

HERMENEUTICS: SCRIPTURE AND INTERPRETATION [NT 501]

Course Syllabus

Canadian Theological Seminary
Fall Semester, 20012002
Wednesday and Friday, 1.303.00 pm

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[I] COURSE PURPOSE AND CONTENT

This course on 'Hermeneutics' (from the Greek *hermeneuc.in*, 'to interpret') is concerned with Christian Scripture (the Bible) and its interpretation. Its immediate purpose is to introduce some of the important literary, historical, and theological elements involved in an informed understanding of the nature and interpretation of Scripture. The ultimate aim is that Scripture may become a living and transforming word, ever equipping us to be God's people in his world.

The various subjects are considered under two broad categories. [i] Most of the course examines certain basic principles and practices entailed in the interpretation of Scripture, with particular reference to the interrelated roles of the author, text, and reader. [ii] This is followed by a briefer consideration of some of the broader issues which bear upon any evaluation of Scripture in relation to God's purposes for the church in the world. The course will consist largely of class presentations and discussions; hands-on exercises, both during and after class; readings from the required texts and handouts; and related assignments.

[II] COURSE OUTLINE

In its essence, the course and structure is briefly outlined below. Some indication of the duration of each element is provided, but it is difficult to anticipate our precise schedule. For that reason I reserve the right to extend, abbreviate, or eliminate elements as necessary. However, you are still responsible to ensure that the relevant sections in your texts and any handouts provided have each been read prior to the session in which their content matter is to be discussed.

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- L. Introductions and Course Overview (Syllabus and Assignments)
The Bible and the 'Big Picture': Holy God, Holy People. Holy Scripture.
3. 'Herman who'? Defining Key Terms | Klein/Blomberg/Hubbard: 120[.
4. Getting our Feet Wet: an initial effort.
5. Resources Available | Exercise 1: a scavenger hunt[.

PART I. ELEMENTS I: THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE:
BASIC PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

6. The Formation, Transmission, and Translation of Scripture [KBH: 53/781].
7. Meaning and its Communication; the Three *Worlds* of the Text: Author, Text, and Reader [KBH: 117/151].
8. The World before the Text I (Reader): Purpose, Prerequisites, and Presuppositions [KBH: 81/116][Exercise 2: on the reader's preunderstanding].
9. The World behind the Text (Author/Context): Historical and Cultural Context [KBH: 172/183][Exercise 3: on the historical and cultural context].
10. The World within the Text (Text): the Literary Aspect and Genre.
OT Narrative Genre [KBH: 259/274]
OT Poetry [KBH: 284/291]
OT Prophecy [KBH: 292/312]
NT Gospels and Luke/Acts [KBH: 323/351]
NT Letters [KBH: 352/366] [Exercise 4: on the literary genre]
11. The World within the Text (Text): the Literary and Syntactical Structure [KBH: 155/171; 199/214]
12. The World before the Text II (Reader): the Application of Scripture [KBH: 377/426]
From Scripture to Christian Theology
Scripture and Cultural Contextualization
- From Scripture to Sermon
Putting it All Together Again; Working on Three Worlds at Once: An Exegesis Paper.

PART II. ISSUES IN THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE:
REFLECTIONS ON SCRIPTURE, CHURCH, AND WORLD.

- The History of Interpretation: Some Questions to Consider [KBH: 21-51]
What about Revelation, Inspiration, Authority and Scripture?
16. An Integrated Approach to Interpreting Scripture
17. Interpretation and Embodiment; Scripture and Christian Character, Community, & the World [Foster and Jones]

* Please note: there are no classes on September 12; October 3, 5, 19, 24; November 2, 1

[3] COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

[3.1] Readings, Attendance, and Participation [10%]. To benefit from the course it is very important that you complete the required readings from Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard [KBH] and any handouts in advance of the class in which their subject matter is to be discussed. You must submit a form attesting to the degree to which this has been the case. *Due Date(s)*: as requested at the appropriate point in the course.

[3.2] Interpretative Exercise [40%]. At certain points in the course you will be asked to undertake exercises designed to develop familiarity with the interpretative approaches being considered. Your careful and timely completion of these exercises is important. *Due Date(s)*: normally no later than one week following the relevant class.

[3.3] An Exegetical Paper [30%]. A 10-12 page paper in which you consider carefully and comprehensively a particular passage of Scripture (from a list provided), attending to the 'three worlds' entailed in its interpretation, and employing an appropriate range of the exegetical approaches considered during the course. *Due Date*: November 14, 2001.

[3.4] A Book Review [20%]. A 6-7 page review of Fowl & Jones, *Reading in Communion*, evaluating their discussion of certain key issues concerning Scripture and its interpretation. Further details to follow. *Due date*: no later than November 28, 2001.

* Normally no extensions will be granted; please consult with me if you think that extenuating circumstances may apply. Late assignments will be penalized at the instructor's discretion (usually by a grade per week or part thereof; for example, an A- would become a B+).

[4] COURSE TEXTS.

[a] *New Revised Standard Bible* (or reasonable alternative: RSV, NASH, NIV)

[b] Klein, William; Blomberg, Craig; Hubbard, Robert. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas: Word, 1993.

[c] Fowl, Stephen; Jones, L. Gregory. *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life*. Wipf and Stock Publishers [formerly published by Eerdmans], 1991.

There may also be a number of handouts (articles and the like) provided

[5] AND FINALLY...

I am here to help you in whatever way I can. So please do not be shy about talking with me at any time, not in course!

