DESCRIPTION:
An introduction to the theory and practice of biblical interpretation with dual focus on the Bible’s ancient formation and contemporary use.

RATIONALE:
The Bible is the foundational document of the Christian faith, the ability to accurately interpret and understand its message with respect to our contemporary contexts is foundational to the ongoing success of the Christian faith. Therefore, a course that introduces students to the fundamental skills necessary to interpret the Bible for their culture is an extremely important part of every Christian leader's education.

OBJECTIVES:
The student who satisfactorily completes this course should . . .

1) Be able to discuss the role and value of context in biblical exegesis.
2) Be able to prepare and present biblical research following a systematic exegetical model.
3) Be able to identify major figures of speech and other rhetorical devices used in the Bible, and understand the unique interpretive challenges of each.
4) Be able to discuss the need to consider genre of literature when interpreting a biblical passage.
5) Be able to evaluate the use of Scripture in popular, devotional works.

MAJOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND ASSIGNMENTS

How to Submit Assignments (constitutes a part of the “professionalism” grade below).

1) All typed assignments will be submitted via the Moodle course page.
2) All typed assignments must be submitted using Times/Times New Roman font, 12pt, 1 inch margins, double spaced lines.
3) The three exegetical papers must follow proper MLA guidelines, including both parenthetical citations and works cited page.

Required Textbooks


1) Reading

Students will read the book by Fee & Stuart and take careful notes. The notes should not take the form of an outline and should not include extensive quotations of the text. Each person should complete this assignment in a way consistent with his or her own personal note-taking style. After your notes, offer a 2-page (double-spaced) review of possible advantages of the genre-based approach to Scripture which Fee & Stuart promote. (Objectives 1–4)
A typed copy of the notes and review is due on September 12.

Students will read the book by Wright and take careful notes, just as with the Fee & Stewart book. After your notes, offer 2-page (double spaced) review of the possible advantages of reading each individual passage in light of the broader 5-Act narrative which Wright discusses. (Objectives 1–4)

Due October 3.

2) Papers (Please note: with each of the following assignments, the exegesis component should be understood as the primary component, and students should focus on developing their exegesis in the paper as the basis for moving ahead with evaluations of other exegeses.)

Students will write three papers, one from each of the following categories.

Paper 1: Popularly misread verses

Choose EITHER Jeremiah 29:11 OR Philippians 4:13 and write a 4-6 page exegetical paper on this verse within its context. Use “The Steps to Exegesis” below to guide your research. You will be graded on how well you apply the exegetical principles discussed in class. In your analysis and conclusion, apply your exegesis to address popular ways these verses are typically used (and abused). (Objectives 2, 5)

This paper is due October 24

Paper 2

(Please note: This assignment is the course capstone assignment in which students demonstrate their grasp of the material, and their ability to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the course. As such, in order to pass the course, the student must receive a passing grade for this assignment.) This paper will be 8-10 pages and is due December 8.

Choose EITHER Hebrews 6:1-6 OR Luke 12:21-29. Use “The Steps to Exegesis” below to guide your research. You will be graded on how well you apply the exegetical principles discussed in class. If you go this route you must (1) exegete the Scriptural passage to get to the Author’s Intended meaning and then (2) deal with the difficult question that emerges in the passage. For Hebrews 6:4-6, is it possible for Christians to lose their salvation once they have been saved? For Luke 12, should Christians refrain from having savings and retirement accounts and even health insurance? (Objectives 2, 5)

GRADING POLICY:

All assignments described above must be completed and submitted by December 9 in order for the student to pass the class. This will be the case irrespective of the student’s attendance or scores on assignments which are actually submitted. A failing grade will be registered if even one assignment is missing from the Instructor’s records. For example, if a student’s percentage grade is 88% on the basis of submitted assignments, but the reading notes on Fee & Stuart are not submitted, that student will receive a grade of “F” for the course.

Possible points for each assignment are noted below; final grade will be the sum of assignment grades on a 100 point scale.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance, Class Participation, Professionalism</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Notes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2</td>
<td>35%</td>
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ATTENDANCE POLICY
Attendance in class is required. Students absent more than six hours from this class will be dropped from the roll. Late and early arrival to and from class will be taken into consideration. Class participation is also required. This includes being actively engaged in class discussions or group work and consistently displaying a professional attitude as seen through class presentations, written work, and in-class demeanor.

NOTICE: All terms and conditions stated in this course plan, including objectives, outline of contents, required texts, assignments, attendance policy, and grading scale, are subject to the professor’s unilateral revision at any point before, during, or after the semester.
The Steps to Exegesis

Step 1: Read Several Translations of the Passage

Note differences between the translations which might effect your interpretation, and decide which translation to use.

Step 2: Determine the Setting of the Passage

Find answers to the following questions:

1) External context
   --By whom was the book written?
   --To whom was the book written?
   --When was the book written?
   --From where was the book written?
   --For what purpose was the book written?
   --What genre of literature is the author following?

2) Internal context

If possible, read through the whole book or several surrounding chapters, but at least read the entire chapter which includes your passage.

   --What has already happened/been said?
   --What will yet happen/be said?

Step 3: Investigate any historical background information which you will need to understand the passage.

Step 4: State the Central Theme--create a simple sentence which concisely states the overall theme of the passage and which can hold the various points together thematically.

Step 5: Analyze the Passage

1) Outline the overall form and structure of the passage (how does the passage break down logically into subpoints or themes?)
2) Consult commentaries to discover the opinions of others on your passage
3) Identify parallel passages which support your analysis

Step 6: Application

Identify ways in which the passage speaks to contemporary life.

***Not all of these steps will be equally relevant or necessary for every passage.

Outline for an Exegetical Paper/Lesson/Sermon

Step 1: Introduction
Your introduction should indicate the topic/text you intend to discuss and should state your preliminary thesis/central theme about that topic or passage. It should do this in a way which makes the topic seem relevant or interesting.

***NOTE: In studying the passage, you can’t come up with a central theme until you’ve done steps 1 and 2 on the “Steps to Exegesis” so that you can understand what the author is trying to do. But in writing the paper, sermon, or lesson, you will generally want to put the central theme somewhere in the introduction, so that your audience can see where you are going.

Step 2: Background of the Passage

Your next several paragraphs should report on the findings of your investigation in steps 2 and 3 of the “Steps to Exegesis.” Discuss the historical context in which the book was written, and then the internal context of the passage to explain how it fits into the overall argument. Explain any historical, cultural, political, or geographical facts which one needs to know to understand the passage which are not included in your discussion of the external background.

Step 3: Analysis

Discuss each section of the passage on the basis of the outline you created at step 5 of the Steps to Exegesis.” Your discussion of each section should be organized by the central theme from the introduction. Discuss each verse or block of verses individually, using the central theme to hold your remarks together.

As you discuss each section, mention any relevant differences between the translations which might effect interpretation (there may not be any). Also discuss the conclusions of the various commentators and state which view you support and which you reject, and why you support that particular view. Once your own view has been stated, briefly discuss any relevant parallel passages which would support your view.

Step 4: Conclusion

1) Restate the central theme and summarize the conclusions of your exegesis
2) Note how the principles observed apply to our situation
3) Closing remarks