



BIBS 225/325

Special Topic: Approaches to Hermeneutics

Course Outline 2020

SEMESTER 1 2020

Lectures/Videoconferenes:

Mondays 1:00-2:50 pm;

Evening Videoconference:

Monday, 6 April, 6:10-8:00pm

Distance students only

Lecturer:

Dr Don Moffat

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Welcome to this course on the art of biblical hermeneutics. Each time we read a text, whether it is a road sign, an email or an academic book, we work out the meaning by interpreting the text we read. This course is an exploration of the processes we use when seeking to understand biblical texts. While we will look at process and technique, interpretation is an art as much as a science. There are rules and processes that need to be followed but issues such as our context, “feel” for the text, and the weighting of influences on the writer and reader, mean every reading is unique. The Bible is literature; interpreting it, like any other piece of literature, means we follow certain conventions, but it is always influenced by a wider set of factors that are not measurable.

This course has three primary goals. First, to give you background knowledge of the history and early critical approaches to interpretation. Second, to practice the core skills of interpreting the Bible. Third, to expose you to some of the breadth of specialised hermeneutical tools. We will begin by surveying some of the history of biblical interpretation and then examining the set of tools that began the Post-Enlightenment critical approach. This will be followed by a focus on acquisition of the genre specific skills that are relevant to biblical texts. The final third of the course will explore some of the more specialist tools that enable us to ask specific questions of the text and look at how hermeneutics relates to modern debates about the meaning of the Bible. Hermeneutics is a large and growing field in biblical studies and we will not be able to cover everything. Therefore, we will focus on core methods and note some of the range of specialist critical approaches.

LECTURER'S INTRODUCTION

The lecturer for this paper is Dr. Don Moffat, who is the Sir Paul Reeves’ Lecturer in Biblical Studies at St John’s Theological College and visiting lecturer in the Otago Theology Programme. Dr. Moffat is based in Auckland. He can be contacted by phone on: (09) 557 0643 or by email: don.moffat@otago.ac.nz.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At 200-level

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- discuss critical issues associated with the historical development of Biblical hermeneutics
- analyse, evaluate, compare and contrast views arising from the application of hermeneutical methods to biblical texts.
- assess the implications of hermeneutical debates for the 21st century.
- demonstrate interpretative skills by the exegesis of selected texts.

At 300-level

In addition to those at 200-level, you should be able to:

- critique arguments by in-depth research on particular topics
- critically evaluate one interpretive method or issue in biblical studies

TEACHING

- Weekly lectures with classes in Auckland, video linked to Dunedin campus or accessible online. The lectures are recorded and the recordings can be accessed through Blackboard.

ASSESSMENT

- Critical examination of a Biblical passage worth 20%
- Two essays worth 40% each

RESOURCES

- Blackboard, the University's online learning tool;
- This Course Outline and the Study Guide
- eReserve, a resource for electronic readings, which you can access via Blackboard;
- The Programme's "Style Guide" which recommends students use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide when writing essays. It is available online at <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>
- The handbook *Distance Learning Information and Support*, providing advice on administrative matters not covered in this Course Outline and on the Distance Library Service. (You may download the PDF from the 'Essential Information' web page).

THIS IS IMPORTANT!

Please Note: You must have access to Blackboard and your University email address in order to complete this paper. You will receive access once your enrolment is complete. Communications from your lecturer regarding teaching matters will be provided only through Blackboard and your University email address, as outlined in the University's Student Communications Policy, so you must check these emails regularly. eVision will also send important messages through your University email. If you have any concerns about your access to Blackboard or to other course resources, please contact the lecturer or administrative staff immediately so that these can be resolved.

You will find there is a lot of helpful information and resources on the Theology Programme website. In particular, we require you to read the section called "Essential Student Information." You will find it here:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

This page provides a number of useful resources such as the Style Guide and the Plagiarism Declaration Form you must attach to your assignments. It supplies detailed information on assessment and student support. In particular, it contains guidance on the topics of plagiarism and deadlines, both of which can incur penalties if not heeded. This also is where you will find instructions for making online discussion posts and submitting assignments electronically. So it is very important you make yourself familiar with this material. Our assumption is that you have read it.

We will make reference to information on the website in the following pages, so do take the time to follow the links and absorb the material. It will save you from making costly mistakes and help to make the practical experience of distance study a straightforward one.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Please note that all weekly lectures are taught as videoconferences. The lecture will be accessible on campus in Dunedin, at St John's Theological College in Auckland, or online via Zoom.

Week 1: Monday 24 February (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Introductions:

Topic 1: Introducing Hermeneutics: the art of interpreting the Bible

Week 2: Monday 2 March (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 2a: Understanding the History: Jewish & Christian Interpretation

Topic 2b: Foundational Approaches: Historical Criticism

Week 3: Monday 9 March (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 3: Foundational Approaches: Text & Source Criticism

Week 4: Monday 16 March (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 4: Foundational Approaches: Form Criticism & Redaction Criticism

Week 5: Monday 23 March (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 5: New literary Approaches: Narrative, Rhetorical, and others

Assignment A: Critical review due Friday 27th March**Week 6: Monday 30 March (1.00-2.50 p.m.)**

Topic 6: Building skills: The foundations

Week 7: Monday 6 April (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 7: Building skills: Genre specific (Narrative, Poetry, Wisdom, Prophecy)

Monday 6th April, 8.10-9.00 pm. Videoconference for Distance Students only

Mid-Semester and Easter Break, 13 April - 17 April**Week 8: Monday 20 April (1.00-2.50 p.m.)**

Topic 8: Building skills; Genre Specific (Apocalyptic, Biography, Parable, Epistle)

Assignment B: Essay due Friday 1st May**ANZAC Day Observed – No Class Monday 27th April****Week 9: Monday 4 May (1.00-2.50 p.m.)**

Topic 9: Contextual Approaches: Social Scientific Criticism

Week 10: Monday 11 May (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 10: Challenging the constructed norm: Feminist Criticism, Ideological Criticism

Week 11: Monday 18 May (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 11: Contextualisation: South Pacific Hermeneutics

Week 12: Monday 25 May (1.00-2.50 p.m.)

Topic 12: Contemporary issues: Ecology and Sexuality

Assignment C: Essay due Friday 5th June**VIDEOCONFERENCES**

All lectures will be conducted as videoconferences. This will allow participation in the lecture by all students whether campus based or distance. If you are unable to attend a videoconference, or want to review a lecture, a recording will be available from the Blackboard site for this paper.

There will be **one evening videoconference for Distance Students** unable to join the live lectures. This will be held from **6.10 – 8.00 pm on Monday 6 April**. It will provide a review and summary of the course to date and will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions you have about the course. An additional evening can be arranged if required in the latter part of the semester.

Accessing the Videoconferences

Videoconferences are taught using Zoom. Dunedin campus students can access by going to eConferencing in the Link. Auckland students can attend the lecture at St Johns College. Other distance students will need a computer with access to reliable broadband, a microphone and headphones (or headset), a web camera, and a quiet place to yourself with no distractions. Please ensure that you have tested your connection prior to the first videoconference. Full instructions on using Zoom are given on the 'Essential Information'

web page, and the 'Zoom Videoconferences' link on Blackboard (where you will find the URL you need to join).

If you are obliged to miss a lecture or videoconference you can find a recording on Blackboard under the 'Zoom Videoconferences' Link.

ASSIGNMENTS

200-level Assignments

Assignment A: Critical review

Value: 20%

Word Limit: 1200 words.

Date Due: **Friday 27th March**

Choose one of the articles listed below and write a critical review. Your review should briefly describe the contents of the article and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. You should support your evaluations with clear reasoning and references to your wider reading on Hermeneutics.

Louis Panier, "From Biblical Text to Literary Enunciation and its Subject" in *Semeia* Vol. 81 (1998), 63-75.

Emily O. Gravett, "Biblical Reponses: Past and Present Retellings of the Enigmatic Mrs Job" in *Biblical Interpretation* Vol. XX (2012), 97-125.

Tevita T.M. Puloka, "Hermeneutics is Body, Mind and Heart Dancing the *Haka*" *The Pacific Journal of Theology* Series II No. 46 (2011), 4-18.

These readings can be found on eReserve

Assignment B: Essay

Value: 40%

Word Limit: 2500 words

Due Date: **Friday 1st May**

Choose one of the following passages, outline and discuss the application of one hermeneutical approach to understanding the text (for example historical criticism, literary criticism, social scientific criticism, feminist criticism; you may choose another). Your essay should include some exegetical engagement with the text.

- Judges 19:22-30
- Psalm
- Amos 8:4-10
- Nehemiah 6:1-19
- Matthew 14:13-21
- Luke 18:9-14
- 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
- Revelation 21:1-8

Assignment C: Essay

Value: 40%.
Word Limit: 2500 words
Due Date: **Friday 5th June**

Choose one of the topics below, which reflect current or recent church debates. Identify biblical texts that are significant to the topic and describe the hermeneutical issues that are raised by those attempting to interpret the texts for application in the context of the debate.

- Sexuality and Church Leadership
- Sexuality and marriage
- Environmental concerns and Christian Responsibility
- Women and Church leadership
- Bicultural/multicultural relations
- Christian relations with other faiths

300-level Assignments**Assignment A: Critical Review**

Value: 20%
Word Limit: 1500 words.
Date Due: **Friday 27th March**

Choose one of the articles listed below and write a critical review. Your review should briefly describe the contents of the article and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses. You should support your evaluations with clear reasoning and references to your wider reading on Hermeneutics.

Izzak J. de Hulster, "Imagination: A Hermeneutical Tool for the Study of the Hebrew Bible" *Biblical Interpretation* Vol. XVIII No. 1 (2010), 114-136.

Elaine Wainwright, "Place, Power and Potentiality: Reading Matthew 2:1-12 Ecologically" *The Expository Times* Vol. 121 No. 4 (2010), 159-167.

David F. Ford, "Meeting Nicodemus: A Case Study in Daring Theological Interpretation" *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 66 No. 1 (2013), 1-17.

Assignment B: Essay

Value: 40%
Word Limit: 3000 words
Due Date: **Friday 1st May**

Choose one of the following passages, outline and discuss the application of one hermeneutical approach to understanding the text (for example historical criticism, literary criticism, social scientific criticism, feminist criticism; you may choose another). Your essay should include some exegetical engagement with the text.

- Judges 19:22-30
- Psalm
- Amos 8:4-10
- Nehemiah 6:1-19

- Matthew 14:13-21
- Luke 18:9-14
- 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
- Revelation 21:1-8

Assignment C: Essay

Value: 40%.

Word Limit: 3000 words

Due Date: **Friday 5th June**

Choose one of the topics below, which reflect current or recent church debates. Identify biblical texts that are significant to the topic and describe the hermeneutical issues that are raised by those attempting to interpret the texts for application in the context of the debate.

- Sexuality and Church Leadership
- Sexuality and marriage
- Environmental concerns and Christian Responsibility
- Women and Church leadership
- Bicultural/multicultural relations
- Christian relations with other faiths

REFERENCING SYSTEM

For writing essays, the Theology Programme requires that you use the 16th edition of the Chicago Style Guide, which is the norm for many academic journals in the Humanities and is often recommended for theses in the humanities. The Programme has prepared a Style Guide, which outlines the Chicago Style and offers other advice on essay presentation. You may find it via the Theology Programme's "Student Resources and Information" page:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

SUBMITTING WRITTEN WORK

All assignments shall be submitted **electronically** via the "Assignment" feature on Blackboard by **midnight** on the due dates notified. Please do not submit paper copies. For full instructions about how to submit assignments electronically via Blackboard as well as other important information on plagiarism, grading, and deadlines, please see the "Essential Information" web page.

All Assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form. They will not be deemed to have been submitted unless and until the Plagiarism Declaration Form has been submitted. It can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/>

It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All Assignments submitted in the Theology Programme must be prefaced with a student Plagiarism Declaration Form.

It can be downloaded from <http://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/studentresources/> It is also on the Blackboard site for this course.

Academic integrity means being honest in your studying and assessments. It is the basis for ethical decision-making and behaviour in an academic context. Academic integrity is informed by the values of honesty, trust, responsibility, fairness, respect and courage. Students are expected to be aware of, and act in accordance with, the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

Academic Misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a breach of Academic Integrity and is taken very seriously by the University. Types of misconduct include plagiarism, copying, unauthorised collaboration, taking unauthorised material into a test or exam, impersonation, and assisting someone else's misconduct. A more extensive list of the types of academic misconduct and associated processes and penalties is available in the University's Student Academic Misconduct Procedures.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and use acceptable academic practices when completing your assessments. To access the information in the Academic Integrity Policy and learn more, please visit the University's Academic Integrity website at www.otago.ac.nz/study/academicintegrity or ask at the Student Learning Centre or Library. If you have any questions, ask your lecturer.

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116838.html>

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago116850.html>

STUDENT SUPPORT

The "**Essential Information**" web page provides helpful information on how to access the University Library's resources, as well as a guide to the support services available to students at the University of Otago, including the Student Learning Centre and Disability Support.

For all **administrative** enquiries, please contact the Theology Administrator:
Email: theology@otago.ac.nz Phone: 03 479 8639

We recommend that you contact the Programme as soon as possible if you have any problems participating in the course or accessing resources. Please remember to check your University email account regularly for updates and announcements.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note that this bibliography is indicative only. Its focus is core material and introductions of various methods. There is a great deal of very good material on various aspects of hermeneutics. Please make sure you look closely at the library catalogue.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.

_____. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Amit, Yairah. *Reading Biblical Narrative*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001.

Bar-Efrat, S. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. New York: T&T Clark, 1992.

Berlin, A. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

Carson, D.A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

Cosgrove, Charles H. (ed.) *The Meanings We Choose. Hermeneutical Ethics, Indeterminacy and the Conflict of Interpretation*, JSOTSS 411, London: T&T Clark, 2004.

Countryman, L. William, *Interpreting the Truth. Changing the Paradigm of Biblical Studies*, Harrisburg: Trinity Continuum, 2003.

Deppe, D.B. *All Roads Lead to the Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Fee, G. & D. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*. Grand Rapids; Zondervan 1993.

Fokkelman, J.P. *Reading Biblical Narrative*. Scholekserstraat: Deo Publishing, 1999.

_____. *Reading Biblical Poetry*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Gillingham, S. *The Image, the Depths and the Surface. Multivalent Approaches to Biblical Study*. JSOTSS 354, Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 2001.

_____. *One Bible, Many Voices*, London: SPCK, 1998.

Goldingay, J. *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation*. Leicester: Apollos, 1990.

Gray, P. *Opening Paul's Letters*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.

Hartley, H-A. *Making Sense of the Bible*, London: SPCK, 2011.

Hayes, J.H. & C.R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginners Guide*. 2nd Ed. Atlanta: John Knox, 1987.

Horrell, David G. *The Bible and the Environment. Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*, London: Equinox, 2010

Klein, W.W., C.L. Blomberg, R.L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Dallas: Word, 1993.

Kugel, J.L. *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University, 1981.

Lawrence, Louise J. *The Word in Place. Reading the New Testament in Contemporary Contexts*. London: SPCK, 2009.

Law, David R. *The Historical Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: T&T Clark, 2012.

LeMon, J.M. & K.H. Richards, *Method Matters*. Atlanta; SBL, 2009.

Longenecker, R. *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975 (1983, 1995, 1999).

Lundin, R., C. Walhout, A.C. Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1981.

Marchal, J.A. *Studying Paul's Letters* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

Osbourne, G.R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1991.

Penner, T. & D.C. Lopez, *De-Introducing the New Testament*. Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Petersen, D.L. & K.H. Richards, *Interpreting Hebrew Poetry*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Russell, Letty M. *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1985.

Seow. Choon-Leong, *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

Shanks, Hershel (ed.) *Feminist Approaches to the Bible*, Biblical Archaeological Society, 1995.

Stein, R.H. *A Basic Guide to Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids; Baker, 1994.

Sternberg, M. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*. Bloomington; Indiana University, 1987.

Stuart, D. *Old Testament Exegesis*. 2nd Ed. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984.

Thiselton, A.C. *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Uffenheimer, B. & H. Graf Reventlow (eds.) *Creative Biblical Exegesis. Christian and Jewish Hermeneutics through the Centuries*, JSOTSS 59, Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1988.

Wegner, Paul D. *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*, Leicester: IVP, 2006.

THEOLOGY PROGRAMME

University of Otago, PO Box 56, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand
www.otago.ac.nz/theology