

DM 6462: Seminar II

The Minister as Biblical Interpreter

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Spring 2023

“Meaning making is plural.”

“The questions you ask determine the answers you get.”

“How one interprets a text influences how one sees and treats another.”

Course Information

Dates: June 5-9

Time: 9:00 am – 3:00pm

Location: Schlegel 121

Instructor: Anna Bowden

Email: abowden@lpts.edu

Office: Schlegel 300

Student Hours: Email for appointment

Course Description

Guided by the above maxims, this 4-credit, doctoral seminar re-introduces students to biblical hermeneutics and critical biblical interpretation in order to strengthen biblical-theological reflection as a central practice of Christian ministry. In other words, we will focus on how we (and others) read the Bible. Seminar participants will read and respond to assigned readings, reflect on the benefits and limitations of various approaches to biblical interpretation, identify skillsets for application to their specific ministerial contexts/doctoral projects, and articulate the particularities of their own hermeneutical and exegetical lenses in community with one another.

Course Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course a student will be able to:

- 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 methodological approaches and hermeneutical frameworks (their own and those operative in their ministerial context).
- Discuss their own methods for making learned use of biblical texts in the practices of preaching, pastoral leadership, and/or pastoral care.
- Correlate critical reflections on Scripture to their emerging DMin projects and future ministries.

Relationship to Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

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.

Course Textbooks:

- Marchal, Josph A., ed. *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Methods and Perspectives*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.
- Davison, Lisa Wilson. *More than a Womb: Childfree Women in the Hebrew Bible as Agents of the Holy*. Eugene: Cascade, 2021.
- Angela N. Parker. *If God Still Breathes, Why Can't I?: Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.
- All other assigned readings are available on Canvas.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation

The success of this class is dependent on your attendance, preparation, and participation. Please come to every class and come prepared. Preparation includes reading the assigned readings before coming to class and bringing either a digital or print copy of the readings with you to class. Participation looks different for different people, but may include things like active listening, taking notes, asking questions, sharing answers/mistakes with classmates, and engaging in classroom exercises.

A note about the structure of this class: I have designed this course to be completed in the order I have presented it below (Units 1-4). Because we will discuss the required readings when we come together in June, I've provided you with discussion questions to help guide you in note-taking. I do not intend, however, for these guiding questions to limit your notes. Please write down any and all good thoughts you have about the reading – no matter your opinions! In short, take good notes on the assigned readings so we can have meaningful conversation when we revisit the readings in June.

Written Assignments

- Sermon Analysis (Unit 1), due Feb 28
- Reflection Paper (Unit 2), due March 31
- Self-Inventory (Unit 4), due June 9, revisions due June 23

All assignments for this course are Pass/Fail. It is necessary to pass all assignments to pass this class.

Course & School Policies

Contacting the Professor

If you have a question, concern, or just want to connect, let's talk. I am available by email or by appointment (virtual or in-person). If you'd like to meet with me, please send me an email so we can set up a time. I check email frequently and generally respond within 24 hours.

Late Policy & Re-dos

I understand that you have lives that are at times outside of your control and I understand that you have other classes with due dates that at times might compete with our class schedule. For this reason, I will always accept late work and allow unlimited re-dos of previous assignments. If you wish to resubmit an assignment, send me an email so we can make the necessary arrangements. There will be final deadlines for re-dos, though. While I care about students and I am happy to be flexible, I still need boundaries to keep my own personal and professional life healthy. I will give plenty of notice ahead of time when a re-do deadline is approaching.

Important: Please be aware that the class will be moving on should you miss an assignment. If you don't follow the suggested course schedule and complete your work on time, you're just piling it up for yourself for later.

Written Assignments

All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font, have 1-inch margins, and numbered pages. Your name, the course name/number, the assignment title, and date should be in the upper left-hand corner of the first page.

Expectations for Students

In addition to the obvious - reading chapters before they are discussed in class, completing assignments thoroughly and on time, and contributing to classroom activities - I appreciate straightforward feedback from you regarding how well the class is meeting your needs. Let me know if the material is not clear or when its relevance to the student learning outcomes for the course is not apparent (or when you're bored out of your mind!). It is also expected that you will treat your classmates with respect, avoid gratuitous arguments, and observe rules of confidentiality regarding personal information shared in class.

Expectations for the Instructor

I will follow the course outline as closely as possible and will notify you of modifications in the outline if they happen. I will attempt to create and maintain a class atmosphere in which you feel free to both listen to others and express your views and ask questions to increase your learning. Please make an appointment to talk with me if there is anything you want to discuss or about which you are unclear. I want to be supportive of your learning and growth throughout the semester.

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, in class discussions and in written and oral communication please use 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, but when referring to God please 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 on "Inclusive and Expansive Language" (available [here](#)).

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.

Resources for Instruction, Learning, and Technology at LPTS

- To access the Library and its resources, visit: <https://lpts.libguides.com/Research/eBooks>
- To request a library laptop loan, contact the Online Help Desk – library@lpts.edu
- For general help with campus network access, Outlook (email), contact support@lpts.edu
- For assistance with Canvas, contact Carolyn Cardwell, ccardwell@lpts.edu
- For Academic Support for any of your studies, contact the ASC: Beth Herrinton-Hodge at bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu or Sherry Arconti at sarconti@lpts.edu

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session.

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructor 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 (including A.I. chatbots) 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 the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Most courses at LPTS will require that you write papers. Some will be "journal type" writing, offering theological reflecting, and some will be research papers in which you incorporate the research and ideas of others to help support your points. Some of you will actually publish some of your papers in various theological journals. In all cases, your papers should be of professional academic quality.

In your research papers, you must document any information that is not "universally known" or that you did not know before your investigation of the subject. In academic papers and professional journals, you can make some assumptions about your readers since you know that

you have some level of shared expertise. However, any use of information without proper documentation is considered plagiarism.

Sometimes students inadvertently use the works of others without correctly citing the source of the information. Remember, when you use someone's ideas you must give credit to that source. If you are using the author's exact words use quotation marks around the passage and then, using the appropriate documentation style, give the full citation information. These mistakes are usually unintentional but are nonetheless plagiarism.

Another problem occasionally arises when summarizing material. Even when you put the author's ideas in your own words, it is necessary to give the citation information. Sometimes, writers summarize and correctly document their sources, but the summaries are too similar to the original. Phrases and groups of words from the original text might not be rewritten in the writer's "language" but retain too much of the original author's style. This is often tricky but is still considered plagiarism.

A special form of plagiarism is self-plagiarism or "double-dipping": reusing an assignment written for another course (whether at LPTS or elsewhere) or incorporating a substantial portion of work submitted for another course in an assignment submission. Assignments are course-specific and related to the distinctive pedagogical aims of a class. When a student attempts to recycle previous work, whether they intend to deceive or not, they frustrate the aims of teaching and learning in their course as well as the expectation that their submissions represent their fresh, original, and current understanding. In certain exceptional cases (for example, the MAR course Research Methods and Practices) "double-dipping" may be allowed when it serves the aims of two courses, ordinarily taken in the same term, but only with the understanding and express permission of the instructors of both courses. In most other cases, self-plagiarism (or "double-dipping") is academically dishonest practice and should be understood as a variety of plagiarism as defined in this policy. If you are uncertain about what "substantial" re-use of previous work means or whether an exception to this policy applies to your work for a course, you should speak to your instructor for clarification.

Plagiarism is not only unethical but also illegal. Ignorance is not an excuse.

When a professor judges a student's work to have been plagiarized, or to be subject to academic dishonesty, the following steps will be taken:

1. The instructor and the student shall have a consultation in which the assignment in question and the issue of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be discussed.
2. If, in the instructor's judgment, it is unequivocal that a student has plagiarized or used dishonest academic methods in preparing an exercise, the grade for that particular piece shall be judged an "F" or a numerical grade of zero. Any opportunity to redo the exercise is left to the discretion of the instructor.
3. The instructor shall promptly notify the Dean about the incident of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.
4. Such notification will be confidential written communication among the instructor, the Dean, and the student.

5. Two incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty by the same student shall be grounds for dismissal from the Seminary.
6. A student wishing to appeal the judgment of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may use the established procedures for appealing grades.

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, 2018.

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 center: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>.

Unit 1: Social Location & Biblical Hermeneutics

February 2023

Assignment #1

- **Sermon Analysis:** Summarize, reflect on, and analyze a sermon you've preached in the past two years, paying particular attention to *what* biblical texts you used and *how* you used them. Some questions you might address in your analysis include (but are not limited to): What biblical texts offer the key images or teachings in this sermon? How did you choose the biblical text/s? Did you allude to other biblical texts, images, or ideas? How did you study and/or prepare for the sermon? What tools/resources did you use? What interpretive moves did you make in your sermon? How do you make the move between the biblical text and the situation of your local audience? What assumptions underly your sermon? What does your sermon say about the way you read and/or think about the Bible?
- **Format:** Your paper should be 3 pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. Please email your paper as a Word or Google document to abowden@lpts.edu and bharrington@lpts.edu by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **February 28.**

Read:

1. Bird, Jennifer Grace. *Permission Granted: Take the Bible into Your Own Hands*. Louisville: WJK, 2015. Read: xi-11.

Discussion: What are your initial thoughts of Bird's introduction? What do you find valuable in her approach? What do you find less valuable? Imagine you are writing a piece on "what the Bible is and is not" to your ministerial context. What would you write and why? How might it be similar to Bird's? How might it differ?

2. Segovia, Fernando F. and Mary Ann Tolbert, eds. *Reading from this Place*. Volume 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. Read: 1-32 (Introduction, Segovia); 57-73 (Chapter 2, Segovia); 109-118 (Chapter 5, Yee); 263-276 (Chapter 16, Tolbert) CANVAS
3. Jacqueline M. Hidalgo. "Reading from No Place: Toward a Hybrid and Ambivalent Study of Scriptures." In *Latino/a Biblical Hermeneutics: Problematics, Objectives, Strategies*. Francisco Lozada Jr. and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. Atlanta: SBL, 2014. Pgs. 165-186 CANVAS
4. Segovia, Fernando F. "Reading-Across: Intercultural Criticism and Textual Posture." In *Interpreting Beyond Borders*. Sheffield: Sheffield, 2000. Read: "Reading-of and Reading-Across" (60-67) and "Reading-with" (68-72). CANVAS
5. Mogomme Alpheus Masoga. "'Dear God! Give us Our Daily Leftovers and We Will be Able to Forgive Those Who Trouble Our Souls': Some Perspectives on Conversational Biblical Hermeneutics and Theologies." In *Reading Other-Wise: Socially Engaged*

Biblical Scholars Reading with their Local Communities. Atlanta: SBL, 2007. Pgs. 19-27. (ebook at LPTS library)

Discussion: Consider the various hermeneutical strategies presented in this block of readings – reading from this place, reading across, reading with, reading from no place, reading from the periphery. How would you describe each of the strategies? Compare and contrast them. What do you find most useful? Most challenging? Do you have a strong preference for one over another? How do you imagine using one or more of these strategies in your ministerial context? How might they contribute to your research or doctoral project?

Unit 2: Methods & Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

March – April 2023

An Introduction to Methods

Read:

1. Marchal, Joseph A., ed. *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Methods and Perspectives*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

Assignment #2

- **Reflection Paper:** A short reflection paper on *Studying Paul's Letters: Contemporary Perspectives and Methods*. For this paper I want you to reflect on the methods of interpretation presented in the book, on the resulting interpretations of Paul's letters, and on what you came away with from the book. Note: This paper should be a *reflection on the reading, not a summary of it*. Tell me what you think! Some questions you might address in your reflection include:
 - Compare and contrast the methods of interpretation presented: What method did you find most valuable; what did you find the least valuable; and why?
 - What did you appreciate; what did you dislike? What do you take away from these likes and dislikes?
 - What methods do you imagine yourself using in the future and why?
 - How does what you've learned from the book square with what you've learned in other classes, at church, or from your own general experience/knowledge?
 - What surprised you; what disturbed you; and how do you learn from your own surprises and disturbances?
 - Did anything you read lead you to think differently about the way you interpret Paul's letters or the Bible in general?
- **Format:** Your paper should be 3-5 pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. Please email your paper as a Word or Google document to abowden@lpts.edu and bharrington@lpts.edu by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **March 31**.

Reading Biblical Texts

Psalm 23

2. Clines, David J. A. "Psalm 23 and Method" CANVAS

Exodus

3. Robert Allen Warrior. "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians" In *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006. 235-241.
4. Cuéllar, Gregory Lee. "A Migrant-Centric Reading of Exodus 2: Tactics of Survival for Immigrant Women and Their Unaccompanied Children." *Biblical Interpretation* 26 (2018): 499-514.
5. West, Mona. "Outsiders, Aliens, and Boundary Crossers: A Queer Reading of the Hebrew Exodus." In *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*. Robert E. Goss and Mona West, eds. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2000. 71-81.

Discussion: In what ways do these readings illustrate the maxims "meaning making is plural" and "the questions you ask determine the answers you get"? What do you take away from these readings? How have these readings helped you to develop your own critical abilities?

Childfree Women in the Hebrew Bible

6. Davison, Lisa Wilson. *More than a Womb: Childfree Women in the Hebrew Bible as Agents of the Holy*. Eugene: Cascade, 2021.

Discussion: Please come prepared with one or more of the following:

- What most struck me about this book is...
 - The question that I'd most like to ask the author is...
 - The idea I most take issue with is...
 - The most crucial point was...
 - The part of the book that made the most sense to me was...
- or*
- A memory or experience that connects to a point in the book
 - A discussion question you'd like to pitch to your colleagues

Unit 3: Biblical Authority

May 2023

Read:

1. Angela N. Parker. *If God Still Breathes, Why Can't I?: Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.

Optional: If you want to dive deeper in the authority of scripture. Watch the following interview of four biblical scholars: [Authority of Scripture — Courageous Conversations \(courageousconvos.org\)](https://courageousconvos.org)

Discussion: Does the author present information in a way that is interesting and insightful? Has reading this book changed your thoughts on biblical authority and/or inerrancy? If so, how? If not, why? In your opinion, does the author give proper consideration to all sides of the topic? What did you find surprising? Did certain parts of the book make you uncomfortable? If so, why did you feel that way? Did reading this book lead to new understanding or awareness? Why was the title chosen for this book? Do you think the cover art reflects the book's themes? If so, how? If not, what would you depict on the cover in its place? Would you recommend this book to a friend or colleague? How will this book shape/inform your research?

Unit 4: Learning in Community

June 2023

Assignment #3a

- **Self-Inventory:** Read, pgs. 256-261 from *Reading from this Place*.
- Directions: Answer the twenty questions provided in the assigned reading “Self-inventory on Biblical Hermeneutics.” This assignment is meant as a guide to stimulate self-reflection and to help you articulate the ways you read and interpret the Bible. There is no page requirement for this assignment. You will get out of it what you put into it. Some answers you will be able to answer in a short paragraph. Others might require several paragraphs or pages. Students will present their thoughts and questions about their self-inventories with their classmates for feedback and reflection toward the end of class.
- Format: Your paper should be double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. This paper is due on the last day of class, June 9. Please email your paper as a Word or Google document to abowden@lpts.edu and bharrington@lpts.edu by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **June 9**.

Assignment #3b

- **Self-Inventory:** Now that you've had time to discuss your inventory with your colleagues, what would you change or add? This is an opportunity for you to edit your initial self-inventory. After you edit your answers, answer this final question: How has this class changed the way you read and study the bible and how will this impact the study and completion of your DMin project?
- Format: Your paper should be double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. Please email your paper as a Word or Google document to abowden@lpts.edu and bharrington@lpts.edu by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **June 23**.

Class Schedule

Time	Monday June 5	Tuesday June 6	Wednesday June 7	Thursday June 8	Friday June 9
9:00 – 9:15	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer	Prayer
9:15-10:30	Discussion on Sermon Analysis and Unit 1, Reading 1	Discussion on Unit 2, Reading 1, Intro to Ch. 5	Discussion on Unit 2, Readings 3-5	Discussion on Unit 3, Reading 1	<i>Cont.</i>
10:30-10:45	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:45-12:00	Discussion on Unit 1, Readings 2-5	Discussion on Unit 2, Reading 1, Chs. 6-11	Discussion on Unit 2, Reading 6	<i>Cont.</i>	<i>Cont.</i>
12:00-1:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Dismiss
1:30-3:00	<i>Cont.</i>	Discussion on Unit 2, Reading 2	<i>Cont.</i>	Students Present Self-Inventories for Discussion	