



Grace Communion Seminary

BI501 Hermeneutics

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Michael Morrison, PhD

Course description

This course surveys various methods of analyzing the biblical text, gives a brief introduction to using biblical Greek, and discusses how to use various forms of analysis in exploring the original meaning and contemporary applications of biblical passages.

Required textbooks

Please obtain these books before the class begins. To find the lowest prices on these books, you may find it helpful to use www.bookfinder.com.

Camery-Hoggatt, Jerry. *Reading the Good Book Well: A Guide to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007. 240 pages. ISBN: 0687642752. Cost: about \$28 (Amazon price); new book from third-party seller, about \$17. This is an easy-to-read introduction to biblical studies.

Deddo, Gary. *Scripture: God's Gift*. Glendora, CA: Grace Communion International, 2013. ISBN: 978-1301126286. 34 pages. Free at <http://bit.ly/1orqJTX>.

Green, Joel B., and Max Turner, *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000. 256 pages. 080284541X. Amazon price about \$20; new book from third-party seller \$15.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017. 720 pages. ISBN: 0310524172. New book: Amazon, \$23, third party seller \$22. Second edition is also acceptable.

Recommended textbooks

Keener, Craig S. *The Bible in Its Context: How to Improve Your Study of the Scriptures*. Word document, available at <http://goo.gl/Z4O7mA>.

Morrison, Michael. *Inspiration, Authority, and Reliability of Scripture*. Grace Communion International, 2013. Articles from the GCI website. <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/152565>.

———. *Exploring the Word of God: The Letter to the Hebrews*. A collection of articles, most from the GCI website. PDF and e-book formats free at <https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/372012>.

Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.

Student learning outcomes

Through this course, students will...

1. Describe three major areas of focus for a systematic study of the biblical text: the historical setting, the literary setting, and the setting of the reader.
2. Describe scholarly critical methods of study, including those focusing on the history behind the text, the literary composition of the text, and the role of the reader in grasping the meaning.
3. Describe the structure of biblical Greek, enough so that the student is able to use lexicons, concordances, and understand basic grammatical terms used in exegetical commentaries.
4. Learn to analyze biblical texts using various Bible-study websites, with awareness of the limitations of the resources.
5. Analyze the philosophical foundations of hermeneutics, including the question of where “meaning” is to be sought.
6. With a sample passage from the book of Hebrews, demonstrate sound analysis of a text for use in a sermon.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday for ten weeks. See the *Academic Catalog*, section VI, for study suggestions.
2. **Participate.** Part of the learning that occurs in a class comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. This counts for 10 percent of the final grade.
3. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 1100 pages, or about 100 pages each week, or 14-15 per day. Schedule time each day!
4. **Two quizzes.** These open-book quizzes will help you review some of the lectures. 10 percent of the grade.
5. **Website research assignment.** This project will help you become familiar with some biblical-studies websites. 5 percent.
6. **One 10-page paper, done in two parts.** This counts for 60 percent of the final grade. You will need about 50 hours to work on this – an average of 5 hours per week – some weeks more, some less.
 - 1) Part 1 – due at the end of the seventh week
 - a. Choose one of the passages from the book of Hebrews (see separate document for options and instructions).
 - b. Describe the original setting of the readers.
 - c. Identify the main point being made in that passage for the original readers, and why that point was needed in the original setting.
 - d. Outline the passage with 2–5 subpoints, with attention to the grammar of the passage.
 - e. Describe the literary setting.
 - 2) Part 2 – due at the end of the 12th week
 - a. Verse by verse, explain how the words of the passage help support the point being made in the passage.

- b. Comment on how our own context affects the way we read this passage.
- c. Select one point from the passage that is appropriate in our own context, and outline a message designed to make that point to a contemporary audience.

3) For further details, see “Exegetical Assignment for BI501.”

7. **One final exam.** Must be proctored. This open-book exam will help you review the lectures and readings; it counts for 10 percent of the final grade. There will be 20 multiple-choice questions, and three short essays.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	20	
Reading discussions and making responses	5	10
Taking quizzes	3	15
Website research project	2	5
Taking the final exam	2	10
Reading the textbooks	55	
Studying for quizzes and the final exam	7	
Writing research papers	50	60
Total – about 12 hours each week	144	100

Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

Week	Topic	Assignments during the week
Week 1	Lecture 1A: Introduction to hermeneutics, and why study the Bible? 1B: How do we study the Bible? – a brief guide	Camery-Hoggatt, chapters 1-9 Discussion forum

Week 2	2A: Scholarly study methods that focus on history 2B: Scholarly methods that focus on the text 2C: Scholarly methods that focus on the readers	Camery-Hoggatt, chps. 10-18 Quiz 1 , on biblical criticisms
Week 3	3A: The purpose of sermons 3B: Method of study for sermon preparation	Klein et al., chapters 1-4 Discussion forum
Week 4	4A: Greek nouns, pronouns and adjectives 4B: Greek verbs, adverbs, conjunctions & prepositions	Klein et al., chapters 5 & 7 Quiz 2 , on Greek
Week 5	5A: Bible concordances B: Lexicons C: Dictionaries & encyclopedias D: Interlinear & literal versions E: Introductions & handbooks F: Commentaries	Klein et al., chapters 10-11 Discussion forum
Week 6	Lecture 6: Bible study websites	Klein et al., chapters 8-9, “General Rules” and “Genres of the Old Testament” Discussion forum
Week 7	7A: Suggested strategy for using Bible study websites: Mark 8:31-38 as a case study Lecture appendices A-E show how much good scholarly material is available on the internet. 7B: Word studies, and mistakes to avoid	Klein et al., chapter 12, “Application” Deddo, <i>Scripture: God’s Gift</i> . http://bit.ly/1orqJTX Research Paper , part 1 Due by end of week 7

Week 8	8A: Horizons and spirals 8B: Philosophical issues: where is meaning to be found?	Green & Turner, chap. 4 Klein et al., chap. 6 Website research project
Week 9	9A: How do theology and biblical studies interact? 9B: Theological interpretation	Green & Turner, chps 1-3, 5-6 Discussion forum
Week 10	10A: Application: 1 Tim. 5 as an example of the challenge 10B: Finding applications	Green & Turner, chapters 7-11 Discussion forum
Week 11	Final exam must be proctored, and taken by the end of Sunday, Nov. 26. Please note! The Thanksgiving holiday occurs this week, when GCS offices are closed. Schedule early, perhaps Nov. 16-17 or Nov. 20-21.	
Week 12	Final paper is due by the end of Sunday, December 4, 2017.	