

McMaster Divinity College

NT/OT 2A03: Biblical Interpretation and Application

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Mondays 1:30-3:20 p.m.

I. Course Description

A study of the principles of interpretation and application of the Bible. Attention is given to students developing a clearly defined hermeneutical framework that is biblically and theologically grounded, spiritually sensitive, critically aware and practically relevant.

II. Course Objectives— Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments the following goals are set for the student:

A. Knowing—

1. Know sound guidelines for reading and interpreting Scripture
2. Know various factors that provide the foundation of applying the Bible to the Christian life
3. Understand common fallacies of interpretation
4. Know the types of literature of the Bible, and how they affect interpretation
5. Know the variety of methods by which the Bible has historically been and is currently being interpreted

B. Being—

5. Be a person who is habitually challenged and changed by the reading and study of the Bible
6. Be spiritually formed by and through the process of interpretation
7. Become an informed and responsible interpreter of the Bible
8. Be a critical thinker in the process of the constant evaluation of interpretation

C. Doing—

9. Apply a theologically and biblically sound hermeneutical method
10. Make specific applications of the Bible to your ministry and/or spiritual formation
11. Listen and read critically→Identify fallacies of interpretation

III. Course Requirements

A. Class Participation: Student participation in interactive lectures and class and group discussions is expected, based on your readings for the week.

B. Reading (10%)

See the Daily Schedule at the end for the precise dates and pages.

1. Read the pages for the required reading prior to class on the due dates (see Daily Schedule at the end). Be prepared to interact with the main issues in group discussions. During class time, reading groups will compose peer evaluation for each individual in the group

2. Selected Old and New Testament texts New Testament completed by **April 11**.

Old Testament

Narrative: Genesis

Narrative + Law: Exodus

Poetry:

Lament: Psalms 22, 136

Thanksgiving: Psalms 116

Royal: Psalms 93, 110

Salvation History: Psalms 98

Praise: Psalms 89, 132

Prophecy: Isaiah, Jonah, Hosea

Prophecy+narrative+apocalyptic: Daniel

New Testament

Narrative: Luke-Acts

Epistles

Group: Romans, Galatians, Philippians

Personal: Philemon, 2 Timothy

Homiletic: Hebrews, James

Apocalyptic+Epistle+Prophecy: Revelation

3. On the day of the scheduled final (**April 11**), each student will submit a reading report by e-mail for the Bible reading, stating a percentage of the reading completed on time, and groups will turn in their evaluations. Do your own math on the percentage.

C. Written Assignments

1. Scripture Twisting Journal (30%)

- a. Each student is required to keep a journal of approximately one entry a week (10 total), where they identify a significant abuse of biblical interpretation and/or application that they have observed—some cases can be from past experience, but the students should also be particularly alert to “Scripture twisting” that they encounter during the course. Each student bring the first entry to class **Jan 10** in a hard copy.
- b. Remember the priority of biblical interpretation, meaning that each entry should focus on a particular Bible verse or passage. Avoid addressing problems that are theological in approach.
- c. Language may be casual. No documentation is necessary, except for the identification of written sources and the commentaries used. The contexts where you observe biblical interpretation can range from children, friends and family to the pew, the pulpit, and scholarly journals as well as popular media. You are welcome to include clippings or illustrations.
- d. Format: identify the use of Scripture, state how the Scripture is misinterpreted/misapplied (identify the fallacy, using Caron’s categories), expand what is wrong with the approach, explain a better approach to understanding the passage, utilizing at least one resource such as a commentary.
- e. All entries are due on **April 4 at 1:30 p.m. submitted by e-mail**; bring a copy to class and be prepared to discuss your entries. Late journals lose 2% every day. No journals will be accepted after April 11.

2. Exegetical Paper (30%)

- a. Each student will write an exegetical paper. **It will be due March 7 at 1:30 p.m. submitted by e-mail.** Late papers lose 2% each day.
 - b. Length & style: It should be no more than 3000 words (about 12 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, see the Mac Style Guide. There should be a minimum of 15 sources used in the footnotes and bibliography.
 - c. Approach: Choose a text from the Old Testament or the New Testament that forms a cohesive unit (not less than 10, up to 15 verses). Guidelines for exegetical procedures will be given in detail in class and discussed in the text, but briefly, the steps involve a broad overview of the text within its book, a study of the socio-cultural and historical context, and analysis of the various features of the text, the identification of interpretive problems, a summary of your findings and an application. Complete your own preliminary research/study of the text in terms of its argument and big idea before you interact with secondary sources. Carefully assess the options when there is a diversity of viewpoints and state your position on those controversial texts.
 - d. Briefly apply one of the critical methods to your passage to draw additional insights.
 - e. See attachment for criteria for grading.
3. Project (30%)
- a. Utilize the exegesis of your passage in one of the specific applications to your ministry (MRS assignment): worship, liturgy, a sermon, teaching, applied spiritual formation, or other ways appropriate for your ministry selected in consultation with your professor (on paper or by e-mail). **It will be due April 11 at 1:30 p.m. during the scheduled final.**
 - b. Length & style: if written, the project should be no more than 1,500 words (about 6 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, see the Mac Style Guide.
 - c. Approach: The approach to your projects will largely be determined by what application you choose. Creativity is encouraged. Marking will be done by both discussion groups and the professor based on message/content, medium, appropriateness for the target groups, effort.
 - d. On **April 11**, be prepared to discuss your project. This is the final. No late projects can be accepted.

F. Grading Summary

1. Reading	10% (value of 85 % maximum)
2. Exegetical Paper	30%
3. Project	30%
4. Journal	30%

All assignments must be completed by the scheduled final to pass the course.

IV. Textbooks and Materials

A. Required

1. Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993, 2004.
2. Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI:

Zondervan, 1981, 1993, 2003.

3. Carson, D.A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
4. The New Testament (modern version such as NRSV or TNIV)
5. The Greek New Testament (for those with Greek competence). Students with facility in Greek or who are beginning Greek are encouraged to use their Greek Bible.

B. Recommended

1. The *IVP Bible Dictionary Series* (4 vols.)
2. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
3. Craig Keener. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994.

C. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 218, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

D. Additional Materials

1. Handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available during class and/or online.
2. Procedures and guidelines for assignments will be given in class and/or online on the class web site.
3. **Books on Reserve at Mills.**

V. Classroom Behavior

A. Attendance

1. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor.
2. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
3. Except in extreme circumstances, more than two absences from class will result in grade penalties; four or more absences from class will result in failure of the course.

B. Participation

1. Please respect the opinions of others without disrespect or ridicule, even if you do not agree with them. However, feel free to respond logically and critically in an orderly manner.
2. Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except that which is appropriate in the course outline.
3. Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
4. Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines will be dismissed from the class with consequences.

C. Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ www.madciv.ca/regs/honesty.php.

***** Gender Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

****** Disclaimer on Syllabi posted on the web and at the bottom of each syllabus:**

Please Note: This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Appointments:

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via E-mail: westfal@mcmaster.ca

I'm available for appointments

Office Hours: TBA

NT1A03 Daily Schedule

DATE	CLASS SESSION	Intro to Bib Interp <i>How to Read</i> — (<i>italics</i>)
Jan 3	Introduction to course Introduction: Identifying fallacies/Scripture Twisting	
Jan 10	The process of writing an exegetical paper Bring first journal entry to class	Steps to Exegesis Carson 1-66
Jan 17	The process of writing an exegetical paper	Steps to Exegesis Carson 67-90
Jan 24	The goal and activities of interpretation	Fee 17-31 Carson 91-126
Jan 31	The Canon and translations	Fee 33-53 Carson 127-144
Feb 7	Interpreting & applying the NT Epistles	Fee 55-87
Feb 14	Interpreting & applying Narratives/stories	Fee 89-162
Feb 21	Reading Week	
Feb 28	Interpreting & applying the Law and Prophecy	Fee 163-204, 249-68
March 7	Interpreting & applying Poetry Exegetical Paper due at 10:30 a.m.	Fee 205-48
March 14	History of interpretation	KBH 23-62
March 21	Recent approaches	KBH 63-101
March 30	The role of the interpreter	KBH 135-68
April 4	Scripture Twisting Journal due at 10:30 a.m. Group and class discussion	
April 11	Final: Projects due & presented in Groups Reading reports due by e-mail	

Grading of written materials will be based on the following general criteria

Grade Range	Content	Argument	Presentation
90–100 85–89 80–84	Mastery of subject matter; creativity and individualized integration of insights and their relationships; exceeds required elements	Clear, logical structure; with comprehensive introduction, persuasive argumentation, and innovative conclusions	Detailed adherence to relevant style for formatting of text, notes, and bibliography; no errors of grammar or syntax; elegant presentation
77–79 73–76 70–72	Above-average grasp of principles and concepts, and their inter-relationship; completion of all required elements	Coherent structure and consistent argumentation; well-stated introduction and conclusion	General adherence to relevant style and format; few errors of grammar or syntax
67–69 63–66 60–62	Adequate understanding of theoretical foundations; minimal completion of required elements	Rudimentary structure; minimal introductory and concluding statements	Significant errors of grammar, syntax, or style
57–59 53–56 50–52	Low level of comprehension; required elements incomplete or missing	Lack of coherence or structure in argumentation; no introduction or conclusion	Abundant grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic errors
0–49 %	Inability to grasp basic concepts; required elements missing	Incomprehensible or illogical structure and argumentation	Failure to follow stylistic guidelines; incomprehensible syntax