

DM 6462 Seminar II – The Minister as Biblical Interpreter
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
June Term 2024

Instructors:

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“As long as there are [people] 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 tensive 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 and readings 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) Frederick C. Tiffany and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

2) Select one:

Ronald Hendel, ed. *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods* Cambridge University Press, 2010.

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

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

If you need to refresh your survey knowledge, I recommend:

Rolf A. Jacobson and Michael J. Chan, *Introducing the Old Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023).

Mark Alan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

Assignments and Schedule

The course is designed with preparatory work in Feb-May and class during June 3-7. This method spreads the work out over several months so that you do not have to go to class in June all day then read for class all evening and night. Our class time will be reviewing and expanding on the preparatory work in order starting with Unit 1. There will be no new readings during June.

Unit 1: Social Location and Biblical Hermeneutics

February and March 2024 – Lenten Season

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, 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.

We will consider Steps 1 and 2 in the hermeneutical circle (or “roadmap” as described in the Tiffany and Ringe textbook). What might it mean to bring ourselves to our encounter of the biblical story?

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

Unit Readings:

Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe. *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996. pp. 13-66. [Textbook]

Killen, Patricia O’Connell & John de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. New York: Crossroad, 1994. pp. vii-19. [Canvas]

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. [Canvas]

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

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. [Canvas]

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): 256-61. [Canvas]

Unit Assignment:

Tiffany and Ringe argue that we bring ourselves (as individuals and communities) to every encounter with the biblical text. Write a 3-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? Use the Self-Inventory on Biblical Hermeneutics in *Reading from this Place* (pages 256-61) to help you.

Format: Your paper should be 3 pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. Please submit your paper via Canvas by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **March 23**.

Unit 2: Biblical Exegesis and Methods

April 2024 – Easter Season

"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*

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.

Unit Topics:

Encounter as Close Reading in Historical and Literary Context – STEPS 3 & 4 of T&R

Engagement with Other Readers and Communities – STEP 5 of Tiffany and Ringe

Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings

Unit Readings:

Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe. *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996, 67-125.

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): 1-32 (Introduction, Segovia). [Canvas]

Chose 1 of the following 2 books:

Ronald Hendel, ed. *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

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

Unit Assignment:

Reflection Paper: A short reflection paper on either *Studying Paul's Letters* or *Reading Genesis*. For this paper I want you to reflect on the methods of interpretation presented in the book, on the resulting interpretations, 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 Genesis or the Bible in general?

Format: Your paper should be 4 pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. Please submit your paper via Canvas by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **April 30**.

Unit 3: Biblical Authority

May 2024

Unit Description:

This course unit addresses the topic of biblical authority by conversing with womanist New Testament scholar, Angela Parker and her work. How is the Bible authoritative in your ministry and your ministry setting?

Unit Readings:

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

Watch the following interview of four biblical scholars: [Authority of Scripture — Courageous Conversations \(courageousconversations.org\)](https://www.courageousconversations.org) <https://youtu.be/IyVIBWdTXSo?si=uifC8ehoPO5CGyr6>

Recommended Readings:

Dale B. Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006): 161-185.

Karen Armstrong, "Post-Scripture," in *The Lost Art of Scripture: Rescuing the Sacred Texts* (New York: Knopf, 2019): 451-481.

David Ford, *Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007): 59-71.

Francis Clooney, "Extending the Canon: Some Implications of a Hindu Argument about Scripture," *Harvard Theological Review* 85.2 (1992): 197-215.

David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009): 132-156.

Unit Assignment:

Write a 3-page reflection essay pondering the following questions: 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?

Format: Your paper should be 3 pages in length, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, with 1-inch margins. Please submit your paper via Canvas by the end of the day (11:59pm) on **May 31**.

Unit 4: Learning in Community

June 3-7, 2024

Daily Schedule TBD.

We will work our way through the readings and your assignments in each unit.

We will plan to meet each day of this week from approximately 9am to 3pm. Please do not schedule any other work for this intense week.

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.