

BSG 5501 DL: Engaging Texts and Contexts

ASHLAND THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

August 31 – December 14, 2020

Online, with weekly synchronous meeting on Mondays, 7–8 p.m.

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(Email is best means of contact, due to working from home)

I. Course Description

This course introduces students to a three-fold framework for biblical interpretation involving the investigation of the “world in front of the text” (between the text’s composition and us as readers), the “world within the text” (the close reading of the text itself), and the “world behind the text” (the environment and situation that contributes to the occasion and shaping of the text, and therefore its contextual interpretation). The applicability of this model also to the literature and contexts of other curricular areas will also be demonstrated.

II. Course Format

This course will meet for one hour (by Zoom) each Monday, 7–8 p.m. The learner will need access to high-speed internet, a simple headset with microphone, and a room free of interruptions. Attire should be suitable for attending class, and students should show the consideration of refraining from eating during class.

Additional lecture material will be viewed online. Homework will be submitted online. Similarly, discussion forums and any small group activities will be handled online.

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

III. Student Learning Outcomes

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

- 1a. Articulate their own personal social context and what that brings 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. Engage with the text’s language, genre, literary forms, and narrative and/or argumentative development.
- 1c. Apply evidence about the historical and socio-cultural context pertinent to understanding the text.
- 1d. Explain how the text came to be from original composition to translation and the import of this narrative for interpretation.
- 2-6. Not assessed in this course.

IV. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks and Other Materials

Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. New York: Harper Collins, 2007.
ISBN 9780061231186.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (3rd edition).* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-3105-2417-5.
Also available through Faithlife / Logos Bible software as a digital resource.

Peterson, Eugene. *Eat this Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8028-2948-1.

*Note: So that the entire class will have continuity of biblical expression for inductive study in this course, we will employ the NRSV. It is not necessary to use the particular layout or Harper Collins edition listed above, but **you will need to own a copy of the NRSV for use both in class and for homework.***

B. Attendance

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. The following obtains for any student in a face-to-face course who miss more than six class hours (2 weeks), or for any student in an online course who is inactive for two weeks: he or she will be required to do additional work, receive a lower grade, audit or withdraw from the class, or be penalized otherwise at the discretion of the professor.

For an online course, inactivity for two weeks may result in student's withdrawal from the course.

A student who is absent is responsible to learn from a classmate what was covered in the missed lecture, including obtaining handouts and assignment explanations.

Late Assignments will incur a reduction of approximately one-half of a letter grade for each day late.

Extensions will be possible only in the case of an emergency (such as a death in the family). Except for an emergency, the course must be completed in normal semester time frame.

C. Assignments/Assessment of Student Learning

Note: (a) Assignments will be explained more fully in class, and
(b) All assignments will be submitted electronically through Blackboard.

1. Weekly Assignments will help the student to recognize targeted features in selected biblical text(s), inductively. Weekly assignments are issued in pairs. The first of each pair is pass/fail, the second will be scored more rigorously using a numerical assessment.
2. The Term Project will give the student an opportunity to research and write concerning specific hermeneutic skills, applied to a selected biblical text(s), in a 5-15 page paper
3. For *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, a brief online quiz will be given each week in which there is assigned reading.
4. For *Eat This Book*, each week submit two posts:
 - i. Begin by posting an observation arising from the reading. Briefly summarize what you observed (indicate **page and paragraph number**), then interact with it (why was it interesting, inspiring, upsetting, or puzzling, etc.). Posts will be scored based on depth of engagement.
 - ii. Then respond thoughtfully to one classmate's post. Your response again will be scored based on depth of engagement.

D. Calculation of Grade and Connection of Learning Outcomes

Assignments	Learning Outcomes	Percent of Final Grade
Weekly Assignments (5 scored p/f and Biblical authority essay)	1a, b, c	15
Weekly Assignments (5 numerically scored)	1b, c	45
Word Study	1b, c	5
Weekly Reading quizzes and posts	1a, b, c, d	20
Term Project, Part 1	1b, c, d	5
Term Project, Part 2	1b, c, d	5
Term Project, Part 3	1b, c, d	5

V. Course Schedule

This schedule may be modified as the course progresses.

Week / Session #	Week beginning	Lecture/Topic	Assigned This Week, Due at End of This Week		
			IBI Textbook Chapter(s)	Peterson Volume	Weekly Assignments / Term Project¹
1	31-Aug	Background: What is the Bible? Skills: (a) Discovering boundaries (beginnings, endings) (b) Forming historical observations	1. Need for Hermeneutics	Preface and ch. 1	1A. Boundaries and Historical Observations: Prose 'How the Bible is authoritative for me' (a one-page essay)
2	7-Sep	<i>Due to Labor Day, the live session will not convene this week.</i> Background: How is the Bible authoritative? Skills: Forming literary observations in prose	2. History of Interpretation	ch. 2	1B. Boundaries and Historical Observations: Poetry 2A. Literary Observations: Prose
3	14-Sep	Background: How others have interpreted the Bible (history of interp.) Skills: Forming literary observations in poetry	3. Literary Criticism	ch. 3	2B. Literary Observations: Poetry

¹ Assignments in bold are the second of paired assignments, to be scored numerically, not pass / fail.

4	21-Sep	Background: Lenses through which some view the Bible (literary criticism) Skills: Logical outlining in prose	4. Canon	ch. 4	3A. Logical Outline: Prose
5	28-Sep	Background: How books were included in the Bible (canon) Skills: Logical outlining in poetry	5. Interpreter	ch. 5	3B. Logical Outline: Poetry
6	5-Oct	Background: Self-awareness in the process of interpreting (the interpreter) Skills: Interpretive questions in prose	6. Goal of Interpretation	ch. 6	4A. Interpretive Questions: Prose
7	12-Oct	Background: Our goal as we interpret the Bible Skills: Interpretive questions in poetry	7. Prose	ch. 7	4B. Interpretive Questions: Poetry
8	19-Oct	Background: Kinds of prose, and how to navigate them Skill: (a) Forming applications in prose (b) Word studies	8. Poetry	ch. 8	5A. Application: Prose
9	26-Oct	Background: Kinds of poetry, and how to navigate them Skill: Forming applications in poetry	9. Old Testament	ch. 9	Word Study
10	2-Nov	Background: Interpreting various parts of the Old Testament	10. New Testament	☼	5B. Application: Poetry
11	9-Nov	Background: Interpreting various parts of the New Testament	11. Using the Bible Today	☼	Term Project: Part 1
12	16-Nov	A Case Study in the Early Church's Interpretive Method	12. Application	☼	Term Project: Part 2
	23-Nov	Thanksgiving Break			
13	30-Nov	A Case Study in Jesus' Interpretive Method	☼	☼	
14	7-Dec	♦ Open topic	☼	☼	Term Project: Part 3
15	14-Dec	♦ Open topic			

🌀 Additional readings or resources may be assigned during these weeks.

VI. Recommendations for Lifelong Learning

- a. Make it your practice to employ techniques learned in this course when preparing sermons or lectures.
- b. Enroll in an advanced hermeneutics course.
- c. Enroll in an advanced Bible book course.
- d. Design a lay-level course on Bible study techniques, and teach it to a group in your congregation or community.

VII. 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 [AshlandMultiliteracy Center](https://ashlandmywconline.com/) (abbreviated AMuLit Center) (<https://ashlandmywconline.com/>). Or you may go to (<https://www.ashland.edu/administration/graduate-online-adult-center-academic-support/resources-students/graduate-writing-consultation>) and scroll down to “For online appointments”.

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](tel: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.

D. 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.

VIII. Selected Bibliography or References

Please refer to the annotated bibliography found on pp. 637–681 in *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*.