

OT 102-3 Introduction to Old Testament Exegesis

(Using Genesis and Isaiah)

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Spring Term 2014 Tuesdays and Thursdays

Section 1: 8:30 – 9:50 am // Section 2: 1:30 – 2:50 pm

Instructor: Tyler Mayfield

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Office Hours: email for appointment

Tutors: Erin Gill (erin.gill@my.lpts.edu) – morning session

& Elana Levy (elana.levy@my.lpts.edu) – afternoon session

"Turn it [Torah] and turn it again, for everything is in it, and contemplate it and grow grey and old over it and stir not from it, for thou canst have no better rule." *Pirke Avot* (Chapters of the Fathers) 5.25 of the Mishnah.

"Open my eyes that I may behold, wondrous things from your Torah." Psalm 119:18

"Modern readers are so conditioned to look for and ask for the 'moral of the story' that the idea of carefully reading or hearing a story and letting it work on us, trusting a story to do what it will, is an act of patience often beyond our capability." Mark McEntire, *Portraits of a Mature God*

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to exegetical methodologies with regard to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Students will gain greater familiarity with exegetical methods and interpretation of particular texts. In addition, greater facility may be attained in translating and interpreting biblical Hebrew and the use of secondary literature.

Course Objectives

Students completing this course will be able to:

- 1) Describe various exegetical methodologies including historical/diachronic, literary/synchronic, and theological approaches to the Hebrew Bible.
- 2) Translate Hebrew biblical texts with greater facility.
- 3) Exegete Old Testament passages by asking historical, literary, and theological questions of the text.
- 4) Write an exegetical paper combining multiple methods on a selected biblical passage.

Required Books

- 1) English translation of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. I highly recommend the JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh or a NRSV Study Bible such as The New Oxford or New Interpreters.
- 2) Elliger, K. and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967/77.
- 3) Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Or another suitable lexicon such as BDB or HALOT by Koehler & Baumgartner.

- 4) Ronald Hendel, ed. *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- 5) John H. Hayes and Carl. R. Holladay, ed. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook Third Edition*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.
- 6) Michael Joseph Brown, *What They Don't Tell You: A Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

Assignments & Evaluation

1) Attendance and Class Participation (10%) Also, includes a Bibleworks workshop in library.

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend “all scheduled meetings of the courses” excepting illness or “other valid reasons.” In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify me of their planned absence from class preferably prior to the session. Tardiness also affects classroom dynamics; please make every effort to be ready to start class on time.

Many class sessions will be conducted as “workshops” in which we study a biblical passage in detail with regard to particular exegetical issues. Students should come to class each day *eagerly ready to discuss* the assigned biblical passage and/or readings. Active participation includes, but is not limited to, activities such as listening carefully to others’ thoughts, taking notes, asking relevant questions, responding to others’ comments, and inviting others into the conversation. It does not include dominating a group or class discussion.

2) Weekly (or so) Translations (with Footnotes) and Exegetical Exercises. (20%)

These 13 exercises are marked and explained in the schedule below with a ∞ sign. Also, see handout for more information. They are due at class time on the date listed in the syllabus. *No late exercises accepted.* [Course Objectives 1, 2, and 3]

3) HLT Reference Sheet on OT Passage. Due Friday, March 14. (10%)

Students will create a 2-page reference sheet that addresses 1 historical, 1 literary, and 1 theological issue within a given OT passage. See Handout for additional information. [Course Objectives 1 and 3]

4) Group Exegetical Presentation on Historical and Literary Issues. On April 8, 10, or 15. (20%)

Students will present as a small group on a particular biblical passage using historical and literary methods. A handout will provide additional information. [Course Objectives 1 and 3]

5) 15 page Exegesis Paper (40%)

Students will write an exegesis paper on a selected passage from Genesis or Isaiah. This paper will be completed throughout the semester in sections and receive significant feedback in order to strengthen the final product. [Course Objective 4]

Translation of Passage 1 pg *Draft* (5%)

Due Tuesday, Feb 25

Historical/Diachronic/Author Section 5 pg *Draft* (5%)

Due Tuesday, March 25

Literary/Synchronic/Text Section 5 pg *Draft* (5%)

Due Tuesday, April 22

Theological/Existential/Reader Section 4 pg *Draft* (5%)

Due Tuesday, May 6

Final Paper with revisions and thesis (HLT statement) 15 pages (20%) Due Friday, May 16*

*I need a final paper from those graduating by Wed. May 14 so you can participate in ceremonies.

Course Policies:

Academic Honesty: All work turned in is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center and should make use of the available resources at an *early* date, since violations of seminary policy on academic honesty can lead to a failing grade for the course.

Citation Policy:

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides:

Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Accessibility and Accommodation: Students requiring accommodation for a physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) within the first few days of the course and should speak with me as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments.

Inclusive Language: Our use of language, personally and as a community, is a powerful tool of both healing and oppression. In order to establish a more egalitarian environment and in accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. Avoid language for people that excludes part of the population or perpetuates stereotypes. Do not assume masculine gender when the gender of the person is unknown. See http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

When referring to God, students are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors. The God of the Hebrew Bible is envisioned in both personal and non-personal ways, as well as masculine and feminine terms. Naming God exclusively as "He" does not capture this splendid diversity.

Policy on late work: All written assignments are due on the date given in the syllabus. Assignments submitted late will be penalized in the grading by one letter grade increment for every day (a B+ paper becomes a B if one day late, a B- if two days, a C+ if three days, etc.). Assignments submitted more than ten days after the due date will not be accepted.

Use of electronic devices in class: I ask that we create a time and space in the classroom to set aside such distractions as email, Facebook, and texting in order to engage our minds and hearts. Do not send or read text messages during class. In the event that you have a legitimate need to be accessible during class, you may ask me for an exception to this rule. Laptops should not be used if you cannot trust yourself to restrict your use to note-taking. You may not access the Internet during class time. Any misuse of electronic devices during class time, including checking of email or social networking sites, will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will negatively affect the course grade.

Course Schedule

INTRODUCTIONS

Thursday, Feb 6

Introduction to course / syllabus

What is Exegesis?

Translation and Exegetical Exercise: Genesis 2: 4b ff

Tuesday, Feb 11

Introduction to Exegesis: HLT

Discuss HLT Assignment

Class Readings: Hayes, 1-16

Brown, 1-17, skim 17-39.

Thursday, Feb 13

Introduction to BHS and lexicons using Genesis 1.

∞ Translate and footnote Genesis 1:1-5 for class.

TRANSLATION

Tuesday, Feb 18

Bible Translations Through the Centuries

Class Readings: The Bible in Translation skim pp 55-69; read 70-80. [CAMS or library reserve]
Dewey, 32-34, 65-66 [CAMS]
Gravett, An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, 42-45 [CAMS]

Thursday, Feb 20

Translation and Its Consequences

Class Readings: Hendel, 157-175
Brown, Rule of Thumb #4, pages 49-56

∞ Bring to class a ½ page response to the question, "Pastor, which Bible translation is the best?" The response should include an educational component based on our readings this week (obviously attuned to your audience) as well as a pastoral component.

HISTORICAL ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

Tuesday, Feb 25

Translation of Passage 1 pg Draft Due

Grammatical Criticism

Introduction to "Tools of the Trade": Concordances & Word Studies, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Journal Articles, Commentaries

Class Readings: Hayes, 72-82

Thursday, Feb 27

Text Criticism

Class Readings: Hayes, 34-47

Gravett, Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, 46-53. [CAMS]

Tuesday, March 4

Test Case: Genesis 4, Cain and Abel (focusing on Translation Issues, Text Criticism, and Grammatical Criticism)

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Genesis 4:1-4 to class. Also write down 2 places where modern English translations differ on their translation of Genesis 4:1-16. Also, look up in your lexicon 2 Hebrew words from this passage and write a summary of what you learned about the words from the lexicon.

Thursday, March 6

Historical Criticism I: Reading Like an Ancient Israelite

Test Case: Isaiah 7:10-16

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 7:13-14 to class. Also take notes on the historical context of this passage based on the Blenkinsopp reading. What, in brief, was going on in ancient Israel when this text was written? How is that information important to the interpretation of this text?

Class Readings: Hayes, 53-61
Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 227-34. [CAMS]

Tuesday, March 11

Historical Criticism II

Test Case: Genesis 17 (Priestly Covenant)

∞ Bring your translation (with footnotes) of Genesis 17: 1-8. Go to the library and research in Genesis commentaries about the historical context of this passage. Write a page summary of your research.

Note: Students planning to write their exegesis papers on a passage in Genesis, need to read Hendel, *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*, 47-70, soon in order to understand source criticism for the historical section of your paper.

Thursday, March 13

Form Criticism

Test Case: Isaiah 6:1-13

Class Readings: Hayes, 104-113
Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 132-136. [CAMS]

Friday, March 14

HLT Assignment Due

LITERARY ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

Tuesday, March 25

Historical/Diachronic/Author Section 5 pg Draft Due

Literary Criticism Introduction: Reading Like a University English Major

Fokkelman and Abraham Cycle: Narration Time

Trible and Rhetorical Criticism

Class Readings: Hayes, 90-100

Trible, Rhetorical Criticism, 101-106. [CAMS]

Thursday, March 27

Literary Approaches

∞ Write a one page response to Hendel's reading of the Jacob cycle. Pay close attention to how he reads the story. What is he doing? How is he reading? NOT what does he say about Jacob? But what's the methodology?

Class Readings: Hendel, 13-27

Tuesday, April 1

Test Case: Genesis 37: 12-36 in Literary Perspective

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Genesis 37: 29-36. Be prepared to discuss this text from a literary perspective. What questions might we ask?

Thursday, April 3

Test Case: Isaiah 40: 1-11

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 40: 1-5.

COMBINING HISTORICAL AND LITERARY ISSUES: GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, April 8

First Group Presentation: Genesis 16: 1-16 (Hagar and Ishmael)

Thursday, April 10

Second Group Presentation: Genesis 25: 19-34 (Esau and Jacob)

Tuesday, April 15

Third Group Presentation: Isaiah 56: 1-8 (Oracle of Universal Salvation)

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

Tuesday, April 22

Literary/Synchronic/Text Section 5 pg Draft Due

Theological Interpretation Introduction: Reading Like a Theologian

Test Case: Isaiah 2:1-5

Class Readings: Hendel, 196-214

Thursday, April 24

Canonical Criticism

Test Case: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

∞ Bring a translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 53: 3-6. Also consult commentaries to determine where in the NT this passage is quoted, alluded to, etc.

Class Readings: Hayes, 152-164

Tuesday, April 29

Test Case: Genesis 22: 1-19, The Near-Sacrifice of Isaac

∞ Respond to Moberly's chapter on Gen 22 by focusing on his theological argument. What does he see as the primary theological issue(s) of this passage? What do YOU see as the theological issues within this passage?

Class Readings: Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*, 179-199. [CAMS]

Thursday, May 1

Feminist / Gender / Queer Criticism

Genesis 19

∞ Write a 1-page response to the Hendel article on Gender and Sexuality focusing many on the author's methodologies principles, assumptions, interpretive moves, etc. How are they doing exegesis?

Class Readings: Hendel, 71-91

Hayes, 167-73

CONCLUSIONS: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Tuesday, May 6

Theological/Existential/Reader Section 4 pg Draft Due

Putting It All Together

Test Case: Genesis 2: 4b-25 in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspectives

∞ Write for class today one historical, one literary, and one theological question concerning Genesis 2: 4b-25. No answers, just questions.

Class Readings: Hayes, 178-190

Thursday, May 8

Putting in All Together

Test Case: Isaiah 58: 1-12 in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspectives

∞ Write for class today one historical, one literary, and one theological question concerning Isaiah 58:1-12. No answers, just questions.

Class Readings: Feasting on the Word article [CAMS]