BI 210
ENGLISH BIBLE EXEGESIS 1: OLD TESTAMENT
Fall 2019

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Office hours: Monday, 9:00-10:00; 11:15-1:00; Tuesday, 10:00-11:15; Wednesday, 12:00-2:30; Thursday, 10:00-11:15; others by appointment.

Course Description:
This course introduces the process of Old Testament exegesis and gives students opportunity to practice exegesis of various Old Testament passages from the English Bible. Students will learn to identify and evaluate the literary, social, historical, and canonical contexts of passages and to articulate the meaning of those passages as Christian Scripture. Students will also learn to identify appropriate scholarly resources for Old Testament interpretation.

Course objectives:
At the end of this course students should be able to:
(a) Discuss the nature and character of English translations of the Bible, including the process through which translators do their work and basic features of major translations.
(b) Describe an approach to the interpretation of Old Testament texts based on contemporary hermeneutical theory.
(c) Express a rudimentary understanding of biblical authority from various perspectives.
(d) Write a theologically-sensitive exegetical paper that uses appropriate secondary sources.

Student Learning Outcomes:
This course specifically addresses the following student learning outcomes of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary’s curriculum:
For M.Div. students: “Demonstrate knowledge of the Bible and a capacity to interpret it as Christian Scripture,” and “Demonstrate a capacity to integrate Scripture, Christian history, and theology in relation to the life of the church in the world.”
For MTS students: “Demonstrate ability to reflect on Christian traditions.”
For MAPS students: “Demonstrate a capacity to integrate Scripture, Christian history, and theology in relation to the life of the church in the world,” and “Demonstrate an understanding of Christian ministry using biblical, historical, theological, and contextual insight.

Class Schedule:
Long 207, Wednesdays, 8:30-11:15. Class sessions will be given to lecture and discussion.
Required texts:


Recommended texts:


Course Requirements and Evaluation:
1. Assigned readings from Brown and others posted on mypts. In the course of the semester, read Lapsley. Most of the readings refer to texts from Scripture: be sure to have your Bible handy to follow along with the passages under review in the readings.

2. Short reflection papers due September 11, “Self-exegesis” (see Brown, 12, for questions to address in the paper) 2-4 pages; and September 18, “First Impressions” (see Brown, 22, for questions to address in the paper) 2-4 pages, each worth 5% of the final evaluation. All written work is to be double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12-pt. font, with one-inch margins.

3. A take-home midterm exam (distributed in class October 2; due October 9, worth 20% of the final evaluation) will be given.

4. A critical essay on Lapsley, Whispering the Word (4-6 pages, October 30, worth 10% of the final evaluation), addressing the following questions: What is the author’s purpose? What is the context of the work in scholarship? How does the author make her argument? How is the book useful (or not) in ministry?

5. A 20 page (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, with one-inch margins) exegetical paper on a biblical text chosen in consultation with and approved by the professor (plus cover page and bibliography). The final form must be submitted electronically by December 20.
An outline for this essay is attached to the syllabus. The paper will count for **50% of the final evaluation**. The student should select a passage in consultation with the professor, and begin work on this project, as soon as possible; **a choice must be made by September 18**.

Do not select a single, isolated verse or fraction of a verse. The passage you select to interpret must be a complete unit, with a clear beginning, middle, and end: that way, you will be certain not to go astray from the start by taking a passage out of context. *The HarperCollins Study Bible* divides the biblical text into sections with headings; these divisions could guide your selection. The lectionary readings (see [https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/](https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/)), similarly, generally follow natural units within the biblical text. Passages for exegesis will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

Students must consult the relevant footnotes and introductions from the *HarperCollins Study Bible*, and no fewer than three other sources approved by the professor. All sources used in your paper **must be appropriately cited in footnotes**, and a **bibliography must be provided**. For proper footnote and bibliographical form, see the *Student Handbook* [https://www.pts.edu/UserFiles/File/PDFs/Student%20Handbook%20September%202016.pdf](https://www.pts.edu/UserFiles/File/PDFs/Student%20Handbook%20September%202016.pdf), 69-72 (also under Resources in mypts). Proper footnote and bibliographical form is **required**.

At least one **rough draft of the essay must be submitted (in MS Word) by November 13**; this assignment is worth the remaining **10% of the course grade**. Other drafts may be submitted until **December 13**.

6. Regular attendance is presupposed. **All due dates are final**: work missed may be made up only if the absence was excused.

7. Students who are found to have cheated on an exam or plagiarized a paper or project will receive no credit for that assignment, and may incur additional penalties as well. Please see the *Student Handbook*, 13, 16, 73, for regulations concerning plagiarism, and guidance as to what constitutes plagiarism.

8. In this class, we will abide by the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary **COMMUNITY STANDARDS OF COMMUNICATION AND CONDUCT** (see *Student Handbook*, 7-8, and the course handout under mypts).

9. Barring express permission from the professor, use of the Internet during class and recording of lectures and classroom discussion are prohibited. Please read the seminary policies on Internet use and recording in the classroom in the *Student Handbook*, 19-20.
10. Students who may need accommodations in their classes should contact the Dean of Faculty as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**September 4:**
A. Introduction to the Course and to the Task of Exegesis  
   Read: Brown, 3-10.  

B. Introduction to Accordance Bible software (bring laptop).

**September 11:**
A. Theories of Interpretation  

B. Self-Exegesis  
   Read: Brown, 11-19.  
   **Bring to class a 2-4 page “self-exegesis” that addresses the questions in Brown, 12.**

**September 18:**
Text for exegesis due
A. First Impressions  
   Read: Genesis 1:1—2:4a; 2:4b-25.  
   Brown, 21-22.  
   **After reading Gen 1:1—2:4a, answer the questions in Brown, 22; then do the same for Gen 2:4b-25 (2-4 pages). Bring to class.**

B. Translation and Text Criticism  
   Read: Brown, 25-62.  
   Introduction to *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (xiii-xix) and the NRSV translation (xxi-xxv).  
September 25: A. Style and Structure of Old Testament Passages
   Read: Brown, 63-112.
   Bring to class a draft of an outline of your passage for exegesis. The outline should follow standard outlining format with major headings (I, II, III, etc.) and subheadings at two levels or more (A, B, C, etc.; 1, 2, 3, etc.). Note that this is an outline of the passage (not questions about the passage) and should show how its language unfolds from beginning to end. The headings and subheadings should reflect the language of the passage and should signal the content of each section or subsection.

   B. Resources for Old Testament Interpretation (go to Library reference room).

October 2: Take-home midterm posted.
   A. Compositional and Comparative Analysis
      Read: Brown, 113-143.

   B. Literary and Historical Analysis
      Read: Brown, 145-171.

October 9: No class; MIDTERM DUE, 4:30 PM.

October 14-18: READING WEEK

October 23: A. Canon as Context for Interpretation
   Read: Brown, 175-191.

   B. Science and Ecology
      Read: Brown, 195-245.

October 30: Gender
   Read: Brown, 248-277.
Bring to class a 4-6 page critical essay on Jacqueline Lapsley’s book *Whispering the Word*.

**November 6:**  
Minority  
Read: Brown, 279-326.  

**November 13:**  
First draft of paper due.  
A. Empire  
Read: Brown, 279-91.  

B. Disability  
Read: Brown, 305-316.

**November 20:**  
A. Theology and Authority  

B. Proclamation  
Read: Brown, 329-40.

**November 25-29:**  
THANKSGIVING BREAK

**December 4 and 11:**  
Sharing our research: a 10-15 minute, ungraded presentation of your work.

**December 20:**  
FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER DUE
AN OUTLINE FOR EXEGESIS

I. THE TEXT IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT
   A. Set the borders of your text. Where does this unit begin? Where does it end? What are the markers that set this text off from material before and after it? How does your text fit into its context?
   B. Describe the structure of your text. How is it put together? What techniques are used to set off its parts, or to lead one part into another? Try as much as possible to let the text communicate its structure to you, rather than forcing your structure upon the text. Look for clues like repeated words or phrases, stylized language or shifts in person, style, or method. Make an outline of the text, reflecting this structure.
   C. Identify the literary form of your text. What sort of literature do you find in this text? Is it poetry or prose, law or narrative, wisdom saying or love song? In what social setting would its language be most appropriate: does it belong in the Temple, in the royal court, or in the ordinary round of life? What is the significance of the author’s use of this literary form: how has the author met, or frustrated, or transformed expectations raised by the choice of this particular form?

II. THE TEXT IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT
   A. Identify the probable author, date and setting of your text. Is the text the work of the person to whom its context has attributed it? If not, what clues lead you to believe the text was not authored as attributed? What does the identification of the author tell us about the text, and the text about the author? How does the text fit into its date and place: is it a word out of time, or does it show definite signs of its period? In what setting was this text composed and read? Is it a product of speech, or a literary creation? Who was the probable intended audience for this text?
   B. Briefly trace the composition history of your text. Did one person write the text at one sitting, or has it been subject to later editing and expansion? Where can the signs of such expansion (or deletion) be detected? What interests and attitudes are reflected by the reconstructed “original” text, and by its subsequent reworking? Have the original insights of the text been sharpened, redirected, or obscured by its editorial reworking?
   C. Describe the final canonical shape of your text. Returning to the text on the page, ask how your understanding and appreciation of the final product is affected by your analysis of the text’s history. Considered now as a finished piece of work, what particular insights and attitudes are communicated by the text in its context?

III. THE TEXT IN ITS CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT
   A. Relate the message of your text. What, in fact, does this text say? How and what did it communicate to its first hearers, and to its subsequent readers and redactors?
   B. Draw out the implications of the literary and historical context of your text for its message. How does the medium shape, as well as communicate, the message? Does the historical setting of the text rule out potential readings, or present possibilities that might otherwise be missed?
   C. Apply the message of your text as Christian Scripture. What Christian doctrines are addressed by this passage? How is this text used in later Jewish or Christian tradition? If this passage is used in the Revised Common Lectionary, how does it relate to its setting in the church year, and to the other readings associated with it? If it is not, do you believe that it ought to be? Would you preach or teach this text in your own congregation, and if so, how? How were your own beliefs supported, challenged, or changed by this study?