30—May 14, 2008

No class on Mar. 5 (Module Week)

No classes on Apr. 23, 30, May 7

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## 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 a literary-historical-canonical 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. Master 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. Coordinate 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 and the intertextual links—both internal and external, 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, and suggesting practical ways to embody and appropriate that vision (*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 (MBBS desired outcome #1: *Demonstrate commitment to live as a disciple of Jesus in Christian community*).
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 faith communities (MBBS desired outcome #2: *Articulate commitment to a biblical theological Christian perspective*).
3. Nurture healthy interpersonal relationships and effective communication patterns in the context of the learning community (MBBS desired outcome #3: *Interpret diverse cultural contexts of ministry using theological perspectives integrated with social scientific approaches*).
4. Develop and practice skills in sound biblical exegesis and interpretation for preaching, teaching, social advocacy, personal enrichment, and our life together (MBBS desired outcome #4: *Practice skills in pastoral and educational leadership*).

## 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 through any bookseller, including the Pacific Bookshop, and on two-hour Reserve @ *Hiebert Library*.

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

- Fee, Gordon D. & Douglas Stuart. 2003. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Wald, Oletta. 2002. *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, newly rev. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress.

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. 1961. *The Semantics of Biblical Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brueggeman, Walter. 1993. *Texts under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Caird, George B. 1980. *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*. London: Gerald Duckworth.
- Carson, Don A. 1984. *Exegetical Fallacies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Dyck, Elmer, ed. 1996. *The Act of Bible Reading*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Osborne, Grant R. 2006. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, revised and expanded. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.
- Schertz, Mary & Perry Yoder. 2001. *Seeing the Text: Exegesis for Students of Greek and Hebrew*. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Shillington, V. George. 2002. *Reading the Sacred Text: An Introduction to Biblical Studies*. London: T & T Clark.
- Yoder, Perry. 1982. *From Word to Life: A Guide to the Art of Bible Study*. Scottdale, PA: Herald Press.

## COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

### **Jan. 30 (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 (uploaded to class page on seminary website)
- \*skim all Scripture text options (see learning activity #2 below) and send me an email (due Tuesday, Feb. 5) noting your top two choices

### **Feb. 5** Top two Scripture selections due

### **Feb. 6 (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

**Feb. 13 (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* (9:00-9:30 AM) 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

**Feb. 20 (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

**Feb. 27 (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 A*)
- 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* (due Friday, Feb. 29)
- \*identify several key words for further study in your textual unit

**Feb. 29 Text Profile due**

**Mar. 5 (No Class) *Module Week***

**Mar. 12 (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* (9:00-9:30 AM) 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

**Mar. 19 (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 Exod 19-24 (genre = Law)
- \*read Fee & Stuart chpt 9, Wald chpts 9 thru 12, and Ewert pp 187-207
- \*respond to study questions
- \*complete final draft of *Word-Study* (due Friday, Mar. 21)
- \*prepare a draft of a Horizontal Chart of your text's larger literary context

**Mar. 21 Word-Study due**

**Mar. 26 (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

**-post-meeting assignment:**

- \*skim Micah 1-7 (genre = Prophecy)
- \*read Fee & Stuart chpt 10 with Ewert pp 150-153, 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)

**Apr. 2 (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* (9:00-9:30 AM) 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, and Ewert pp 99-124
- \*respond to study questions
- \*complete final draft of *Literary/Historical Context* (due Friday, Apr. 4)
- \*make preliminary attempt to articulate your textual unit's underlying theology

**Apr. 4** Literary/Historical Context due

**Apr. 9 (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 Ewert pp 208-223
- \*respond to study questions
- \*prepare draft of Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections

**Apr. 16 (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* (9:00-9:30 AM) 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* (due Friday, Apr. 18)
- \*choose another biblical text from a different genre (see Learning Activities below) and complete second exegetical paper (due Friday, May 16)
- \*prepare for in-class exam (scheduled for our last meeting on Wednesday, May 14)

**Apr. 18** Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections due

**Apr. 23** (No Class)

**Apr. 30** (No Class)

**May 7** (No Class)

**May 14 (Meeting #12)** *Exam on Course Readings and Exegetical Method*

- do in-class exam on course readings (Bible, Fee & Stuart, Wald, and Ewert) and demonstrate skill in exegetical methods

**-post-meeting assignment:**

- \*complete exegetical paper (see *Appendix B*)

**May 16** Second exegetical paper due**LEARNING ACTIVITIES/ASSIGNMENTS/EXPECTATIONS**

The assignments are designed to promote the course and degree objectives listed above. The expectations, minimum time requirements, and the percentages of the final grade for each activity are listed below. First, I list my expectations of students and then, second, I list what students 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 on the assigned reading will be uploaded to the class page on the seminary website. The questions aim to guide your reading and check your mastery of the key points presented by the textbooks. I suggest that you save these questions to your computer and note 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 before 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 = 12 mtgs × 2 hrs/mtg = 24 hrs

Textbook reading time = 589 pp × 2 min/pp = 20 hrs

Weekly questions 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 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> choice. In the interests of equity and pedagogy, I have selected texts from Paul’s epistles that are all somewhat controversial and theologically challenging. During our class sessions we will work on OT texts. Later in the course you will have a chance to work on another biblical genre. On the basis of your choices from the Pauline Letters, 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 = 9 hrs

Date due = Friday, Feb. 29

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 or GK 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, *Pradis* by Zondervan, 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 = 6 hrs

Date due = Friday, Mar. 21

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.

**Part #1: 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 have 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 subdivided (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.

**Part #2: The historical context.** Consult the articles in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)* 1992 (BS 440.A54 REF) and *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters (DPHL)* 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 both dictionaries (*ABD* and *DPHL*) and three journal articles by citing them appropriately in your paper. Suggested length is 2 pages (see sample distributed in class).

Literary/Historical context research and writing time = 14 hrs

Date due = Friday, Apr. 4 (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.

In this 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. Thus, both the Theological and Hermeneutical reflections combine to make a two-page assignment (see sample distributed in class).

Note: the Hermeneutical task is not to be confused with *Application* or the Pragmatic task, which is still to be completed. 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.”

Theological/Hermeneutical reflections research and writing time = 6 hrs

Date due = Friday, Apr. 18

Value of final grade = 10%

6. Write an exegetical/hermeneutical paper on *another* textual unit from a biblical genre *other than “letters.”* This assignment provides an opportunity to bring together all of the exegetical and hermeneutical skills learned through the semester and apply them to a text of your choice—one that you have not worked on before. Choose a genre other than “letters” and proceed as follows: begin your paper with an introduction to the issues raised by your textual unit. Be sure to clearly state the problem or question you are going to address. Often, situating your exegesis within a vocational, social, ministerial, or personal context of significance to you provides a good introduction. Then work through the four basic tasks of biblical exegesis as outlined in *Appendix B*. Be sure to note when you are transitioning from one task to another.

Organize your paper roughly 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). In the Conclusion, briefly summarize your findings, referring to the context described in your Introduction. See *Appendix C* for a summary of what I am looking for.

Note: To earn a grade in the “A” range, (among other things) papers will give evidence of three things: 1) a well-conceived and executed paper with clear evidence of having addressed each of the four exegetical tasks, 2) extensive research with citations from Dictionaries, monographs, commentaries, and academic journals (use ATLA to locate these resources), and 3) a well-formatted paper using appropriate academic form with sources correctly cited. I will be grading you on the overall impact of the paper. See the Evaluation Rubric (*Appendix C*) for grading criteria. 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).

Reading time in journals, dictionaries, and commentaries = 210 pp × 2 min/p = 7 hrs

Editing and writing time = 12 hrs

Date due = Friday, May 16

Value of final grade = 30%

7. Write an in-class exam to gauge your grasp of the course readings and mastery of the exegetical method. The exam includes three parts:

*Part A: Bible readings* (10% of the exam). I will ask you to indicate how much of the assigned Bible readings you have completed

*Part B: Textbook readings* (67% of the exam). I have prepared a series of 44 multiple-choice questions designed to test your mastery of the content developed in Fee & Stuart, Wald, and Ewert. All questions are drawn from the study questions

*Part C: Exegetical sketch* (23% of the exam). I will provide you with two biblical texts that we have not worked through in class. Each text will be photo-copied page from a study Bible with one verse highlighted. Your task will be to write an exegetical sketch on one of these biblical texts, by defining the parameters of the textual unit that includes the highlighted verse and by addressing the four tasks—descriptive, synthetic, hermeneutical, and pragmatic. I want to see something for each of these tasks. Of course, there is time only to sketch things out and list things that you feel would be worth pursuing in the library or elsewhere. The following paragraph (taken from the third course objective) will appear on the exam to remind you of the key features of the exegetical method we have learned (a literary-historical-canonical method).

The student should be able to 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 and the intertextual links—both internal and external, 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, and suggesting practical ways to embody and appropriate that vision.

In-class exam date = Wednesday, May 14

Value of final grade = 30%

Total activity/assignment load = 104 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

Tuesday	Feb. 5	Text selection due
Friday	Feb. 29	Text Profile due
Friday	Mar. 21	Word-Study due
Friday	Apr. 4	Literary/Historical Context due
Friday	Apr. 18	Theological/Hermeneutical Reflections due
Wednesday	May 14	In-Class Exam on course readings
Friday	May 16	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%	
Second Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper .....	30%	

Note: 3% deduction for each un-made-up absence (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, accommodations for disabilities, 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 me or consult the Registrar.

2. Evaluation. The first four assignments (i.e., Text Profile, 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 second exegetical paper will be assessed according to the expectations noted in *Appendix C*.

All assignments must be completed in order 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.

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 “make up” an absence by doing extra reading and writing related to the missed class, which effectively erases the deduction. Please see me about what a “make up” assignment could look like, if you anticipate being away or if you would like to “make up” an absence.

6. Submitting assignments. If you would like to receive handwritten comments on your written assignments, submit a hard-copy version of your paper. You may send me an electronic version of your paper (i.e., an email attachment), however, I will not print your paper. I will read your work online and either email you my assessment or complete the evaluation rubric (*Appendix C*), placing it in your mailbox at school.

7. Formatting specifications. Either Chicago or APA citation format is acceptable. 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. A pdf file called the *Student Supplement for SBL Handbook of Style* can be found on our class page on the seminary website. Slade's, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000) is also a useful guide.

8. Course evaluations. Course evaluations are to be completed online and are due one week after the completion of the course. Official grades will not be posted until the student's evaluation of the course is completed.

## APPENDIX A: WORD-STUDY TEMPLATE

Note: The following guidelines are an adaptation of a document produced by Prof. Allen Guenther and they are reproduced here with permission from the author.

### 1. WORD IDENTIFICATION

a) Give the *English transliteration* of the Hebrew/Greek word and cite the textual unit in which it is found. Note the Strong's or GK (Goodrick/Kohlenberger) number attached to the word.

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. Make note of any cognates (verbs, nouns, adjectives). 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.* 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.*

#### A Literary-Historical-Canonical Method

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

a) *Define the parameters of the textual unit or pericope (i.e., the text) under consideration.*

\*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 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) *Restate the message of 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—explore the internal relations between the parts (e.g., rhetorical features and patterns of persuasion).

\*Locate the text in its historical, literary, and social context (use Bible dictionaries, commentaries, monographs, journal articles, etc.).

\*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 that come through the echoes, allusions, and inter-textual links.

\*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 RUBRIC FOR EXEGETICAL/HERMENEUTICAL PAPER

Category	%	Satisfactory	Exceptional	Unsatisfactory
<b>Statement of purpose</b> a) clear question or problem or thesis b) key issues in the text addressed	10	Question statement is identifiable Paper moves from statement of problem through the exegetical steps to conclusion Key issues identified and treated	Question statement is framed with innovation, creativity, and insight Paper moves from statement of problem through the exegetical steps to conclusion Key issues identified and discussed with awareness of the strength of various arguments	Question not clearly identified Some or all key issues ignored
<b>Analysis of the text</b> a) demarcation of textual unit b) structural outline shows function of parts in relation to whole c) discussion of key words	20	Basic ability to demarcate textual unit Good structural outline Appropriate word studies Keeps focus on the textual unit Demonstrates awareness of grammatical issues and possibilities	Above average ability demonstrated in demarcation, structural analysis, word studies, and focus Textual variants/problems assessed, understood, and cogently presented Demonstrates ability to evaluate grammatical possibilities and argue for choices made in context	Demarcation of textual unit, structural outline, and word studies are inadequate Does not discern well the issues to be addressed
<b>Assessment of literary issues</b> a) genre b) literary context c) rhetorical features d) relation to inner biblical context and place of passage in overarching biblical context: immediate, book, canon e) statement of text's theological vision	20	Aware of related texts Places text in overarching framework of immediate chapter, book, and related writings in the canon Some awareness of text's rhetorical and persuasive features Understands the legitimate contribution of other passages to interpretation and theological vision	Strong grasp of related texts and ability to evaluation connections Places text in the overarching framework of the canon Understands and makes use of the stylistic and theological tendencies of the writer Superior grasp of text's internal literary structure, theological vision, and contribution	Does not demonstrate awareness of the text's internal literary structure or of related texts
<b>Concern for historical, cultural, and social context</b>	15	Shows basic awareness of the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which the text was written	Superior awareness of the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which the text was written	Inadequate or no awareness of the historical, cultural, and social contexts in which the text was written
<b>Hermeneutical reflection</b> a) evaluate the gap between textual and contemporary world b) articulate the ongoing message of the text	10	Basic awareness of the temporal and culture differences between then and now Good attempt to bridge the gap in order to hear the text's message today	Superior sensitivity to the temporal and cultural differences between then and now Exceptionally clear articulation of a way to bridge the gap in order to hear the text's message today	Little awareness or sensitivity to the temporal and cultural gap Inadequate attempt to articulate the ongoing message of the text
<b>Application or "so what factor"</b> a) identifies concrete ways to embody the text and theological concepts b) solid conclusion	10	Clearly identifies theological implication of the text Makes concrete suggestions for appropriating the text's message Adequate conclusion	Identifies the theological implications of the text with particular insight and persuasiveness Real insight into concrete ways the significance of the text can shape contemporary life Convincing conclusion	Inadequately identifies theological implications of text Few if any concrete suggestions Weak or nonexistent conclusion
<b>Bibliography</b> a) solid academic sources b) adequate number c) critique of sources used in body of paper	5	70% or greater met Proper citation form	90% or greater met Proper citation form	Less than 70% met Proper citation form not used
<b>English Grammar</b> a) grammar b) word choice c) punctuation d) spelling	5	Few grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors Proper use of words	None or very few grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors Word choices "sparkle"	Many grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors
<b>Writing Style</b> a) evidence of thoughtful logic; moves from introduction, through a main discussion, and to a conclusion b) appropriate summaries c) good "flow" d) appropriate length and citation format e) appropriate use of endnotes or footnotes	5	70% or greater met Use of clear language Clear introduction, developed discussion, and coherent conclusion Style is readable and understandable	90% or greater met Clear introduction, developed discussion, and coherent conclusion Lively style and exceptional articulation	Less than 70% met