

BSG5510: FUNDAMENTALS OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
[MACMHC STUDENTS ONLY]

Fall Semester, 2020

Tuesday, 6:00-7:20 p.m., Online & Synchronous

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This course format consistently meets the same quality, assessment, learning outcomes and requirements of the traditional semester course format.

I. Course Description

Mental health professionals will often encounter clients operating from within a Christian world view. This course seeks to provide these professionals with a framework for examining how an individual's interpretations of discrete Scriptures position him or her for greater or diminished mental and relational health. In particular, the course seeks to equip future counselors to help disentangle interpretations of Scripture that perpetuate dysfunction and to help construct interpretations that are both sound and healthful.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

- 1a. Discuss what interpreters bring to the text in terms of social location, theological commitments, and community of reading, and how these factors shape their interpretations of a text.
- 1b. Critically engage the text's language, genre, literary forms, and narrative and/or argumentative development.
- 1c. Apply information about the historical and socio-cultural context pertinent to understanding the text.
- 2-6. Not Assessed in this course.

III. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks

Barreto, Eric D. and Michael J. Chan. *Exploring the Bible*. Fortress, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-5064-0104-1.
Instone-Brewer, David. *Moral Questions of the Bible: Timeless Truth in a Changing World*. Lexham, 2019. ISBN: 978-1683592952.
Richter, Sandra. *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament*. IVP Academic, 2008. ISBN: 978-0830825776.

A Bible in one of the following translations: New Revised Standard Version (suggested), Today's New International Version, English Standard Version, New Living Translation, or Common English Bible.

Recommended

Gorman, Michael J., ed. *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible*. Baker Academic, 2017. ISBN: 9780801098390.

B. Attendance Statement

According to the Student Handbook, attendance at all class sessions is expected, unless the professor has been notified in advance and has approved the absence. Students should be on time and should stay through the duration of all classes. Any student missing 3 hours of class time will be required to do additional work. Students missing more than the equivalent of 9 hours will not receive credit for the course. *Time missed due to late logins or early departures will be counted toward the four-hour limit.*

Incompletes and Extensions will be given only in the case of unforeseen events that prevent completion of coursework in a timely manner. Full schedules and events that arise due to the normal course of ministry or employment do not fall into this category.

A note about etiquette – in person and online

The practice of civility and the willingness to be fully present are fundamental to the ministry of counseling. Please see this course as an opportunity to practice these virtues by giving your full attention to your classmates and professor.

- Be ready to begin at 6:00.
- Keep your video on for the duration of the class. Check your audio and video beforehand to ensure that they are working.
- Resist the temptation to check email, surf the web, or undertake online activities outside of the class while it is in session.

C. Assignments/Assessment of Student Learning

Discussion Forums

Writing prompts will be unlocked on Blackboard at the end of class each week to guide your reading and reflection and prepare you for the next class. Typically, you will be asked: 1) before each class, to write a paragraph in response to the prompt and a paragraph in response to what one of your group members has posted; and 2) after each class, a paragraph that reflects on information from the class. Posts not uploaded by the scheduled date will receive an automatic one-grade deduction.

Richter Reflection Paper

A review and reflection of 4-6 pages on *The Epic of Eden*, comprising the following elements:

1. Begin by identifying Richter's thesis and summarizing her argument. That is, what would Richter say about the message of the Old Testament, in one sentence? How does she develop her argument? Summarize the content succinctly but fully.
2. Describe how you understand Richter's approach to interpretation in one paragraph. How does she interpret the Bible? How does she address the "Three Worlds" of biblical interpretation?
3. Interact with Richter. Elaborate new insights. Evaluate her approach. Grapple with points of disagreement. How has she helped you read the Old Testament in a new way? What do you think about her approach? What questions has she raised for you? How might Richter help you to distinguish healthy or good interpretations from harmful or skewed interpretations?

Theology of Scripture Paper,

This assignment asks you to reflect on how your mind has changed or stayed the same, as a result of what you've learned in the course, in a paper of 5-7 pages. The paper will express your thinking on the following topics:

1. A paragraph that describes the ideas about the Bible and its interpretation you had at the start of the course.
2. 4-5 pages on:
 - How you describe what the Bible is and how it shapes Christian faith, thinking, and practice
 - What you regard as elements of faithful interpretation. That is, what approaches, understandings, and methods do you believe are necessary for an interpretation of Scripture that positions the reading for mental and spiritual well-being?
4. 1-2 pages on how you see your view of Scripture enhancing your spiritual journey and helping you to give counsel, where relevant, to Christian clients.

Support your ideas with information and insights from the reading and class sessions and with brief interactions with select biblical texts. Write the paper as if you were explaining your thinking to a friend who is asking these questions. Be clear and concise, and explain your ideas fully.

D. Writing and Classroom Guidelines

1. Submissions

All written work will be uploaded to the course Blackboard site.

2. Writing Matters

Papers are to be *descriptive* and *analytical*, exhibit clear organization of thought, and give proper attention to style and grammar. Correct and complete documentation of sources must be followed, as specified in the *ATS Writing Handbook*. Papers are to be typed and doubled-spaced with one inch margins and with font set at 12 point Times New Roman.

Evaluation of papers will be based on the depth of critical interaction with the topic, coherence and organization of ideas, clarity of writing, and informed incorporation of secondary materials. Papers will receive a deduction in grade if:

- The paper is less than or more than the assigned limits (up to one grade deduction per page)
- The paper is submitted after the due date (one grade deduction after one week).
- The paper does not follow the correct format for documenting sources (up to one grade deduction).

3. No written work will be accepted after 6:00 p.m., December 15.

E. Calculation of Grade and Connection of Learning Outcomes

Assignments	Learning Outcomes	Percent of Final Grade
Richter Reflection	1a, 1c	20%
Theology of Scripture	1a, 1b, 1c	30%
Discussion Forums	1b	50%

IV. Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Date(s)	Lecture/Topic	Assignments
1	September 1	Introducing the Bible	
2	September 8	The Composition of Biblical Books	<i>Mark 5:1-20; Matthew 8:28-9:1</i> Barreto & Chan 1, 3
3	September 15	The Biblical Canons	<i>Jude</i> Barreto & Chan 4
4	September 22	Transmission and Translation	Online readings, TBA Barreto & Chan 5 Richter Assignment, TBA
5	September 29	Three Biblical Worlds	<i>Acts 10-15</i> Barreto & Chan 2, 6-7, Appendix

			Instone-Brewer, 3-26
6	October 6	Creation	<i>Genesis 1-11</i> Barreto & Chan 8
7	October 13	Narrative	<i>Ruth 1-4</i> Barreto & Chan 13
8	October 20	Law and Covenant	<i>Exodus 2-24</i> Barreto & Chan 9, 11
9	October 27	Psalms and Prayers	<i>Psalms 8, 13, 18, 22, 23, 51, 109, 116, 145, 146</i> Barreto & Chan 10 Richter Reflection Paper Due
10	November 3	Wisdom	<i>Proverbs 1-10; Job 1-10; Ecclesiastes 1-3, 8-9</i> Barreto & Chan 12
11	November 10	Prophecy	<i>Amos 1-9; Isaiah 1, 6-9; Jeremiah 7, 26, 28</i> Barreto & Chan, 13
12	November 17	The Synoptic Gospels	<i>Mark 1-13; Matthew 13; Luke 8</i> Barreto & Chan 14
	November 24	Thanksgiving Break	Class does not meet
13	December 1	Epistles	<i>Romans 1-16</i> Barreto & Chan 15
14	December 8	Johannine Literature	<i>John 1-4, 11-20; Revelation 1-7, 17, 20-21</i> Barreto & Chan 16 Theology of Scripture Paper due
15	December 15	The Bible and Human Sexuality	Reading assignment TBA

V. Recommendations for Lifelong Learning

1. Relevant modules from Logos Bible Software.
<https://www.logos.com/pastors1?googleads&gclid=Cija1pTqnLOCFYt9OgodPDEA8g>
3. Listen to podcasts or watch an online videos featuring a lecture or discussion by biblical scholars on topics of interest. See, for example, the Bible Odyssey site hosted by the Society of Biblical Literature at [Bible Odyssey](#)

VI. Seminary Guidelines

A. ATS Academic Integrity Policy

Ashland Theological Seminary expects each student to uphold the Seminary's core value of academic excellence by contributing to an environment that is both challenging and supportive. In such an

environment a student will neither seek nor offer improper assistance. All students have an obligation to be forthright in their academic endeavors and to respect ethical standards. The work that one submits for academic evaluation must be one's own, unless an instructor expressly permits certain types of collaboration. Academic integrity requires that each student will use one's own capabilities to achieve one's fullest potential and will neither offer nor accept aid that is not in keeping with regularly accepted standards of academic integrity. Failure to conform to this conduct shall constitute academic dishonesty. The full Academic Integrity Policy statement may be found in the *Student Handbook*.

B. Ashland Multiliteracy Center for Writing, Speaking, And Digital Communication

The Ashland Multiliteracy Center Service can help you brainstorm, draft, and revise your writing assignments in your graduate Seminary classes. Masters and doctoral qualified Consultants can advise you online or in person.

To schedule an appointment, visit [Ashland Multiliteracy Center](#) and select "Online and Graduate" from the schedule menu.

C. Accessibility Resources and Accommodations

It is Ashland University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please contact the Student Accessibility Center at 419-289-5904, or send an email to dservices@ashland.edu. The Student Accessibility Center office and the course instructor will work together in order to establish accommodations and to meet your learning needs.

ATS Grading Scale

Grade	Quality	Percent	Description
A	4.0	97-100	Superior achievement of course objectives, diligence and originality, high degree of freedom from error, outstanding evidence of ability to utilize course knowledge, initiative expressed in preparing and completing assignments, positive contributions verbalized in class.
A-	3.7	92-96	
B+	3.3	89-91	
B	3.0	86-88	Good work submitted, commendable achievement of course objectives, some aspects of the course met with excellence, substantial evidence of ability to utilize course material, positive contributions verbalized in class, consistency and thoroughness of work completed.
B-	2.7	83-85	
C+	2.3	80-82	
C	2.0	77-79	Acceptable work completed, satisfactory achievement of course objectives, demonstrating at least some ability to utilize course knowledge, satisfactory class contribution.
C-	1.7	74-76	
D+	1.3	71-73	
D	1.0	68-70	Passing but minimal work, marginal achievement of course objectives, poor performance in comprehension of work submitted, inadequate class contributions.
D-	0.7	65-67	
F	0.0	Below 65	Unacceptable work resulting in failure to receive class credit, inadequacy of work submitted or of performance and attendance in class.

Hawk's Interpretation of the ATS Grading Scale

- A** Signifies work that generally reflects a depth of research, thought and critical thinking, and may include an insight I haven't thought of before or information I haven't encountered. Sparks are flying. You've got me thinking!
- B** Signifies work that reflects thoughtful integration, a direct and careful engagement with the assignment, and sound critical thinking. I experience a deep sense of fulfillment that learning has taken place.
- C** Signifies a minimal engagement with the assignment characterized by a perfunctory or hackneyed response and shallow critical reflection. I yawn.
- D** Signifies gaps in thinking or a deficient response to the readings or written work. I reach for my Tums.
- F** Signifies failure to address the core components of the reading or written assignments. I turn on reruns of Green Acres in a vain attempt to restore my cheery disposition.

VII. Selected Bibliography

A core bibliography of recommended works will be distributed during the course.

VIII. Hawk's Compositional Caveats (Redacted by Colijn)

1. Each paper should present a thesis: an argument or perspective on the topic that will be developed in the paper. At some point (usually early on), the thesis should be articulated in a statement that clearly and succinctly defines the topic and your approach to it.
2. Your thesis should be developed in an organized and coherent fashion. Paragraphs should follow in logical order, with transitional sentences to guide your reader. To achieve coherence, you may find it helpful to make an outline of the paper before writing it.
3. Each paragraph should develop a *single* idea, introduced by a topic sentence.
4. Generally, paragraphs should comprise three or more sentences. Fewer sentences rarely allow the opportunity to develop an idea. Paragraphs, however, usually should not be longer than one page.
5. *Your* analysis and perspective should provide the primary focus and organization of the paper. Do not let secondary sources draw most of your conclusions for you. Use secondary sources to support and supplement your own research.
6. Support all assertions, conclusions, and assessments with relevant information. Give examples. Your position is stronger if you draw support from the biblical text rather than from secondary sources alone.
7. Be sure to spell out the implications of your observations. Draw explicit conclusions. Explain the significance of your findings. Always ask yourself, "So what?"
8. Information of a general nature should be synthesized from a number of sources and presented in your own words. Information unique to a particular source must be documented.
9. Use quotations sparingly – only when the information or perspective is unique or is presented in a distinctive and particularly helpful fashion.
10. Make sure all quotations are explained and integrated into the paper so that your reader can appreciate their relevance.
11. Present most information from secondary sources in your own words. Paraphrasing shows that you understand the material. Be sure to recast the information completely; changing a word here or there is not paraphrase but an inaccurate and unacknowledged quotation.
12. Document both quotations and paraphrases from secondary sources. Follow Turabian format *carefully*. If more than one of your paragraphs refers to the same source, document each paragraph.
13. Use good scholarly sources, those that not only give conclusions but define the issues, present relevant supporting material, and/or survey scholarship on the topic. Don't neglect journal articles (available through the *ATLASerials* online databases).
14. Avoid wordiness. Strive for clarity.
15. Use active voice whenever possible. Referring to yourself in the first person (as "I") is permissible as long as you do so sparingly and don't put yourself in the foreground.
16. Use complete sentences. Sentence fragments are rarely effective in formal writing.
17. Don't join independent clauses with a comma; use a semicolon, as in this sentence.
18. When beginning a sentence, a modifier must refer to the subject of the sentence, as in this example.
19. The pronoun "they" is still considered a plural pronoun in most formal writing. For inclusive language, use a plural noun with "they" or use a singular noun with "he or she."
20. Proofread your paper. If you have difficulty doing this, find an editor.
21. Good writing is rewriting!