

DM 6461 Seminar II
The Minister as Biblical Interpreter
Louisville Seminary
June 10-14, 2019

“Reading Scripture in Creation and Creation in Scripture”

Instructor

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Schlegel 121

Catalog Course Description

This seminar will introduce students to current topics in biblical studies as a means of helping students develop skills in biblical interpretation related to situations in ministry. In this seminar, students will continue to identify and give shape to their research project prospectus.

Specific Course Description

Building on Seminar I’s focus on race, class, gender discrimination, and pastoral ethnography to widen the circle of human and pastoral care, this seminar will explore, through Scripture and contemporary observation, healthy understandings of the relationships among ourselves, God, and the larger creation we inhabit.

Learning Goals

- (1) In light of the needs and concerns of contemporary religious communities, to demonstrate an advanced understanding and integration of ministry in relationship to academic biblical studies, particularly the task of interpreting texts produced by ancient Israelites as they explored their role and responsibilities in the created world of nature and human society (SLO 1).
- (2) To demonstrate skills and competencies in methods of research by successfully researching, writing, and presenting an academic/pastoral paper that meaningfully connects Scripture’s various views of humans in the created world to areas of ecological concern in contemporary religious communities, and where applicable incorporating those applicable concepts, theories, theologies, and reflections into their research project prospectus (SLO 3).
- (3) To identify areas of personal growth in spiritual awareness and theological and ethical sensitivity, informed by our vocational commitments as persons of faith and church leaders, to a life in the Spirit, nurtured by participation with others in Christian practices

and the work and life of ministry, particularly in being Christian leaders during an era of multiple ecological crises (SLO 3).

Required Readings

Books

- William P. Brown, *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2017.
This new book outlines the process of exegesis for students and pastors. As you read it, make sure you understand and can carry out the work of exegesis outlined by Prof. Brown, who teaches at Columbia Seminary. This will be necessary for completing your first paper and will be discussed in class as we begin our week.
- Fletcher Harper, *GreenFaith: Mobilizing God's People to Save the Earth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015).
The Rev. Fletcher Harper is an Episcopal priest and founder of GreenFaith, which trains individuals and congregations in faith-based creation care. *You may choose to read either this book or Torgerson.*
- Melanie Harris, *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faith* (Orbis, 2017).
Dr. Melanie Harris is professor of Religion at Texas Christian University (TCU) specializing in social, environmental, and womanist ethics and interreligious dialogue.
- David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*, London: Equinox, 2010.
Dr. Horrell is Professor of New Testament Studies and Director of the Centre for Biblical Studies, at the University of Exeter in the UK. (Some editions of this book seem quite expensive—search for one that is under \$30.)
- James B. Martin-Schramm and Robert L. Stivers, *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Method Approach* (Orbis, 2003). Read pages 1-63. You will be assigned to read one case study to discuss in class (chapters 4-12).
Dr. Martin-Schramm is a Lutheran and teaches religion and ethics at Luther College in Iowa. The Rev. Dr. Stivers, a Presbyterian, is professor emeritus of ethics at Pacific Lutheran University in Washington.
- Mark A. Torgerson, *Greening Spaces for Worship and Ministry: Congregations, Their Buildings, and Creation Care* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2012).
Dr. Torgerson is professor of worship arts and biblical and theological studies at Judson University in Illinois. *You may choose to read either this book or Harper.*
- Patricia Tull, *Inhabiting Eden: Christians, the Bible, and the Ecological Crisis* (Westminster John Knox, 2013).
The Rev. Dr. Patricia Tull is professor emerita of Hebrew Bible at Louisville Seminary.
- E. O. Wilson, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* (W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).

Dr. Wilson is a prolific science writer and professor emeritus in entomology at Harvard University in Massachusetts and is the world's leading expert on ants and has been called "the father of biodiversity."

Articles and excerpts available on CAMS

- Saleem H. Ali and Mary A. Ackley, "Foreign Investment and Environmental Justice in an Island Economy: Mining, Bottled Water, and Corporate Social Responsibility in Fiji," in JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman, eds., *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices* (MIT Press, 2011), 67-83. (Only one of you will read this on your case study day.)
- Wendell Berry, "A Limitless Reality," in Lyndsay Moseley, ed., *Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices for Creation Care* (Sierra Club Books, 2008), pp. 47-56.
Wendell Berry lives in northern Kentucky and is a world-renowned essayist, poet, and novelist, as well as an environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer.
- Pope Francis, "Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home." Read pp. 3-44 (more if you can).
Pope Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, a Jesuit priest from Argentina, adopted the papal name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi. He is also a trained chemist.
- bell hooks, "Touching the Earth," in Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (Trinity University Press, 2010), pp. 363-68.
Gloria Jean Watkins adopted the pen name bell hooks in honor of her maternal great-grandmother, Bell Blair Hooks. She is a prolific author and postmodern African American cultural critic. In 2014 she founded the bell hooks Institute at Berea College in Kentucky.
- Wangari Maathai, "We Are Called to Help the Earth to Heal," in Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (Trinity University Press, 2010), pp. 271-74.
Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai was a Kenyan environmental activist and founder of the Green Belt Movement, an NGO focused on tree planting, environmental conservation, and women's rights.
- Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Colored Town and Liberation Science in Lyndsay Moseley, ed., *Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices for Creation Care* (Sierra Club Books, 2008), pp. 218-29.
Dr. Shrader-Frechette tells her personal story in this essay, showing how childhood roots in interracial communities led to her work at Notre Dame University as an environmental scientist and activist.
- Kristin Shrader-Frechette, *Taking Action, Saving Lives: Our Duties to Protect Environmental and Public Health* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-38. (Only one of you will read this on your case study day.)

- David N. Livingstone, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis: A Reassessment,” *Fides et Historia* 26:1 (1994): 38-55.
Dr. Livingstone is a geographer and historian at Queen’s University in Belfast. His essay offers interesting background on the author whose work he is revisiting, Lynn White, Jr.
- Desmond Tutu, “Foreword,” in Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (Trinity University Press, 2010), pp. xiii-xiv.
Rev. Tutu is a South African Anglican priest and human rights activist who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his unifying anti-apartheid work.
- Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science*, New Series, 155:3767 (Mar. 10, 1967), 1203-7.
Dr. White was an American historian who taught at several colleges and universities during his lifetime, and is perhaps most well-known today for the essay you are reading.
- Ming Xu and Xin Wei, “An Invisible Killer,” in Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (Trinity University Press, 2010), pp. 275-78.
Ming Xu is a professor at the institute of Geographical Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Xin Wei is a student at the Institute of World Literature of Peking University.

Further readings for those interested

- Anything by Wendell Berry.
- JoAnn Carmin and Julian Agyeman, eds., *Environmental Inequalities Beyond Borders: Local Perspectives on Global Injustices* (MIT Press, 2011).
- Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
- Andrea Cohen-Kiener, *Claiming Earth as Common Ground: The Ecological Crisis through the Lens of Faith* (Skylight Paths, 2009).
- Ellen Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- Daniel G. Defenbaugh, *Learning the Language of the Fields: Tilling and Keeping as Christian Vocation* (Cowley, 2006).
- Ryan D. Harker and Heather L. Bunce, *The Earth Is the Lord’s: Essays on Creation and the Bible in Honor of Ben C. Ollenburger* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019).
- Katharine Hayhoe and Andrew Farley, *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Decisions* (Faithwords, 2009).
Dr. Hayhoe is an evangelical Christian and climate science professor at Texas Tech University. Her YouTube channel Global Weirding is well worth checking out. Her husband, the Rev. Dr. Farley, is a church pastor and linguistics professor at Texas Tech.
- David G. Horrell et al., eds., *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (T&T Clark, 2010).

- Charlene Hosenfeld, *Ecofaith: Creating and Sustaining Green Congregations* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2009).
- Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Georgetown University Press, 2013).
- Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Making Peace with the Earth: Action and Advocacy for Climate Justice* (World Council of Churches, 2016).
- Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Hilda P. Koster, eds., *Planetary Solidarity: Global Women's Voices on Christian Doctrine and Climate Justice* (Fortress, 2017).
- Steve Lerner, *Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the United States* (MIT Press, 2010).
- Wangari Maathai, *Replenishing the Earth: Spiritual Values for Healing Ourselves and the World* (Doubleday, 2010).
- Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Fortress, 2013)
- Douglas J. Moo and Jonathan A. Moo, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World* (Zondervan, 2018).
- Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson, eds., *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (Trinity University Press, 2010).
- Lyndsay Moseley, ed., *Holy Ground: A Gathering of Voices for Creation Care* (Sierra Club Books, 2008).
- Kristin Shrader-Frechette, *Taking Action, Saving Lives: Our Duties to Protect Environmental and Public Health* (Oxford University Press, 2007).
- Nick Spencer, Robert White, and Virginia Vroblesky, *Christianity, Climate Change, and Sustainable Living* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009).
- Noah J. Toly and Daniel I. Block, eds., *Keeping God's Earth: The Global Environment in Biblical Perspective* (InterVarsity Press, 2010).

Course Requirements

(1) Participation (30%)

Consistent, informed, and constructive participation in all class sessions is required. Careful reading and analysis of the assigned primary and secondary sources are crucial for participation.

(2) Short Paper #1 (2 pages, double-spaced) Due by Friday, March 1 (10%)

Write an exegetical self-profile as described and exemplified in Brown's *Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (pp. 12-19). Use the nine questions on p. 12 as a guide, adding as a 10th question: "How have you been exposed to the natural world and what effect has God's creation had on the way you live, think, and worship?"

(3) Short Paper #2 (3-4 pages, double-spaced) Due by Friday, April 5 (20%)

The second short paper will explore a chosen Psalm that reflects upon creation and human participation in and/or celebration of it. It should show exegetical study of the psalm as laid out in Brown's *Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*, reflection on the psalm's form and message, and implications of the psalm as Scripture for Christians today as they consider responsibility toward creation. As an exegetical paper, this will no doubt take more time, and require more research, than a standard paper might take. Because we will do a lot of reading on certain psalms, such as Pss 8, 104, and 148, avoid these. Otherwise, you may choose any psalm in which the natural world or its elements are prominent.

- (4) Book Review (2 pages, double-spaced) Due by May 6 (10%)—specific assignments given in early March

Each student will prepare a review of one of the books assigned as readings for the course and will help to guide discussion of that work when we meet in June. Your review should spend approximately the first 75% of space summarizing and clarifying the book's contents, and 25% of space responding judiciously to them.

- (5) Practice of Ministry Paper, Prospectus, and Presentation (12-14 pp.) Due by May 31 (30%)

This paper will employ Scripture in reflecting in worship and practice on establishing an ethic of earth care in your workplace, church, or community.

1. Drawing from the readings and your own life experiences and reflections, write a page reflecting on your own role as an environmental theologian. How does the human responsibility for creation care intersect other concerns and practices of the Christian church, and what is your role as a local leader?
2. Drawing on your experiences, offer a profile of your setting's general understanding of creation theology and human responsibility. What is the range? What practices reflect the ethos? What areas of special concern or energy do you see, and what points of resistance or misunderstanding?
3. In light of the conversations reflected above, and drawing upon the readings, choose a passage of Scripture that you believe could fruitfully be explored in worship and Bible study to further reflection and action with regard to creation. It may be the psalm from your second short paper or it may be another. Because of their frequent discussion in the readings, do avoid Genesis 1-2. Offer a brief exegetical analysis of the passage and outline how you might present it in worship and in a Bible study forum. What occasion might be appropriate, what hymns, prayers, or other worship practices might accompany a sermon on this passage?
4. As a final step, returning to your developing research project prospectus, consider how you might incorporate learnings from your readings and exegetical research in this course into the plans for your research project, bearing in mind that the environment is not a separate concern from human wellbeing, but rather that the wellbeing of those we serve

depends creation's health. Redraft or add to your research prospectus accordingly and turn in with your paper.

Drafts of these papers are due for class reading on Friday, May 31, and presentations will be made in class during the week we meet.

Deadlines and Extensions

Friday, March 1 Short Paper #1 on exegetical self-profile due to Instructor via email
Friday, April 5 Short Paper #2 a psalm due to Instructor via email
Monday, May 6 Book review due to Instructor via email
Friday, May 31 Draft of Practice of Ministry paper due to seminar members via CAMS
Friday, June 28 Revision of Practice of Ministry paper due to Instructor via email

Extensions to deadlines for written course assignments will only be considered in advance (i.e., prior to a given deadline). They will only be granted in "extraordinary circumstances," as outlined in the Seminary catalog and according to the procedure explained therein. Truly "extraordinary circumstances" are, by definition, very rare.

Late submission of written course assignments will be accepted with the following penalties: after the deadline but within 24 hours, reduction of one full letter grade (i.e., A- to B-); after 24 hours but within 48 hours, reduction of two full letter grades (i.e., A- to C-). This pattern of penalties will be followed until the paper is more than four days (i.e., 96 hours) late, at which point a failing grade (F) will be assigned. Written course assignments submitted beyond that point will not be accepted in any circumstances without appropriate documentation and direction from the relevant LPTS administrator.

Formatting of Written Assignments

Please follow these guidelines for your written assignments:

- Include your name, assignment, course, date, and title on first page. No need to make a separate cover page.
- One-inch (1") margins on top, bottom, left, and right of all pages. Justify left all text.
- Use Times New Roman 12-point font, black color, double-spaced.
- One-line break between paragraphs.
- Any block quotes should be single-spaced and indented by ½".
- Indicate page numbers in Arabic numerals at bottom of page.
- For any citations, use either APA (parenthetical with bibliography of works cited) or Turabian/CMS (full footnotes; no bibliography necessary). Either way, pay close attention to offering all bibliographical information that is needed. (see Citation Policy below). Citations of Scripture can be made in parentheses in the body of the paper, including translation (e.g., NRSV, NIV), no footnote or further bibliography needed.

Assignment Submission

Save and submit your first three papers to me in DOC or DOCX format (not PDF) as email attachments. The Practice of Ministry paper, however, will be uploaded to CAMS. Do not submit hard copies as they will not reach me or other class members. Improperly formatted assignments will be returned for revision according to the guidelines listed above, due within 24 hours. Since students sometimes experience difficulty with proper footnoting and bibliographic references, your papers will be important practice toward formatting for your further D.Min. work.

Assessment

Transcript Grade: Pass/Fail

In-Class Grade: A to C-

The grade on your transcript for this class will be either Pass or Fail. However, I will offer letter grades for your individual works of A to C- (passing) so that you may evaluate where your work stands in relation to seminary standards. Anything lower than C- is a failing grade.

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with Seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussion and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community with 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. For further assistance, go to <http://lpts.libguides.com/OWL/language> or Well Chosen Words by the PCUSA (also on the OWL website).

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 the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should have already been in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (bherrintonhodge@lpts.edu) during Seminar I and should contact this class's instructor as soon

as possible in the spring to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy

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

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

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*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

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.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all class meetings which will be held from 9 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday (see course schedule below for details). Absences are excused for emergencies only. Given the intensive seminar format of the class, unexcused absences will automatically result in a failing course grade.

Course Conduct

As in Seminar 1, a willing and open mind is fundamental to establishing a productive learning environment for yourself and your colleagues. Please be ready thoughtfully to wrestle with ideas and questions that are different from your own or new for you.

Class participation entails attendance, punctuality, preparedness, class etiquette, and engagement. Each student is expected to come to class having thoroughly read assignments and prepared for thoughtful discussion, including both contributing to explanations of key arguments and raising appropriate questions in interaction with the materials.

Engaged, active classroom conversation and attentive and respectful listening are both necessary. Please do not interrupt others when they're speaking, dismiss others' views as unimportant or immoral, or dominate classroom conversation. *Adapted from Dr. Stacy Floyd-Thomas, Vanderbilt Divinity School*

Technology in the Classroom

You may bring your laptop to class and use it to take notes, access readings we are discussing, and similar activities that contribute to classroom discussion. Please turn off and put away your cell phones, and refrain from social media, email, and other activities unrelated to the class. If you feel your electronic devices will present too great a distraction for you, do not get them out.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday, June 10

Morning (9-12)

Topic: Review of Biblical Exegesis

Readings: Brown

Afternoon (1-4)

Topic: Brief presentations on the psalms studied and prepared for first short paper.

Readings: You will receive a list of the psalms to read and review before this session.

Tuesday, June 11

Morning (9-12)

Topic: The Church's Record and Challenges

Readings: Wilson, White, Livingstone, Francis, Berry (only the first of these is a book)

Afternoon (1-4)

Topic: Calls to Environmental Justice

Readings: Harris, Martin-Schramm & Stivers, Shrader-Frechette, Maathai, hooks, Tutu, Xu and Wei (Again, only the first is a whole book. You all read the first three chapters of Martin-Schramm & Stivers, and each will be assigned a further chapter to read.)

Wednesday, June 12

Morning (9-12)

Topic: Scripture and Nature

Readings: Horrell, Tull (two books)

Afternoon (1-4)

Topic: Practical Work of Churches

Readings: Harper OR Torgerson

Thursday, June 13

Morning (9-12)

Topic: Student exegetical presentations

Afternoon (1-4)

Topic: Student exegetical presentations

Friday, June 14

Morning (9-12)

Topic: Student exegetical presentations

Afternoon (1-4)

Topic: Student exegetical presentations and concluding discussion