It is not so very important for a person to learn facts. For that he does not really need a college. He can learn them from books. The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks. (Albert Einstein, 1921, in response to Thomas Edison’s opinion that a college education is useless)

The growing precision of our understanding should enhance, and not diminish our sense of wonder. (Alfred Brendel)

In much wisdom is much vexation, and those who increase knowledge increase in sorrow. (Ecclesiastes 1.18)

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. (William Butler Yeats)

You must unlearn what you have learned. (Yoda, Star Wars V: Empire Strikes Back)

The unexamined life is not worth living. (Socrates [Plato, Apology, 38a])

ΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ ΟΤΙ ΟΥΔΕΝ ΟΙΔΑ. (= Ἐν οἴδα ὅτι οὐδὲν οἶδα. — Socrates)

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ. (= Γνῶθι σεαυτόν. — Temple of Apollo at Delphi)

Welcome to Religion 200: Applied Biblical Interpretation! As the course title indicates, our main objective is to examine biblical texts for meaning(s) and to explore possible ways in which the meaning(s) can be applied in various contexts (e.g., church education, ethics, politics, mission, preaching, theology, military chaplaincy, hospital chaplaincy, nursing home, orphanage). More specifically, our aim will be to:

- identify and explain what the Bible is as well as its significance for Western culture, for the world, and for us
- identify and explain the various approaches to biblical interpretation
- identify and explain the methodological issues involved in biblical interpretation
- identify and explain biblical theology and dogmatic theology
- read carefully and critically passages from a variety of biblical books
- explain the meaning(s) of biblical passages in their historical contexts (e.g., cultural, geographical, literary, political contexts) as well as in relation to other areas of knowledge and to contemporary thought
- demonstrate exegetical skills using modern methods of interpretation, especially historical-critical and literary approaches
- define terms relevant to understanding the Bible as well as to understanding biblical exegesis and the study of the Bible
- demonstrate an appreciation of the Bible that is both critical and creative
- present an application of a Bible passage to a concrete situation in a specified context

Achieving these goals will require hard work on your part, which will bring many challenging, enlightening, exciting, frustrating, and rewarding experiences.

Caveat

This course is designed for students who have already taken at least one course on the Bible and have some familiarity with biblical exegesis.

Requirements and evaluation for the course

For my criteria for evaluation go to my Evaluation page and read the information carefully.
• If you have any questions about any assignment, ask in class or make an appointment to see me.
• If you have any questions about any evaluation or how you are doing in the course, make an appointment to see me.
• If you miss an assignment or exam, call or make an appointment to discuss any makeup work.

Due dates for submitting assignments are on D2L (click on the “Dropbox”).

**assigned readings**

Assigned readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned—use your best judgment to divide the readings evenly for each week. You must come to class with at least 2 written questions or comments in response to the readings (see Participation).

The primary focus throughout the course will be on the biblical texts and on cultivating the ability to ask informed questions about all the assigned readings based on the knowledge you gain along the way; the demonstration of your ability to formulate questions will affect the evaluation of your semester grade. Keeping notes on the readings is highly recommended. I would encourage you to use this form for the reading assignments (also on D2L).

Not all assigned readings may be covered in class or on exams, but they are assigned for your edification in achieving the goals of the course. The more you refer to them in class and in your work, the better your mastery of the readings will be. Your use of them in class discussion and in your work will affect the evaluation of your semester grade.

Occasionally I may assign additional readings, but these will ordinarily be short.

**discussion starter**

Classes will be conducted as quasi-seminars. The instructor will present some materials, but much of the class will be designated for discussion of the readings. You will prepare a 10-minute discussion starter during the semester presenting

- the main idea(s) or main point(s) of the reading assignment (see the course schedule below for the texts in bold to be presented)
- your critique or response to it (including references to previous readings)—this should be the focus and main portion of the presentation

Include within your presentation critical questions, challenges, discoveries, insights, etc. that you had while, or after, reading the assignment—these will initiate class discussion following your presentation.

You are expected to have read the text(s) thoroughly and be able to share the penetrating questions or issues you dealt with in your reading, preparation, or even further research. N.B.: you do not necessarily have to understand everything before class, but you should demonstrate that you prepared and that you can discern, and are familiar with, the major issues in the text(s). Remember that questions are more valuable than answers.

See my Evaluation page under Presentations for evaluation criteria (do not be concerned about the “Communication Skills” section of the Presentation evaluation page). If you wish to use a PowerPoint presentation, let me know in advance.

Each of you will lead a discussion at least once during the semester (twice, if time permits). When you will be asked, only the muses know. If you are not prepared to do so for some reason, let me know before the class begins, so that I will not call on you.

N.B.: You should prepare notes for each class as if you were the discussion leader. I.e., everyone is expected to do the preparatory work, not just the presenter.

**presentation**

You will prepare a 30-minute presentation focusing on the text(s) assigned for your particular day (see the schedule below for the date you of your assignment). You are expected to have read the text(s) carefully and be able to share the penetrating questions or issues you dealt with during your research or preparation. You will show your understanding of how you would apply your exegesis (see below re the exegesis paper) in a particular situation by treating the class as your intended audience. If you have a creative and challenging scenario (or biblical text) in mind and would prefer it over the one assigned to you, consult the instructor as soon as possible for permission. If you would like to use “smart” equipment for your presentation, let me know as soon as possible.

Before you present, take a few minutes to describe your role and any details about the intended audience that may be helpful to your presentation, e.g., particular place, time, gender mix, expected responses. Be as creative and imaginative as you wish without sacrificing critical, effective work.

After you present, (1) your classmates will complete presentation evaluation sheets, and (2) there will be a discussion focusing on the text(s) and the application. The discussion will include constructive criticism in which all students are expected to take active part. N.B.: The critical responses of your peers will be considered in assessing their participation in the course. Likewise, your responses to others’ analysis and critique will also be considered in evaluating your presentation.
N.B.: Every student will prepare 1–2 pages of notes for each presentation as if he or she were the presenter. I.e., everyone is expected to do all the preparatory work for every presentation (do thorough exegesis, plan the application, and be ready to respond to critique) with the exception of writing the exegesis paper. The instructor reserves the right to collect these unannounced.

**exegesis paper**

As part of your preparation for the presentation you will submit an exegesis paper (1,600–2,500 words) of your text(s) **at least 2 weeks before** your presentation. If there are more than one passage, then choose one as your focus, using the other(s) as you see fit. In all cases discuss parallels and relevant passages elsewhere in the Bible. For ideas, look at some critical commentaries and academic journals, i.e., scholarly books and articles with lots of (foot)notes. If you need some tips for doing exegesis, see the Exegesis Guidelines page. You may find the Tips for writing papers helpful.

- Include at least a historical-critical understanding of the text(s) and present possible meanings in it (them).
- Include an analysis of the structure of the text(s).
- The paper should represent original work (i.e., **your own thoughts**), not a mere digest of other people's opinions. Your own reading and re-reading of the relevant texts, as well as review of other materials, are fundamental to the task. I want to know what you discover in your engagement with the biblical text(s) whether or not you agree with the authors or the opinions presented in class, including mine.

N.B.: Focus on honing your ability (1) to **argue** for your opinions and conclusions persuasively and (2) to **support them with evidence** from texts (especially primary sources) and other relevant sources.

- Your bibliography (N.B.: not works cited) must contain at least 8 sources used in your paper, including 4 periodical (journal) articles.
- Electronic sources count only if you provide evidence that they are scholarly sources.
- Use footnotes or endnotes to document your sources following the *Chicago Manual of Style*—for help: NoodleTools. Learn the automatic footnote (and endnote) function of your word processor.
- N.B.: the word-count will not include footnotes and endnotes.
- Follow all the instructions given on my Evaluation page under Written assignments.

You are strongly encouraged to make appointments for feedback on your progress.

**terms**

Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for learning significant terms used in our texts or in class (see the “terms” file on D2L). You will be responsible for finding the definitions. Your knowledge of significant terms may constitute a part of a quiz or exam.

**exams**

There will be 2 quizzes (ca. 30 minutes) and a midterm exam (ca. 45 minutes). They will cover the materials in the course you will have learned by the time of the tests. There may be pop quizzes, the results of which will affect the evaluation of your participation. See my Evaluation page under Quizzes and examinations.

**grades**

Grades will be determined as fairly as possible. See my Evaluation page under Grades for more information. The final grade for the course will consist of the following:

- presentation — 25%
- exegesis paper — 25%
- participation (including pop quizzes) — 15%
- midterm exam — 15%
- discussion starter(s) — 10%
- quiz #1 & 3) — 10%

**extra credit**

You may earn extra credit any time during the semester.

- Submit a paper consisting of 700–1,000 words relating something from popular culture (e.g., movie, play, TV show, book, any performance) to a particular biblical text or theme (consult the instructor).
- The paper should be mostly critique (not mere description or summary).

The instructor reserves the right to make the final determination concerning any extra credit. You can earn a maximum of 5% toward the final grade. You may write more than one, if you wish, but you will not receive more than 5% total in extra credit.
Required books

A Bible of your choice.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (NOAB) using the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) will be the common text for class assignments and discussions. N.B.: the table of contents, introductions, essays, tables, glossary, maps, etc. are all very helpful. In all cases, you are encouraged to use (1) other English translations besides the NRSV, e.g., NIV, and (2) Bibles in other languages.

The NRSV and other Bibles in English are available free online (also under “Resources to consider” below or via D2L).


Recommended books (* = highly recommended)


Aland, Kurt, ed. Synopsis of the four Gospels. New York: United Bible Societies, 1982. (also available in Greek-English version)


Resources to consider

My Resources page, e.g., esp. The NT Gateway, online Bibles, parallel translations, more parallels [See updated tips page.]

Course materials on D2L

Bible concordances (also in McGill library)


Keeping in touch

During the semester check your e-mail regularly for messages regarding course matters (e.g., changes in the syllabus). Visit D2L regularly to see updates to the syllabus; see also my home page for other information and resources related to the course. Please feel free to make an appointment any time about any course matters.

Tips from former students

For some practical advice from former students, see the tips page.

One last word . . .

Regardless of how demanding all of this is, I promise to be as fair as possible. I recognize that you will be very busy this semester pursuing various obligations and passions. I understand. I have my passions too, e.g., my family, music, philosophy, nature, mountain biking, fixing things, food. But I am also very passionate about education, both yours and mine—I mean not just the business of acquiring knowledge but more importantly the total development of honorable human beings. I do not require you to share my excitement about all the things we will cover, but I do expect you to do your best to complete the requirements for the course. To help you do that, I will make myself available outside the class time and the office hours. I will be glad to help you when you are struggling with an assignment. Or if you have any questions, concerns, complaints, and even compliments, I will do my best to take the time to listen and offer my response. Keep in mind that I am here to help you learn. So again, welcome to 200: Applied Biblical Interpretation.
## Week 1
### Aug 27 M, 29

**General orientation:**
- What is the Bible?
- Biblical theology & dogmatic theology (Gabler)
- World-view
- Context & perspective

**Gabler:** "On the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each" (*Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 [1980]: 133–58)

- Brown: Prolegomena; ch. 1
- Fisher: Effective Learning (pp. 3 & 6; also in Inquiry text)
- Translation comparison
- Christmas Quiz
- Easter Quiz (N.B.: take this "quiz" before reading the following)
  - 1 Cor 15.3–10
  - Mk 15.40–16.8
  - Mt 27.55–28.20
  - Lk 23.48–24.53
  - Jn 19.25–21.25
  - Acts 1.1–2.4
  - *Gos Pet* (N.B. Q10 on "Easter Quiz")

- Memorize the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling). [also: comparison chart; canons; some early NT canons]
- Remember: bring your Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation).
- Gabler: bring your Qs & Cs (esp. on the distinction between biblical theology & dogmatic theology)
- Copy all relevant Web pages and resources to your hard disk or flash drive, etc. for easy access. Keep the copies updated.

> Brown, *Responses*, Q1–4: Translations of the Bible
> *Bible in 50 words*
> *Bible Contradiction* & *Responses*
> *Do you know how to think?* (a self-exam)
> *Bible quiz*
> *Bible Hunt*
> *Optical Illusions*
> *Riddles*
> *Calendar*
> *Perception quiz*
> *Study Guide 1* (These may be helpful, but they may not always correspond with the assignments.)

### Week 2
### Sep 3 M, 5

**Bible, theology, interpretation, application:**
- The Bible ain't what it used to be. or How to read the Bible again.
- Canon

**Gabler:** "On the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each" (*Scottish Journal of Theology* 33 [1980]: 133–58)

- Hayes: ch. 1 (first 2 sections)
- Brown: Prolegomena, ch. 1; Rule of Thumb 1–19
- Gen 1–2 (esp. 2.4–25)

- Review the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling).
- Reminder: bring your Qs & Cs to each class (see Participation)
- Translation comparison

> Brown, *Responses*, Q5–10: Genuine and apocryphal books of the Bible; Q11–14: How to read the Bible
> Brooks & Collins: “Introduction” to Hebrew Bible or Old Testament
> *Transmission errors*
> *Myth*
> *Blogging the Bible* (an interesting viewpoint that might resonate with your life)
> *Study Guide 2*
> *Study Guide 3*
Week 3  Sep 10 M, 12

Bible, theology, interpretation, application: • The Bible ain’t what it used to be: how to read the Bible again

• Meyer: “Faith and History Revisited” (Princeton Seminary Bulletin 10 [1989]: 75–83)
• Brown: Rule of Thumb 20–28; ch. 5
• Gen 1–2 (esp. 2.4–25)

• Hayes: ch. 1
• Gen 1–2 (esp. 2.4–25)
• Isa 7–8 (esp. 7.10–17)
• Review the books of the Protestant canon in order (learn correct spelling).

> Brown, Responses, Q15–17: Church guidance; Q18–22: Why read the Bible
> Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)
> Study Guide 4

Week 4  Sep 17 M, 19

• Hayes: ch. 2: Textual Criticism
  • Translation comparison

• Hayes: ch. 3: Historical Criticism
  • Isa 7–8 (esp. 7.10–17)

> Greek NT: 1st page
> Mt1
> Manuscript
> Interpreting Ancient Manuscripts (very helpful)
> Transmission errors
> Brown, Responses, Q23–27: Is the Bible literally true; Q28–30: Biblical criticism

Week 5  Sep 24 M, 26

• Hayes: ch. 4: Grammatical Criticism
  • Isa 7–8 (esp. 7.10–17)

• Hayes: ch. 5: Literary Criticism

> Brown, Responses, Q31–33: Biblical fundamentalism; pp. 137–42; Q34–37: How literally true is the NT

Sep 24: 추석 (Choo-suhk, harvest festival in Korea)

Week 6  Oct 1 M, 3

• Hayes: ch. 6: Form Criticism

• Hayes: ch. 7: Tradition Criticism
  • Lk 10.25–37: exegesis (use various criticisms)
  • Cotton Patch: Lk 10.25–37

> The Cotton Patch NT
> Reflections on the Cotton Patch Version
> The "Parable of the Good Samaritan" with a humorous twist

> Brown, Responses, Q38–44: The Gospels; Q45–51 Jesus' words and deeds

Week 7  Oct 8 M, 10

• Hayes: ch. 8: Redaction Criticism

• Hayes: ch. 9: Structuralist Criticism
  • Lk 10.25–37: exegesis (use various criticisms)
  • Cotton Patch: Lk 10.25–37

> Redaction & hermeneutics (funny, interesting & instructive)
> The Cotton Patch NT

Feel free to bring DVDs of movies you think your classmates should see. For directions click here.
The "Parable of the Good Samaritan" with a humorous twist

Brown, Responses, Q52–53: Jesus' resurrection; Q54–60: Jesus' birth
Brown: Intro to NT Christology, 162–70 (“The Reality of the Resurrection of Jesus”)
Brown: Intro to NT, 817–830 (“The Historical Jesus”)
Reflections on the Cotton Patch Version

Week 8  Oct 15 M, 17

• Course syllabus (including Evaluation link; review requirements, expectations, and criteria for grading—ask Qs, if you have any)

• Hayes: ch. 10: Canonical Criticism

• Hayes: ch. 11: Exegesis with a Special Focus

• Brown, Responses, Q61–68: Mary (esp. of interest to Roman Catholics); Q69–76: Jesus' knowledge

• Jn 1.1–18
  Role: Church school teacher
  Audience: 6th grade church school class during Advent examining the incarnation

• Gen 38
  Role: young adult group leader
  Audience: young adult group studying biblical narratives with a focus on human ethics & God's will

• Alternative #1:
  Role: college chapel staff
  Audience: college Bible study group trying to recover the relevance of OT texts

• Alternative #2:
  Role: Women's Bible study leader
  Audience: Women's Bible study on the role of women in society & in God's plan for human history

Week 9  Oct 22 M, 24  Oct 27–30 (break)

Oct 22: midterm exam (see prep file on D2L)

• Is God ethical?
• Variety of voices in the Bible
• Where did Mary & Joseph originally live?

• Hayes: ch. 12: Integrating Exegetical Procedures

• Hayes: ch. 13: Fruits of exegesis

• Gen 22.1–19

  Role: pastor
  Audience: adult church school class studying biblical narratives with a focus on human ethics & God's will

  • Alternative
  Audience: adult church group sharing grief experiences, focusing on God's will & human ethics

  • Mt 1.18–2.23 & Lk 2.1–20
  Role: youth group leader
  Audience: sr. high students who are confused by the Christmas story

• Brown, Responses, Q77–78: Foundation of the church; Q79–85: The sacraments
  > Study Guide

Week 10  Oct 31 W, Nov 5

• Achtemeier: Intro; ch. 1
• Josh 6.15–21
• Why so violent?
  Role: military chaplain
Audience: soldiers in the midst of a bloody war; or Christian pacifists

- **Achtemeier**: ch. 2
- Gen 1
- Bible in our scientific world
Role: Christian educator
Audience: church youth group whose members are confused by what they're learning in their biology classes at school

**Week 11**  
**Nov 7 W, 12**

- **Presentation evaluation**: be ready to offer each presenter good critique (focus is on the applied biblical interpretation evident in the presentations)

- **Achtemeier**: ch. 3
- Lk 15.11–32
  - The parable of whom, for whom?
Role: youth group leader
Audience: jr. high students
- Alternative: 1Th 4.13–18; 1Cor 15.50–52; Mt 16.27–28 (cf. Mk 9.1; Mk 13.24–30; Lk 9.27)
- Apocalypticism & eschatology
- Y2K has come & gone; were Jesus & Paul wrong
Role: missionary
Audience: skeptics who claim the Bible was wrong in its predictions

> **Luke: pairs**

**Week 12**  
**Nov 14 W, 19**

- **Presentation evaluation**: be ready to offer each presenter good critique (focus is on the applied biblical interpretation evident in the presentations)

- **Achtemeier**: ch. 4
- Mt 7.15–27; 25.31–46; James 2.8–26 (cf. Rom 2.13; 3.21–4.5; 10.9–13; Gal 2.16–21)
- Sola fide? (or "What you do is who you are?)
- **Presentation**: Suchcicki
Role: Christian (traditionally Protestants) who claims that salvation depends on only faith (you must define what you mean by faith)
Audience: Christians (traditionally Roman Catholics or Baptists) who claim that salvation depends on what a person does

> **Brown, Responses**, Q93–96: Who celebrated the eucharist; Q97–100: Peter and the popes

**Nov 21–25 (break)**

- **Achtemeier**: ch. 5
- Eccl 1.1–2.23
- Does life have any meaning?
- **Presentation**: Thomas
Role: chaplain at a nursing home
Audience: elderly people whose lives are in their waning years

**Week 13**  
**Nov 26 M, 28**

- **Achtemeier**: ch. 7; epilogue
- Job 7.11–21; 9.14–24; Job 19.23–27 (cf. Job 1–2; 42.7–17)
- Evil, suffering & theodicy
- **Presentation**: TBD
Role: pastoral counselor
Audience: people of any age who have suffered extraordinary tragedies (e.g., Holocaust, Columbine HS, 9-11, Hurricane Katrina)

- Alternative
Role: Bible study/prayer group leader
Audience: mixed group of adults (grieving & not grieving)

- Ex 1.15–2.10 (cf. Pritchard: vol.1: 85–86; also consider esp. Meyer, 78 & 80)
- **Presentation**: Crider

Role: pastor

Audience: college students who have recently learned that biblical stories were not unique in the ancient world, but often followed certain patterns or borrowed from other traditions

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**Nov 26: Quiz 3**

- Gal 3.27–29
- Paul's gospel & ethnicism

Role: youth group leader

Audience: group members involved in either Neo-Nazi groups or the KKK

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**Week 14**

**Dec 3 M, 5**

- Ex 1.15–2.10 (cf. Pritchard: vol.1: 85–86; also consider esp. Meyer, 78 & 80)
- **Presentation**: TBD

Role: pastor

Audience: college students who have recently learned that biblical stories were not unique in the ancient world, but often followed certain patterns or borrowed from other traditions

- **Job 7.11–21; 9.14–24; Job 19.23–27 (cf. Job 1–2; 42.7–17)**
- Evil, suffering & theodicy
- **Presentation**: TBD

Role: pastoral counselor

Audience: people of any age who have suffered extraordinary tragedies (e.g., Holocaust, Columbine HS, 9-11, Hurricane Katrina)

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**Alternative**

Role: Bible study/prayer group leader

Audience: mixed group of adults (grieving & not grieving)

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- Genesis 2:4–17
- Creatio ex nihilo?
- **Presentation**: Lemke

Role: camp counselor (working at a camp where a literal interpretation of the Bible is taught)

Audience: 12–15-year-old campers, most of whom were raised in a Christian church and are familiar with popular Bible stories taught in church school

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**Dec 5**: Last day for extra credit papers (Turnitin.com)

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> O Little Town of . . . Nazareth?
> Xmas Carol Quiz
> Xmas Quiz

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**Final week**

**Dec 12 W 08:00–10:30**

Final presentation (and final thoughts)

- Rom 8.14–25; Gal 4.1–7 (cf. Eph 1.3–14)
- Belonging to Christ & baptismal identity
- **Presentation**: TBD (Rom; Gal)

Role: director or chaplain of an orphanage

Audience: orphans of various ages who have either lost their parents through tragedy or were abandoned or given up by them

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- Gabler: "On the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each" ([Scottish Journal of Theology](#) 33 [1980]: 133–58)
- **Job 7.11–21; 9.14–24; Job 19.23–27 (cf. Job 1–2; 42.7–17)**
- Evil, suffering & theodicy
- **Presentation**: TBD

Role: pastoral counselor
Audience: people of any age who have suffered extraordinary tragedies (e.g., Holocaust, Columbine HS, 9-11, Hurricane Katrina)

• Alternative
Role: Bible study/prayer group leader
Audience: mixed group of adults (grieving & not grieving)

2Sam 11.1–12.23 (cf. Ps 51)
Role: Chaplain of the US Congress
Audience: Bible study group of senators and representatives

exegesis guide • evaluation • resources • Na home • D2L

Without education we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously. (G. K. Chesterton)

Health is merely the slowest possible rate at which one can die. (Anonymous)

N.B. still being tweaked — check regularly for updates (28 Aug. 2018)