

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary

ROMANS

NT-630 (2 or 3 Units)
Fall 2008 @ MBBS: Fresno
Thursday 1:00–4:00 PM
August 28 to December 12
No class on Oct. 9 (Module week)
No class on Nov. 27 (Thanksgiving)

Instructor: Prof. Jon Isaak
<jisaak@mbseminary.edu>
Office: Rm. 11, Faculty Wing
Office Hours: Tuesday–Thursday
Office Telephone: 559-452-1721
Office Fax: 559-452-1752

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the structure, background, themes, and theology of Paul's letter to the Romans. Special attention is given to the significance of the letter for the life of the church today.

COURSE ASSUMPTIONS

Few of those acquainted with Paul of Tarsus, the early Christian missionary, are neutral about him. Some see Paul as a male chauvinist and primary corrupter of the simple religion of Jesus. Others see Paul as a brilliant theologian who took the message of Jesus from its Hebraic context and successfully translated it for a non-Jewish setting. While I side with the second view, the point is that most readers will bring some notions about Paul to the reading of his letter to the Romans. While this element of subjectivity is inescapable and indeed necessary for reading any text, honest interpreters always test their preliminary assumptions against the evidence and correct them as needed. In the spirit of "honest interpretation," here are five of my preliminary assumptions:

1. Paul's letter to the Romans is primarily a pastoral letter addressed to a concrete situation in the life of the Roman churches. It is aimed at resolving a crisis in Jew-Gentile relations and promoting the reconciliation of divided house churches. It addresses the concrete problem of justifying how Gentiles can now be included members of God's covenant people (*Corollary*: Romans is not a summary of all of Paul's theology).
2. The genre of Romans is best described as persuasive rhetoric and is aimed at intensifying adherence to Paul's vision of God's redefined covenant people. He uses typical Jewish intertextuality where he engages the symbolic world of the Torah and reshapes it according to a new hermeneutical starting point—in Paul's case—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (*Corollary*: Romans is not a polemic against Judaism).
3. Paul was convinced by his Christian experience and missionary reflection that the Spirit of God comes by faith/trust and not by observing law. This being the case, why should his Gentile converts also comply with Jewish laws? This innovation, however, generated a major problem for Paul. If the law is ineffectual, why did God give the law in the first place? Can God be trusted? God is on trial! The starting question that guides Paul's writing of Romans is "How can Gentiles be members of God's covenant people without compromising God's righteousness?" (*Corollary*: Paul's driving concern is not "How can I be saved?").

4. “Justification by faith” plays a central role in Paul’s theology. However, since the Protestant Reformation, two assumptions have tainted this insight into Paul’s thought: first, early Judaism is a “works righteousness” religion, and second, early Judaism can be equated with Catholicism of the sixteenth century. Both of these assumptions are unfounded. For Paul, “justification by faith” is not to be read as anti-law (it is simply more effective than the law at binding Sin) and it is not an alternative to salvation by works (since in Judaism salvation is indeed by grace/election and maintained by works). Instead, Paul uses “justification by faith” in a more limited way, namely, to defend the inclusion of Gentiles into God’s End-Time people Israel (*Corollary*: Paul is not anti-law nor does he set law against grace or faith against works).

5. Paul is a Jewish apocalypticist convinced that in Jesus, God is victorious over the cosmic evil force (Sin) which wields its power over creation by causing decay, destruction, and death—in other words, Sin is much more than just personal transgression. For Paul, Jesus’ resurrection shows that Jesus is no longer subject to the power of death. Therefore, reasoning backward, at his death Jesus must have defeated the Devil and his agent, Sin. Moreover, Jesus’ victory leads to the salvation of all those who participate in the faithful ongoing life of Jesus, the prototype of the new creation order. Such a life involves the transfer from the old order sphere of power/existence to the new order along with the resulting transformation of behavior (*Corollary*: Salvation is not an imputed status that is merely judicially declared without real consequences).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through a variety of activities (close readings of Romans, readings from secondary sources, class discussions, presentations, and interpretative assignments), we are invited to engage personally and critically Paul’s missionary discourse to the Roman church. At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Outline and discuss the literary, thematic, theological, and rhetorical structure of Romans (*Knowledge Objective*).
2. Confess and value this ancient letter of commendation addressed to a first-century church as one that transcends its immediate practical purpose of fund raising (among other things) and continues to give witness to God’s people-gathering activity in the world (*Values Objective*).
3. Explore and articulate imaginative analogies and metaphorical bridges between Paul’s symbolic world and the world we inhabit (*Skills Objective*).

MBBS PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

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*; specifically outcomes 1.1, 1.2).

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*; specifically outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 2.4).
3. Nurture healthy interpersonal relationships and effective communication patterns in the context of the learning community (MBBS desired outcome #3: *Interpret one's own and other cultural contexts of ministry using theological perspectives integrated with social scientific approaches*; specifically outcomes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5).
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*; specifically outcomes 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5).

TEXTBOOKS

The number of books published on Paul and on Romans is enormous (see *Appendix A* for a small sampling). I have chosen four “textbooks” to read together for the course. These four—plus several excerpts from others—will make up the *Required Readings*. You will have an opportunity to work through other commentaries, journal articles, and monographs while working on your Exegetical Paper. The four “textbooks” are the following:

The Letter to the Romans in a contemporary translation of the Bible that aims at “dynamic equivalence” (e.g., *NRSV* 1989, *NIV* 1984, *TNIV* 2002). For comparison, it is often useful to consult more “formal equivalent” translations (e.g., *NASB* 1977, 1995) as well as the more “functional equivalent” translations or paraphrastic single-translator versions (e.g., Peterson’s *Message* 1993). 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*). For Bible students who cannot read Greek, the next best way to get close to the peculiar nuance of a Greek word or phrase is to analyze how different translators have attempted to render it in English.

Sanders, E.P., *Paul*, Oxford University Press, 1991. This small book is a popular edition of Sanders’s watershed book entitled, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Fortress, 1977). Sanders is credited with launching the “New Perspective on Paul” which reversed centuries of Pauline theology which was based on the notion that Paul operated out of an antithesis between the Law (Judaism) and the Gospel (Christianity). Sanders successfully demonstrated that the traditional view of Judaism (i.e., as a religion of works righteousness) was seriously flawed and owed more to Reformation polemics rather than to serious study of Jewish texts. Sanders showed that Judaism from the start was based on grace and election. Thus, the law was conceived not as the “way in” but the “way to maintain” the covenantal relation of those who already were God’s people by guiding them in the way they should live. Sanders goes on to show how this pattern of religion was significantly modified by Paul’s encounter with Christ.

Hodge, Charles, *Romans*, Crossway Books, 1993 [1835]. Chosen to be reprinted in the Crossway

Classic Commentary series, Hodge's commentary represents traditional Reformed theology in the tenor of John Calvin and Martin Luther. In order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the "New Perspective on Paul," Hodge's Romans commentary will provide a valuable dialogue partner. Each week the class will read a selection in Hodge's commentary and discuss its interpretative perspective in relation to other views of Paul's mission and ministry.

Isaak, Jon, *God is One and God is Fair*, Kindred, 2006. This commentary will provide the discussion partner to Hodge and the traditional Reformed interpretation of Romans. I argue that Paul's letter is driven by three very practical aims—he hopes to resolve the crisis involving ethnic and cultural tensions among the divided house churches in Rome, he hopes to rehearse his response to anticipated objections of his Jewish friends during his upcoming trip to Jerusalem, and he hopes to solicit funds for expanding his mission to the west. Paul has one simple argument, God is one and God is fair. From the vantage point of the five assumptions listed above, I attempt to give a thoroughgoing "New Perspective" treatment of Paul's letter to the Romans.

COURSE DESIGN

The course is designed to be an exegetical course using the exegetical skills developed in BI-505 to do "close readings," exegetical research, and sermon composition. In order to promote these aims, the format of the course will follow a "seminar style" with a combination of presentations and discussion.

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

Aug. 28 (Meeting #1) *Introduction to Paul and the Letter to the Romans*

- review history-of-interpretation on Paul and Romans
- outline the character of the "New Perspective" on Paul
- sketch the occasion, purpose, genre, and content of Romans

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Romans ("skim" through in one sitting).
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapters 1-5.
- Rom 1.1-17 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 11-32.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 1-34.

Sept. 4 (Meeting #2) *The Good News of God's Righteousness (1.1-17)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

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|---------|-----------------------|
| 1.1-7 | Opening |
| 1.8-12 | Thanksgiving |
| 1.13-15 | Personal Expectations |
| 1.16-17 | Thesis |

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 1.18–3.20 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 32-82.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 38-61.

- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 10.

Sept. 11 (Meeting #3) *Faithless Humanity and the Power of Sin (1.18–3.20)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 1.18–2.11 God's Impartial Judgment on all humanity: God's Fairness
- 2.12-29 Equality of non-Jews and Jews before God's judgment
- 3.1-20 Answering presumed objections of the Jews

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 3.21-31 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 82-99.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 63-77.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapters 6-7.

Sept. 18 (Meeting #4) *God's Fairness Revealed in Jesus' Faith (3.21-31)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 3.21-26 The Thesis Restated: God's faithfulness & the faithfulness of Jesus
- 3.27-31 Questions, Answers, Assertions

-post-meeting assignment: read and prepare the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 4.1-25 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 100-126.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 80-92.
- complete first Close Reading assignment (due Monday, Sept. 22)

Sept. 22 First Close Reading assignment due.

Sept. 25 (Meeting #5) *How Faith Works: the Example of Abraham (4.1-25)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 4.1-12 Abraham the Father of Us All
- 4.13-17 By Gift and Not by Law
- 4.18-25 The Structure of Faith

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 5.1-21 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 127-174.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 94-107.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 8.

Oct. 2 (Meeting #6) *God's Gift in Christ Jesus (5.1-21)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 5.1-11 Peace with God
- 5.12-21 Victory over sin via Christ

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 6.1–7.6 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).

- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 175-201.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 111-123
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 9.

Oct. 9 (No class—Module week)

Oct. 16 (Meeting #7) *Answering Objections: Grace, Sin, and Law (6.1–7.25)—Part One*
-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance
6.1–7.6 Death of the Old Humanity

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 7.7-25 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 201-225.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 126-138.

Oct. 23 (Meeting #8) *Answering Objections: Grace, Sin, and Law (6.1–7.25)—Part Two*
-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance
7.7-25 Victory of the Flesh via the Spirit

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 8.1-39 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 226-267.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 141-157.

Oct. 30 (Meeting #9) *Life in the Spirit (8.1-39)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

8.1-4	What the Spirit Accomplished
8.5-11	Life in the Spirit
8.12-17	The Gift of Adoption—Children of God
8.18-27	The Spirit in Suffering and Hope
8.28-39	God’s Loving Purpose

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 9.1-29 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 268-300.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 160-177.
- Sanders, *Paul*, chapter 11.
- complete second Close Reading assignment (due Monday, Nov. 3)

Nov. 3 Second Close Reading assignment due.

Nov. 6 (Meeting #10) *God’s Plan for Salvation of Jew and Gentile (9.1–11.36)—Part One*
-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

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|--------|---|
| 9.1-5 | Paul’s Lament for Israel |
| 9.6-29 | The Past: God’s Way of Shaping a People—God’s Word has not failed |

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 9.30–11.36 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 297-342.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 182-201.

Nov. 13 (Meeting #11) *God's Plan for Salvation of Jew and Gentile (9.1–11.36)—Part Two*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 9.30–10.21 The Present: The Remnant by Faith—Christ is God's promised fulfillment
- 11.1-36 The Future: Israel in God's Mysterious Plan—God has not rejected Israel

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 12.1-13.14 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 343-366
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 203-230

Nov. 20 (Meeting #12) *The Transformation of Moral Consciousness (12.1–13.14)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 12.1-2 The Transformation of Consciousness—Basis for Righteous living
- 12.3-8 The Body of Christ redefines God's People
- 12.9-21 Expectations for life in the Christian community
- 13.1-7 Submission to Civil Authorities
- 13.8-10 The Law of Love
- 13.11-14 Eschatological Urgency

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 14.1–15.13 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 367-382.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 233-250.

Nov. 27 (No class—Thanksgiving)

Dec. 4 (Meeting #13) *Righteousness in the Community and Final Appeal (14.1–15.13)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 14.1-12 Judgment, Scorn, Acceptance—The challenge to the “weak”
- 14.13-23 Scandal and Edification—The responsibility of the “strong”
- 15.1-6 The example of Christ
- 15.7-13 Summary: The Church and the Mystery of God's Plan

-post-meeting assignment: read and assess the following texts for next time (in the given order):

- Rom 15.14–16.27 in several translations (*Precise Parallel NT*).
- Hodge, *Romans*, pp. 382-396.
- Isaak, *God is One*, pp. 253-275.

Dec. 11 (Meeting #14) *Paul's Mission Plan and Appeal (15:14–16.27)*

-explore the character (form and function) of the following texts and discuss their significance

- 15.14-33 Paul's Gentile Mission and travel plans

15.25-32	The Collection for Jerusalem
16.1-23	Final Greeting
16.25-27	Concluding Doxology

-post-meeting assignment:

- complete exegetical/hermeneutical paper (due Dec. 15)
- complete sermon/Bible Study portfolio (due Dec. 15)

Dec. 15 Exegetical/Hermeneutical paper due.

Dec. 15 Sermon/Bible Study Portfolio due

LEARNING ACTIVITIES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EXPECTATIONS

The assignments are designed to promote the course and degree objectives listed above. The expectations, minimum time expectations 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 students will:

1. Prepare for, attend, and participate in class discussions. Consult the *Course Schedule* (above) for the texts to be read and the assignments to be completed. I will begin each class by highlighting the key ideas from the week's readings and move rapidly to discussion and to group exercises. Be prepared to contribute with your discoveries, evaluation, and reflection. You will be assessed on your preparation, analysis, articulation, participation, and leadership. I expect each one to offer something significant each meeting. This is an important part of the learning experience and a large part of your grade.

Class participation time = 14 mtgs × 3 hrs/mtg = 42 hrs

Textbook reading time = (Bible, Hodge, Isaak, Sanders) time requirement = 851 pp × 2 min/p = 29 hrs

Value of final grade = 20%

2. Write a two-page, single-spaced, Close Reading interpretive assignment on a key passage in Romans. This is the first of two such assignments. The aim here is to develop and to measure your observation skills and your question-asking skills, both of which are essential for sound interpretation. **This is not a research paper.** The kind of "close reading" of the text in view here cannot be achieved through interaction with commentaries, journal articles, monographs, and other secondary sources. Choose one of the following texts (or propose another) for your study and complete the Close Reading assignment as set out in *Appendix B* (see sample distributed in class).

Rom 5.1-11

Rom 6.1-14

Rom 7.7-25

Rom 8.1-11

The first Close Reading assignment is **due on Monday, Sept. 22.**

Grading for this assignment will be out of 10 points and based on clarity, comprehensiveness,

and creativity. Late assignments will have ½ point deducted for each day they are late.

Close Reading writing time = 2 pp × 2 hrs/p = 4 hrs

Value of final grade = 10%

3. Complete thirteen, one-page, single-spaced, Weekly Reading assignments. The **first part** of each Reading Report is for reporting the percentage of the weekly reading that you have completed. State the author of the assigned text and estimate what percent of the reading you finished.

The **second part** of each Reading Report is for interacting with the text. Identify at least **one issue from each book assigned** (Hodge, Isaak, Sanders OR Hodge, Isaak) on which you would like further clarification or about which you would like to challenge or discuss with the author. Put each issue in the form of a question. Include a several-sentence paragraph of rationale for each question, explaining why it is significant to you.

The Reading Reports are **due at 9 AM on Thursday, before our afternoon meeting.** Please email your report to me at <jisaak@mbseminary.edu>.

Each Report will be graded at one of four levels: “excellent” (≥ 9 pts), “good” (≥ 8 pts), “passable” (≥ 7 pts), or “unsatisfactory” (< 7 pts). Assignments rated “good” or better will give evidence of having read the assigned pages and of thoughtful and engaging questions; this is my “baseline” expectation. Assignments will lose 1 point, if submitted after the 9 AM deadline and will not be graded, if submitted after our meeting begins.

The Reading Reports will be returned to you at the beginning of our meeting and will form part of the agenda for our in-class discussion. I will call on you or a classmate to present one or more of your questions.

Reading Report writing time = 13 pp × 1 hr/p = 13 hrs

Value of final grade = 13 × 10 × 2/13 = 20%

4. Complete a second Close Reading assignment on another Romans text. Select from one of the following (or propose another). Use the same guidelines as outlined in Activity #2 above and in *Appendix B*.

Rom 11.7-36

Rom 12.1-21

Rom 14.1-12

Rom 15.1-13

The second Close Reading assignment is **due on Monday, Nov. 3.**

Grading for this assignment will be out of 10 points and based on clarity, comprehensiveness, and creativity. Late assignments will have ½ point deducted for each day they are late.

Close Reading time requirement = 2 pp × 2 hrs/p = 4 hrs

Value of final grade = 10%

5. Write a ten page, double-spaced (3000 words), Exegetical/Hermeneutical Paper on the text

that you've chosen to research. This assignment provides an opportunity to expand on one of your Close Reading assignments in a thoroughgoing Research Paper. **This is a research paper**, not a sermon nor a personal reflection paper.

Proceed in the following way. First, decide which Close Reading assignment you want to explore further.

Second, read how other commentators (i.e., Cranfield, Dunn, Jewett, Käsemann, Moo, Toews) deal with your text and make notes on each one's contribution. You are welcome to use others as well, but I would like you to consult these **six commentaries**, which are on two-hour Reserve @ *Hiebert Library* (see *Appendix A*). Pay special attention to the assumptions from which each commentator is writing. Also make note of important journal articles or monographs that the commentators cite approvingly as well as those with which they differ. Track down and skim those that seem most promising. Make notes on what they have to offer. Copy good quotes, noting page references. The advantage of beginning with these commentators (after you have done your own Close Reading) is that they will sketch out the "burning issues" (at least for them) and the possible implications just in case you missed these in your own "close reading" of the text.

Third, use the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) On-Line database to locate **three articles** that appear to relate to your text and topic and make notes on each one. Use the Scripture Search feature to find the records related to your text (e.g., type "Romans 7" to get all the records that have Romans 7 "something," anywhere in the record). These articles provide the most recent peer-reviewed research (of course, not all equally valid) and usually an extensive bibliography that you can use to track down other potentially useful sources. Again, copy good quotes, noting page references.

Fourth, try to situate your paper within a context that raises vocational, social, ministry, or personal issues of significance for you. Construct an introductory paragraph that will launch your study into the text that you have chosen and will show why it is significant for this particular context.

Fifth, after you have done your research and conceptualized its significance, prepare an outline that begins with your introductory paragraph and moves through the four basic steps of an Exegetical & Hermeneutical paper (see *Appendix C*) in order to address this particular issue from the standpoint of the selected text. Note: the template in *Appendix C* is designed to be a generic, one that can be used with any text. Still, be sure to use the four headings (i.e., descriptive task, synthetic task, hermeneutical task, and pragmatic task) in your paper, so that I can see when you are moving from one task to the next. Conclude by referring to the context described in your introduction, showing how your exegesis and hermeneutical reflection relates to this situation.

The Exegetical Research Paper is **due on Monday, Dec. 15**.

Be aware of the grading criteria while you are preparing your final draft (see *Appendix D*). In addition, please note that **"A" grade papers will (among other things) give evidence of having consulted and interacted with the commentators indicated above and with academic articles (I will be looking for their citations) and will be composed and documented in excellent academic**

form.

Research Reading time requirement = $300 \text{ pp} \times 2 \text{ min/p} = 10 \text{ hrs}$

Research Paper writing time requirement = $10 \text{ pp} \times 1.5 \text{ hrs/p} = 15 \text{ hrs}$

Value of final grade = 25%

6. Write a sermon or Bible Study lesson plan on a section of Romans other than the two addressed in your close readings. Find a venue where you can deliver the sermon or Bible Study. Submit a Sermon portfolio that includes four pieces: (1) a three-page “exegetical brief” (a summary treatment of each of the four tasks noted in Appendix C), (2) the complete sermon manuscript or lesson plan, (3) two evaluations from participants or observers (paragraph noting strengths and things to improve), and (4) your response to the feedback.

The Sermon/Bible Study Portfolio is **due on Monday, Dec. 15.**

Sermon/Bible Study Reading time = $120 \text{ pp} \times 2 \text{ min/p} = 4 \text{ hrs}$

Exegetical Brief writing time = $3 \text{ pp} \times 1 \text{ hr/p} = 3 \text{ hrs}$

Sermon/Lesson Plan writing time = $5 \text{ pp} \times 1 \text{ hr/p} = 5 \text{ hrs}$

Set up, delivery, and evaluation time = 1 hr

Value of final grade = 15%

Total activity/assignment load = 130 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 Jesus that Paul writes about in Romans. 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 seminar sessions where ideas can be discussed and explored freely without fear of ridicule or attack. Many people have thought deeply on the subject of Paul’s gospel proclamation and what it signifies. 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	Sept. 22	First Close Reading assignment due
Monday	Nov. 3	Second Close Reading assignment due
Monday	Dec. 15	Exegetical/Hermeneutical Research Paper due

SUMMARY OF GRADING SCHEME

Weekly Reading Assignments (13 × 10 × 2/13)	20%
First Close Reading Assignment	10%
Second Close Reading Assignment	10%
Exegetical Research Paper	25%
Sermon/Bible Study Portfolio	15%
Participation Score	20%

	100%

NOTES

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

2. Evaluation. Each of the assignments has specific grading criteria (see descriptions above).

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” (see <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%) (see <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” (see <http://www.mbseminary.edu/fresno/policies/grading>).

3. Credit/No Credit. Students may petition to take this course for “credit/no credit.” If granted, the student must complete each assignment at a satisfactory level and not miss any classes in order to earn a “pass.” Unsatisfactory work in any of the assignments will be returned to the student for revision and resubmission.

4. Due dates. Students are expected to submit assignments on time. Late submissions will be penalized as outlined above in the description of the assignment. However, penalties may not apply to students who have a documented emergency that prevents them from submitting the assignment on the due date. Check with me to see if alternative arrangements can be made.

5. Attendance. Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. Each class is important and each one's contribution is needed to optimize the learning experience of the class. Absences will be noted and each one will result in a 3% drop in your overall Participation grade. If you would like to "make up" an absence, make a proposal to me. If approved, the deduction may be removed.

6. Formatting specifications. Parenthetical or footnote citation styles are both 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. 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).

7. 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: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Entries marked with an asterisk (*) are on two-hour Reserve @ Hiebert Library

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and E.E. Johnson. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1995, pp. 30-67.
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APPENDIX B: GUIDELINES FOR DOING “CLOSE READING”

Note: *The following guidelines are an adaptation of a document produced by Joel B. Green and they are reproduced here with permission from the author.*

1. Introductory comments: Many find a “close reading” assignment one of the most difficult exercises undertaken at seminary. The reason for this is that the kind of “close reading” required for this assignment cannot be achieved by interacting with commentaries, monographs, dictionaries, journal articles, etc. Instead, a “close reading” assignment aims to measure your observation skills and your question-asking skills. So, what is it?

a) A “close reading” is not:

- *a research paper*—no secondary sources should be consulted as you prepare your paper
- *a finished product*—it should be written using good grammar and spelling, but there is no expectation that you “answer” the questions you raise while interacting with the assigned text; hence, no “introduction” or “conclusion” is required
- *a sermon or application paper*—it is simply too early in the interpretative process to be asserting issues of relevance or appropriation

b) A “close reading” is:

- *a series of observations and questions*—looking at your text from multiple vantage points (see list below), should raise a wide range of interpretive issues; some questions may be more relevant to certain texts than to others
- *a research agenda*—a thoroughgoing “close reading” of the text provides the interpretive questions and hunches that you can then take to the reference materials, the next stage in the interpretive process
- *a community event*—you are encouraged to discuss your preliminary thoughts and questions with others as you prepare to write your observations

2. Questions for a “Close Reading” of the text: The following questions are divided into categories that you might bring with you to the task of “close reading.” Not all questions are equally important to every biblical text, and other questions may emerge as you wrestle with the text. You will need to exercise your judgment in discerning which are relevant. Work through the relevant questions from each of the four main blocks—text, co-text, context, intertext—and then write up your observations in prose form.

a) The Text

- *Textual Criticism*—*Through the use of the Greek apparatus, have you indicated potentially problematic readings and their significance?*
- *Genre and Form*—*Have you identified “what this text is” and/or to what larger genre it belongs, and suggested the significance of this identification?*
- *Determination of Boundaries*—*On what basis do you agree or disagree with the demarcation of the assigned pericope? What textual markers support your analysis?*
- *Exploration of the Text’s Internal Development and Argument*—*Have you been able to*

identify the structure and/or other strategies by which the author attempts to communicate with the reader?

- The “About-ness” of the Text—*Can you summarize what you understand this text to be saying?*

b) The Co-Text (literary context)

- Situation of Text in Larger Presentation—*Given that we read from “left to right,” have you been able to show how your reading of this text is informed by what went on before?*
- Development of Important Words/Themes—*What key words and/or themes are signaled in this text? How have you judged them to be key?*
- Openness to Interpretive Possibilities—*What other readings of this text are possible? What would we miss about the meaning of this text without having read further?*

c) Context (historical situation)

- Socio-Historical Setting—*In what socio-historical setting is this text communicated? How does our knowledge of this setting influence our reading?*
- Appeal to Particular Cultural Conventions/Cues—*In what ways does this text appeal to such cultural concerns or conventions as purity, distribution of power, social roles, household codes, honor and shame, patronage systems, etc. in order to communicate its message?*
- Interface of Contexts—*In what ways does this text appear to stand in tension with the world it addresses? In what ways does your own context intersect with the context of this text?*

d) Intertext

- Sensitivity to OT/LXX/HB Citations and Echoes and their Significance—*What OT passages are explicitly cited in this text? Alluded to? What is their significance in their new setting within this text?*
- Sensitivity to other Inter-Canonical Echoes—*What other biblical passages are brought to mind by a reading of this one? How might these echoes inform a canonical reading of this text?*

3. Concluding remarks: There is no “right” way to do a “close reading” assignment—the essential thing is that somehow you bring to the surface the significance of the themes, motifs, details, etc. in the assigned text. Finally, the key thing is to allow yourself to be playful and imaginative as you engage the text from the four angles (text, co-text, context, and intertext).

APPENDIX C: 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 D: EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR EXEGETICAL/HERMENEUTICAL PAPER

Category	%	Satisfactory	Exceptional	Unsatisfactory
Statement of purpose 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
Analysis of the text 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
Assessment of literary issues a) genre b) literary context c) rhetorical features d) relation to inner biblical context and place of passage in overarching biblical context: immediate, book, cannon 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
Concern for historical, cultural, and social context	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
Hermeneutical reflection 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
Application or "so what factor" 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
Bibliography a) solid academic sources b) adequate number c) critique of sources used in body of paper	5	Meets 70% or greater of assignment's bibliographic expectations Good citation format; some errors in form	Meets 90% or greater of assignment's bibliographic expectations Proper citation format; hardly any errors in form	Meets less than 70% of assignment's bibliographic expectations Proper citation format not used
English Grammar 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
Writing Style 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	Meets 70% or greater of assignment's expectations for writing style Use of clear language Clear introduction, developed discussion, and coherent conclusion Style is readable and understandable	Meets 90% or greater of assignment's expectations for writing style Clear introduction, developed discussion, and coherent conclusion Lively style and exceptional articulation	Meets less than 70% of assignment's expectations for writing style Introduction, discussion, and conclusion is rambling, disjointed, and poorly worded Style is distracting and confusing

Sub Total =

Minus 2% for each day late

Total =