

**DM 6462 Seminar II – The Minister as Biblical Interpreter**  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
June Term 2021

Instructors:

Tyler Mayfield  
[tmayfield@lpts.edu](mailto:tmayfield@lpts.edu)

Rev. Dr. Jamesetta Ferguson  
[jamesetta\\_ferguson@yahoo.com](mailto:jamesetta_ferguson@yahoo.com)

“As long as there are women and men who still read the Bible for its theo-ethical value...then there remains—for those of us who care to do so—the responsibility to help contemporary readers to read the Bible with a suspicious hope, careful of the Bible’s distortions and mindful of its possibilities.” Renita J. Weems in *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 123 n. 7.

“All too often we equate piety and devotion with passive obedience to the biblical texts. Resistance, however, can be a sign of a deep piety. While devout people do certainly listen to and read the Bible, they also actively engage it.” Carol Hess in *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women’s Development in Communities of Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 202.

“Scripture beckons! The dramatic narratives and eloquent poems and brilliant aphorisms and passionate exhortations of Scripture invite us into a sustained attentiveness to the relationship between God and God’s people. Scripture also invites us into a profound and tense engagement with our own practices of interpretation.” Carolyn J. Sharp in *Wrestling the Word: The Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Believer* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 135.

### ***Course Description***

This 4-credit, doctoral seminar re-introduces students to critical biblical interpretation in order to strengthen biblical-theological reflection as a central practice of Christian ministry. Seminar participants will read and respond to assigned books dealing with the general topic of biblical interpretation. Students will practice delineating hermeneutical frameworks; acquiring specific knowledge of biblical context and content; and using skillsets for application of their learning in specific ministerial contexts.

## ***Course Objectives and Dreams***

Students completing this course will be able to:

- 1) Relate the theological discipline of biblical studies to the practice of ministry (preaching, pastoral care, teaching, administrative leadership, etc.) in their ministerial contexts, with explicit attention to hermeneutical frameworks (their own and those operative in their ministerial context).
- 2) Discuss their own methods for making learned use of biblical texts in the practices of preaching, pastoral leadership, and/or pastoral care.
- 3) Correlate critical reflections on Scripture to their emerging DMin projects.

These course objectives align with DMin program Student Learning Outcome #1:

Students will demonstrate an advanced (comprehensive, appreciative, and critical) understanding and integration of ministry in relationship to several theological and social scientific disciplines, including practical theology

### ***Required Books*** (please purchase/rent/borrow a copy of each)

- 1) Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- 2) Greg Carey, *Using Our Outside Voice: Public Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020.
- 3) Bruce C. Birch, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018.
- 4) Denise Dombkowski Hopkins and Michael S. Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word: The Old Testament and Pastoral Care Practices*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

## *Assignments and Schedule*

### Unit 1: “The Hermeneutical Circle”

February and March 2021

#### Unit Description

This course unit provides an intensive introduction to the richness of the overlapping yet discrete steps of the hermeneutical circle and cycle of theological reflection. This cycle makes explicit the process of learning how to remain engaged in ongoing and challenging dialogues with our own stories as well as those of others. These stories include the biblical Story and the countless narratives therein, the stories of care-seekers and colleagues, current situations and historical events, wisdom from religious traditions, facts and fiction, and our own life stories. In summary, theological reflection (including biblical interpretation) are concerned with engaging stories – about God, self, others, the world.

#### Unit Topics:

1. Theological Reflection & the Stance of Exploration (Killen and de Beer reading)
2. The Roles of Tradition and Experience (Killen and de Beer reading)
3. Bringing Ourselves to the Encounter of the Text – STEP 1 of Tiffany and Ringe
4. Encounter as Reading and Listening for Your Reactions – STEP 2 of T&R
5. Encounter as Close Reading in Historical and Literary Context – STEPS 3 & 4 of T&R
6. Engagement with Other Readers and Communities – STEP 5 of Tiffany and Ringe
7. Issues in biblical interpretation (Tiffany and Ringe chapter 11)

#### Unit Readings:

Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe. *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. pp. 13-125, 205-224.

Killen, Patricia O’Connell & John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994. pp. vii-19; 27-32, 146.

Weems, Renita. “Reading *Her Way* through the Struggle: African American Women and the Bible,” in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* ed. Cain Hope Felder; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991. pp. 57-77.

#### Unit Assignment:

Tiffany and Ringe argue that we bring ourselves (as individuals and communities) to every encounter with the biblical text. Write a 2-page reflection essay on Steps 1 and 2 of their Roadmap. What values, experiences, and theologies do you bring to the text? How does your

social location (race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic, nationality, etc.) affect the ways you encounter the text? Due at the time of the second Zoom meeting in March.

Course Meetings:

Week of March 15 and/or 22. 2 two-hour Zoom meetings. TBD.

Meeting #1: Intro to Class. Renewing Acquaintances. Killen and de Beer reading.

Meeting #2: Hermeneutical Circle. Social Location of Readers. Weems reading.

Unit 2: “Biblical Interpretation”

April and May 2021

Unit Description:

This course unit reintroduces biblical interpretation by focusing on Steps 3, 4, and 5 in the hermeneutical circle. These steps involve historical criticism, literary criticism, and theological interpretation of the text. Hopefully, these types of interpretation are familiar from previous theological education. We will rethink them, however, in light of a commitment to public biblical interpretation.

Unit Topics:

1. Public Biblical Interpretation (Carey’s chapter 1)
2. Historical Context (Carey’s chapter 2)
3. Literary Context (Carey’s chapter 3)
4. Theological Context (Carey’s chapter 4)
5. Contextual Biblical Interpretation (Carey’s chapter 5)

Readings:

Greg Carey, *Using Our Outside Voice: Public Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2020.

Assignment:

2-page response essay to Carey’s book in which you highlight some aspect(s) of the book that is particularly relevant to your current ministry context. In what ways does (or might) the book connect with your ministry life, in particular your role as a (public) biblical interpreter. How might a particular ministry situation involving biblical interpretation have been enhanced by Carey’s analysis? OR how have you now used some aspect of the work in your ministry of biblical exegesis and interpretation? Due at the time of the second Zoom meeting in May.

Course Meetings:

Week of May 17 and/or 24. Two two-hour Zoom meetings.

Meeting #1: The Task of Biblical Exegesis: “HLT”, Isaiah 56 in “HLT” perspective

Meeting #2: Public Biblical Interpretation, Contextual Biblical Interpretation

### Unit 3: The Bible And...

June Intensive Week 2021

#### Unit Description:

This course unit connects the Bible to two additional fields of study: ethics and pastoral care. Large ethical questions face our society today, and, for Christians, the Bible has a role in shaping our responses. In addition, religious leaders are often called upon to provide pastoral care to individuals and communities. These two topics – ethics and pastoral care – also provide an opportunity to bring together our previous units into an integrated approach to biblical interpretation.

#### Unit Topics:

##### Bible and Ethics

Importance of Community, Biblical authority

How do we read ethically?

Canon and an overarching hermeneutic

##### Bible and Pastoral Care

The importance of stories and storytelling

God Images and pastoral images

Grief and Lament

#### Readings:

Bruce C. Birch, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life: A New Conversation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018.

Denise Dombkowski Hopkins and Michael S. Koppel, *Grounded in the Living Word: The Old Testament and Pastoral Care Practices*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

#### Assignments:

#1 After reading the first three textbooks, choose one of the following three Scripture passages to interpret/exegete anew in 2 pages:

a) Philemon,

b) Matthew 25:31-46 (Sheep and Goats),

c) Hosea 1-2.

It is more desirable to ask new questions, explore new angles, and raise new issues than to present a revolutionary reading or provide a “solution.” **Due June 7.**

#2 After reading all four textbooks, please write a final 3-page reflection on how these readings can help you with your developing D.Min. project. This reflection should be HELPFUL to you and give you a place to start as you depart from this seminar. **Due June 7.**

Course Meetings:

Monday, June 7. All day Zoom meeting (with breaks and lunch break).

Wednesday, June 9. All day Zoom meeting (with breaks and lunch break).

Friday, June 11. All day Zoom meeting (with breaks and lunch break).

See schedule below.

D.Min. Seminar II – The Minister as Biblical Interpreter  
Tentative Schedule  
June 2021

In addition to two Zoom meetings in March and two in May, we will meet intensively on  
Monday, June 7; Wednesday, June 9; and Friday, June 11.  
Students should plan to work independently on Tuesday and Thursday of that week.

Time	Monday June 7	Wednesday June 9	Friday June 11
9:00-9:15	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer
9:15-10:45	Review of Hermeneutical Circle and HLT Exegesis	Biblical Authority & Sources of Authority	Interpretive Textual Exercises
10:45-11:00	Break	Break	Break
11:00-12:30	Bible and Ethics Discussion (textbook)	God Images, Pastoral Images (HopkinsKoppel3)	1. Proof Texting & The Canon 2. Free Discussion
12:30-1:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:30-3:00	Philemon Discussion	Matthew 25:31-46 Discussion	Hosea 1-2 Discussion
3:00-3:15	Break	Break	Break
3:15-5:00	D.Min. Project Preliminary Discussion	Grief and Lament (HopkinsKoppel5)	Precious Teachers, Closing Time

## ***Course Policies:***

### Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors 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 (where appropriate) 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. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

--American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.

--Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

--The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

### Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

### Use of Inclusive Language

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. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

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 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.