

Wesley Theological Seminary  
Weekend Course of Study: October 12-13 and November 2-3, 2018

CS-121        Bible I: Introduction  
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**Objectives:**

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

**Goals:**

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture, using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

**Required Texts:**

- ◆ Bernhard W. Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*, 4th Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) [ISBN-13: 978-0800635602]
- ◆ John H. Hayes and Carol R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd Edition (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2007) [ISBN-13: 978-0664227753]
- ◆ *The New Interpreters Study Bible*, New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003) [ISBN 978-0687278329]
  - ◆ the ISBN is for the hardcover but of course paperback is also fine
- ◆ Corrine L. Carvalho, *Anselm Companion to the Bible with NRSV Translation*. Winona MN: Anselm Academic (2014) [ISBN 978-1599824949]
  - ◆ *NOTE used copies of this book are available*
- ◆ articles/chapters loaded onto Bb
  - ◆ Your essays must show that you read all the assigned texts, including those on Bb.

**Supplemental (not required) Texts:** ideally available in your (personal or church) library

- ◆ Burton Throckmorton. *Gospel Parallels*, 5th Edition. Thomas Nelson, 1992. [ISBN-13: 978-0840774842]
- ◆ A good one-volume Bible dictionary (e.g. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, 2003, or *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, revised and updated, 2011)
- ◆ A good one-volume Bible commentary, such as:
  - ◆ *Oxford Bible Commentary*. Oxford University Press, 2001.
  - ◆ *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. Eerdmans, 2003.
  - ◆ *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 2000.
- ◆ One or more commentaries highlighting different voices in biblical studies, such as:
  - ◆ Daniel Platte. *The Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.
  - ◆ Brian K. Blount And Cain Hope Felder. *True To Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
  - ◆ Carol Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe and Jacqueline E. Lapsley. *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3rd Ed. Lewisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

### Assignments:

Two written assignments (each approximately 10 pages) will count 80% of the final course grade: the first (due 10/12) counts 35%; the second (due 11/2) counts 45%. In-class work and participation will count the remaining 20% of the final course grade.

Due dates: Students are to turn in their first assignment by 1 p.m., Friday October 12, 2018.

Students are to turn in their second assignment by 1 p.m., Friday November 2, 2018.

Assignments are to be submitted via Blackboard. Grades will be reduced a step (i.e. from B to B-) for assignments handed in after due date and time (1 p.m.). Grades will be reduced a full letter (i.e. from B to C) for assignments handed in more than 24 hours late.

Format: Papers should be double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with one-inch margins on all sides.

Grading: Papers will be graded based on

- ◆ whether the question(s) are fully answered,
- ◆ whether the answer engages with the assigned readings, including those on Bb, demonstrating the student's understanding and critical thinking, and
- ◆ whether the written work has few, if any, errors of spelling, grammar or punctuation.

Please note that work which fulfills these expectations will be given a "B" range grade. The "A" grade is awarded only for work that is excellent.

*Guidance based on feedback from students during prior COS classes: When writing your essays, please be attentive to the wording of the questions and answer what is asked, engage with the assigned readings by specific reference to them (appropriately cited), and demonstrate understanding of the material by putting it into your own words. You may find it helpful to read the questions first and use them to guide your reading of the assigned texts so that you can notice relevant sections or phrases which you will then reference when writing your responses.*

*If you have any questions about the syllabus or assignments, please feel free to email me.*

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regard the following as forms of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- ◆ copying from another student's paper
- ◆ giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another person
- ◆ using unauthorized material during an examination
- ◆ borrowing and presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another; this includes direct quotation and/or paraphrasing of others' words/ideas

Assignments in this class do not require you to do additional research but to engage with the readings assigned. You may choose but are not required to consult other resources (commentaries, dictionaries) such as those you may be familiar with from prior COS courses.

Whether you are drawing on the assigned readings or on other resources, you must properly cite your sources. I do not require any particular format - parenthetical citations or footnotes are equally acceptable.

For readings which have been assigned for this class, include author/page number(s) (i.e. "Anderson, 91"). For Bible citations, provide book/chapter:verse (i.e. "Mark 1:1"). For purposes of this class, articles, notes or other scholarly information from your study Bible may be cited simply giving the study Bible abbreviation and the note verse number (i.e. "NISB Reliability of Scripture p. \_"; "NISB Mark Introduction," "NISB Mark 1:1-15 note," or "NISB Mark 1:1 note"; this example is given to make plain the importance of giving the note number; these are two different notes in the NISB). For any additional resources you choose to use, you must include author/title/publisher/publication date/page number(s).

Please refer to your Wesley COS Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office (202-885-8688).

**Assignment #1:** To be posted on Blackboard by 1 p.m. Friday October 12, 2018. The assignment should be submitted as a single document with each question separately numbered, as below. The document name should include your name, CS121, and Assignment No 1 (i.e. Brown\_CS121\_No1); your name should also appear in the document itself.

### 1.1 Learning to Read

Read: Magonet, *A Rabbi Reads the Bible*, ch. 2 ‘Learning How to Read’ [on Bb];  
Hayes/Holladay *Biblical Exegesis*, ch. 1

a. What sorts of reading do you do in your everyday life (news, recipes/instructions, poetry/song lyrics, novels, other)? What skills do you use in this reading? How is this reading like or unlike reading the Bible? How do the skills you use in your ‘everyday’ reading apply to your Bible reading? (1 page; 5 points)

Read Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*.

b. Isn’t the Bible ‘finished’? In what way can it be described as ‘unfolding’? What does Anderson mean by using the word ‘drama’? (1 page; 10 points)

c. On page 92, Anderson quotes Thomas Merton:  
‘It is the very nature of the Bible to affront, perplex, and astonish the human mind. Hence the reader who opens the Bible must be prepared for disorientation, confusion, incomprehension, perhaps outrage.’

How do you understand and react to this quotation? How would the people in your parish react to this quotation? [NOTE: you *must* read the whole book to properly understand Anderson’s use of Merton, and your answer should show that you have done so.]. (2 pages; 15 points)

d. What is the role of the leader (preacher/teacher/etc) in communicating this ‘unfolding drama’? (1 page; 10 points)

### 1.2 What Is Reading?

In addition to the readings, assigned above, read:

*Anselm Companion to the Bible* Ch. 4 (“Methods of Biblical Interpretation,” Carvalho),  
Ch. 6 (“The Bible and Art,” Yee)  
Ch. 8 (“Theological Reading of the Bible,” Tull),  
Ch. 12 (“Jewish Biblical Interpretation,” Levine)

*NISB* articles: “Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation”

“Varieties of Readings and Interpretations of the Biblical Text”

A parishioner comes to you, quotes the bumper sticker, ‘God Said It; I Believe It; That Settles It,’ and argues ‘We need to read the Bible like that: just read it and do it and don’t “interpret” it.’ Respond to this parishioner (being sure to share the benefits of the reading you have just done!). (1 page; 10 points)

### 1.3 What Are We Reading?

Read:

Hayes/Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, ch. 2;

*Anselm Companion to the Bible* Ch. 1 (“Formation of the Bible,” Okoye)

Ch. 2 (“Bible Translations,” Binz, Carvalho, Setzer)

pp. 382-83 (chart of biblical canons)

*NISB* articles: “Reliability of Scripture”

“Authority of the Bible”

“Inspiration of Scripture”

tables of Jewish/Protestant/Catholic [etc] Canons

An elderly parishioner is confused because the King James Bible she’s had since she was a child does not match the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible her granddaughter is using for her college religion class. The two versions are different from the very beginning: Genesis 1:1 in the KJV is a complete sentence: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’; Genesis 1:1 in the NRSV is an incomplete clause: ‘In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,...’. How can both of these books be called ‘Holy Bible’ when they do not even say the same thing?

Explain to your parishioner how/why all Bibles do not use the exact same words.

(1 p., 10 points)

### 1.4 Tools for Reading

Re-read interpretations articles above

Read: Hayes/Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis*, chs. 3 (Historical), 5 (Literary), 6 (Form), 8 (Redaction), 11 (Special Focus), and 12 (Integrating Exegetical Procedures)

You have decided to lead an adult Sunday School class on techniques for reading and interpreting the Bible to support your parishioners in their continuing journey through what Anderson calls ‘the unfolding drama’ — Bravo to you!

Prepare a handout (2 pp.) briefly introducing several different tools for reading and interpreting the Bible. Your handout should include (1) historical criticism, (2) form criticism, (3) literary criticism *and* (4) one of the approaches presented in Hayes/Holladay ch. 11.

For each critical approach (1-4, above), you should (a) briefly describe what it is, (b) explain how it came to be, and (c) describe how it is useful when you read the Bible. (2 pps.; 20 points)

### 1.5 Beginning to Practice

Reread Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama*.

Read Genesis 1-2; Psalms 8; 33; 96; 104; Isaiah 40:12-31; 41:17-20; 45:18-19

Pick any one (1) of Anderson’s questions about Genesis (pp.26-27) and respond to it. (Be sure to identify which question you are responding to.) (2 pp.; 20 points)

**Assignment #2:** To be posted on Blackboard by 1 p.m. Friday November 2, 2018. The assignment should be submitted as a single document with each question separately numbered, as below. The document name should include your name, CS121, and Assignment No 2 (i.e. Brown\_CS121\_No1); your name should also appear in the document itself.

## 2.1 Negotiating Perspectives — i.e. Why do we read what we read?

Read: Genesis, especially chapters 11-22; 37-50

*Anselm Companion to the Bible* Ch. 13 (“Introduction to the Pentateuch,” Dempsey)

Gunn and Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, ch. 4 ‘Abraham and Sarah’ [on Bb]

Waskow, *God-Wrestling*, ch. IV, ‘In the Dark: Joseph and His Brothers’ [on Bb]

You have been asked to resolve a conflict that has arisen between two key members of your education committee. One insists that the children’s Sunday School lessons focus on the wonderful, upstanding moral figures of the Old Testament, especially Abraham and Joseph. The other insists that these characters are so deeply flawed that their stories should not be taught in church, that *only* the stories of Jesus may safely be used as sources of faithful insight.

Using Gunn/Fewell and Waskow, as well as other readings/study Bible notes/etc, explain (1) how the biblical narratives complicate the view of Abraham, Joseph (etc) as perfectly upstanding moral characters, AND (2) how these stories are still important to study and teach as sources of faithful insight. (3+ pp.; 30 points)

## 2.2 Navigating Genres and Personas

Read

*Anselm Companion to the Bible* Ch. 16 (“Introduction to the Prophetic Books,” Sweeney) the books of Hosea and Amos (including the NISB Introductions to those books)

Premnath, ‘Amos and Hosea: Sociohistorical Background and Prophetic Critique,’

*Word and World* 28/2 (2008) [on Bb]

You are preparing a youth Bible study on biblical prophets. Some of the youth have already read about Elijah and Elisha (incl. 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 2-5) as well as the *Percy Jackson* and *Harry Potter* series and are excited to learn more about these wizard-ish wonder-workers of the Bible.

Complicate their view of biblical prophets and prophecy! Prepare a 2-page handout explaining what a ‘prophet’ is ... and isn’t. (2 pages; 20 points)

**2.3 Working Paper.** Follow the “Guidelines for the Working Paper” (attached) and record your work on Mark 6:45-52. (5+ pp.; 50 points)

*NOTE: We will review the Guidelines for Working Papers during Weekend #1, Oct 12-13; I encourage you to wait until we have reviewed and practiced this process together before completing your second essay assignment.*

*Rubric revised from C. Works*

## **Format Guide for the Working Paper**

### **Part One: Reading the Text**

- ◆ Outline [*this is literally an outline; list verse references but do not copy entire verses*]
- ◆ Read the passage closely [*this and the rest of the paper must be written fully, not outlined*]
  - ◆ Note key terms, vocabulary, and recurring themes. What makes these terms “key”?
  - ◆ Compare translations. Are there *major* points of disagreement between the translations over a phrase or word? Identify any areas where you would want to do research, such as a word study.
  - ◆ Note the flow or arrangement of the passage.

### **Part Two: Considering the Contexts**

- ◆ Consider how the passage fits in its literary context. (To phrase the question another way, what would be missing from the book if this text were removed?)
  - ◆ Consider the genre (e.g. of the overall book — narrative; wisdom; prophecy; gospel; letter; apocalypse; and/or the particular passage — e.g. prayer; thanksgiving of a letter)
  - ◆ Consider the passages before and after the selected text. Does/how does the passage connect to what is immediately before/after?
  - ◆ Consider the larger context of the work as a whole by answering the following questions:
    - ◆ Are there themes in this text that reflect larger themes in the letter/book? [consult your study Bible or commentaries for introduction/overviews of the book as a whole, including possible outlines of how that theme is developed to help you assess where this passage fits in the overall argument]
    - ◆ How do the themes elsewhere in the work help you interpret the passage under study
    - ◆ How does the passage fit in the work as a whole?
- ◆ Consider how the text’s social, historical, and political environments (historical context) illuminate this passage.
  - ◆ Identify any terms, ideas, or customs mentioned that would require further research.
  - ◆ NOTE: consult your study Bible/s, Bible commentaries, dictionaries, and/or Gospel Parallels. For purposes of this assignment, you do not need to do additional research beyond this, but you should clearly identify the questions that you would study.

### **Part Three: Rereading the Text in its Context**

- ◆ Consider other voices/interpreters
  - ◆ i.e. apply some of the techniques from Hayes/Holladay Ch. 11, glean insights from commentaries written from these particular perspectives, and/or study in conversation with others whose perspectives are different from your own
- ◆ In 2-5 sentences, state your interpretation of the passage (i.e., your conclusion based on your work in Parts One and Two).
- ◆ In 2-5 sentences, state the implications for your faith community.