

**OT 102-3 Introduction to Old Testament Exegesis**  
(Using Genesis and Isaiah)  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
Spring Term 2018: Wednesdays and Fridays 10:00 – 11:20AM

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"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*

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### ***Course Description***

This course provides an introduction to exegetical methodologies with regard to the Old Testament. 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 scholarly 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 recommend the JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh or a NRSV Study Bible such as The New Oxford or New Interpreters. Many of you already bought one of these bibles for Scripture I.

2) Elliger, K. and W. Rudolph, eds. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1967/77. This is the scholarly version of the Hebrew Bible.

3) Clines, David J. A., ed. *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009. Or another suitable lexicon such as Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) or The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT) by Koehler & Baumgartner.

Instead of #2 and #3, students could purchase BibleWorks software.

4) Brown, William. *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2017)

5) Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

## *Assignments & Evaluation*

### 1) Attendance and Class Participation (10%)

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) Translations (with Footnotes) & Exegetical Exercises (30%)

These exercises are marked and explained in the schedule below with a ∞ sign. Also, see Appendix A 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) Small Group Conversation with Professor on Historical and Literary Issues (15%) April 16-17.

Students will meet in assigned groups (of 3 people maximum) with me for an hour to present on, and converse about, the historical and literary issues of a pre-assigned biblical passage. I might also present a new biblical passage and ask the group to provide historical and literary questions. I will present a handout for additional information. [Course Objectives 1 and 3]

### 4) Exegesis Paper (45%) Due in sections throughout the semester.

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

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

Due Monday, Feb 26

Historical/Diachronic/Author Section - 5 pg *Draft* (10%)

Due Monday, March 19

Literary/Synchronic/Text Section - 5 pg *Draft* (10%)

Due Monday, April 9

Theological/Existential/Reader Section - 5 pg *Draft* (10%)

Due Monday, April 23

Final Paper with revisions and thesis (HLT statement) 15-17 pages (10%) Due Friday, May 11\*

\*I need a final paper from those graduating by Wed. May 9 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*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15<sup>th</sup> 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 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](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.) and receive fewer comments. 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**

#### Friday, Feb 2

Introduction to course & syllabus

What is Exegesis?

Introduction to BHS and lexicons: Genesis 2:4b and following

#### Wednesday, Feb 7

Introduction to Exegesis: HLT

*Class Readings:* Brown, 3-10, 21-22. (Stare at chart on page 8)

Tiffany and Ringe, 14-22, 89-93, 95-102. Revisit from TSE!

#### Friday, Feb 9

Self-Exegesis

*Class Readings:* Brown, 11-19.

Tiffany and Ringe, 25-27, 41-48, 53. Revisit from TSE!

∞ After completing the Brown reading, create a 1-page Exegetical Self-Profile, answering some of the questions on pg. 12 and using the examples on pgs. 13-19.

## TRANSLATION

Wednesday, Feb 14

Translation Issues

Bible Translations through the Centuries

*Class Readings:* Brown, 25-40. (see also Resources on pp. 42-44)

Sandra L. Gravett, Karla G. Bohmbach, F. V. Greifenhagen, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008): 42-45. [CAMS]

Friday, Feb 16

Translation and Its Consequences

*Class Readings:* Ronald Hendel, *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods* (Cambridge University Press, 2010): 157-175. [CAMS and Library Reserve]

∞ 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.

Wednesday, Feb 21

Grammatical Criticism & Text Criticism

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

*Class Readings:* Brown, 45-55. (55-60 is optional)

Sandra L. Gravett, Karla G. Bohmbach, F. V. Greifenhagen, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008): 46-53. [CAMS]

See also Tiffany and Ringe, 225-234, for resources.

See Appendix C of syllabus as well as Brown, 42-44.

Friday, Feb 23

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.

### **HISTORICAL ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS**

Wednesday, Feb 28

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 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:* Brown, 161-169. (113-125 is optional)

Mayfield, *Unto Us a Child Is Born: Isaiah, Advent, and our Jewish Neighbors*

Draft Manuscript, 58-74. [CAMS]

Friday, March 2

Historical Criticism II

Test Case: Genesis 17 (Priestly Covenant)

∞ Bring your translation (with footnotes) of Genesis 17:1-6. 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, [Library Reserve] soon in order to understand source criticism for the historical section of your paper.

### Wednesday, March 7

Form Criticism: Structure and Genre

Test Case: Isaiah 6:1-13 (do not translate; just read in English)

*Class Readings:* Brown, 95-104. (104-111 is helpful but optional).

Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, (FOTL; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): 132-136.  
[CAMS]

### Friday, March 9

Summary of Historical Criticism, Strengths and Weaknesses

*Class Readings:* Brown, 127-140.



## LITERARY ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS

### Wednesday, March 21

Literary Criticism Introduction: Reading like an English Major

Literary Context

Poetry

*Class Readings:* Brown, 63-72, 145-151.

### Friday, March 23

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:* Ronald Hendel, *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods* (Cambridge University Press, 2010): 13-27. [Library Reserve]

### Wednesday, March 28

Reading Biblical Narrative

Fokkelman and Abraham Cycle: Narration Time

Test Case: Genesis 27

*Class Readings:* J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999): 55-72. [CAMS and Library Reserve]

Brown, 79-92.

Wednesday, April 4

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

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Genesis 37: 29-33. Also, bring to class 3 literary questions related to this story (Gen 37:12-36).

Friday, April 6

Test Case: Isaiah 40: 1-11 in Literary Perspective

∞ Bring your translation (and footnotes) of Isaiah 40:1-5. Also, bring to class 2 literary questions.

### **THEOLOGICAL ISSUES / APPROACHES / METHODS**

Wednesday, April 11

Theological Interpretation Introduction: Reading like a Theologian

Test Case: Isaiah 2:1-5

*Class Readings:* Ronald Hendel, *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods* (Cambridge University Press, 2010): 196-214. [CAMS]

Brown, 195-197.

Friday, April 13

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:* Brown, 173-182. (182-190 are optional)

Wednesday, April 18

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:* R. W. L. Moberly, *The Theology of the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge University Press, 2009): 179-199. [CAMS and Library Reserve]

Friday, April 20

Feminist Interpretation

Genesis 18 & 19

∞ Response to book chapter by Schneider by noting how you think her argument is feminist?

*Class Readings:* Brown, 247-261.  
Tammi J. Schneider, *Sarah: Mother of Nations* (New York: Continuum, 2004): 66-81. [CAMS]

Wednesday, April 25

African American Biblical Interpretation

Genesis 9

*Class Readings:* Brown, 293-300.

Friday, April 27

Womanist and Genderqueer Interpretation

Hagar

*Class Readings:* Brown, 265-270, 273-275.  
Wilda Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville: WJK, 2017): 38-45. [Print reserves]

## CONCLUSIONS: PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Wednesday, May 2

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.

Friday, May 4

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 handout

## Appendix A

### Hebrew Translations with Footnotes

When the syllabus asks students to translate a given set of verses, students should provide their own translations of the text using the BHS, your dictionary/lexicon, and Bibleworks. You will want to consult *several* English translations in order to assist you with your translation; be careful however—it is fairly easy to spot when someone is simply copying from a translation. Strive for a translation that captures the Hebrew word order and grammatical features (e.g., translate participles as participles); elegant English is not necessarily the goal. Your English translation nevertheless should be readable as English (e.g. switch the word order so that the subject is first and the verb is second in English)

In addition to this translation, students are expected to include *at least one footnote* per biblical verse that speaks to other interesting English translations, lexicon gleanings, or text critical matters. So, one could note the places you differ or disagree with modern translations. Or one could jot down the ancient versions' variants (found in the critical apparatus).

#### EXAMPLE

#### Isaiah 2:1-2

<sup>1</sup>The matter<sup>1</sup> that Isaiah son of Amoz envisioned concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

<sup>2</sup> In future days<sup>2</sup>, the mountain of the house of ADONAI<sup>3</sup>  
will be established at the head of the mountains  
and will be lifted up above the hills.  
All the nations will flow to it like a river.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> JPS and NRSV translate “word,” which is appropriate to the Hebrew word. Yet, how can one “envision” a “word”?

<sup>2</sup> JPS translates “In the days to come,” which is nice because the oracle seems to refer to an unspecified, future time period. Some interpreters have understood (wrongly in my opinion) the time reference to concern eschatological matters, i.e., the end of time.

<sup>3</sup> “the mountain of the house of ADONAI” is a reference to the Jerusalem Temple Mount.

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew verb used here has as a derived noun, “river,” so that the nations are presented as a river flowing naturally up to the Temple.

## **Appendix B**

### **Suggested Biblical Passages for Exegesis Paper**

(You must receive approval for a passage not on this list;  
if it is not here, it is probably covered during our class time.)

Genesis 1 (First Creation Account)	Isaiah 1:1-20 (Judgment Oracle)
Genesis 11:1-9 (Tower of Babel)	Isaiah 5:1-7 (Song of the Vineyard)
Genesis 15 (Covenant with Abraham)	Isaiah 11:1-9 (Peaceful Kingdom)
Genesis 23 (Death and Burial of Sarah)	Isaiah 19: 1-15 (Oracle about Egypt)
Genesis 28: 10-22 (Jacob's Dream at Bethel)	Isaiah 42: 1-9 (Servant Song)
Genesis 29: 1-14 (Jacob Meets Rachel)	Isaiah 45: 1-8 (Cyrus, the anointed)
Genesis 32: 22-32 (Jacob wrestles at Peniel)	Isaiah 49: 1-13 (Servant Song)
Genesis 33 (Jacob and Esau Meet)	Isaiah 54: 1-17 (Zion poem)
Genesis 34: 1-31 (Rape of Dinah)	Isaiah 59: 1-15a (oracle of judgment)
Genesis 37: 1-11 (Joseph Dreams)	Isaiah 61: 1-11 (Spirit of God on me)
Genesis 38 (Judah and Tamar)	Isaiah 62: 1-12 (Zion's salvation)
Genesis 39 (Joseph and Potiphar's Wife)	Isaiah 66: 1-4 (right worship)

## Appendix C

### Old Testament / Hebrew Bible Exegetical Tools

#### 1) Dictionaries / Encyclopedias

- Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.
- Hayes, John H., ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. 2 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Meyers, Carol, ed. *Women in Scripture: a Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Currently 3 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006 –
- Hepper, F. N. *Baker Encyclopedia of Bible Plants: Flowers, Trees, Fruits, and Vegetables*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Losch, Richard R. *All the People in the Bible: an A-Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Metzger, Bruce M. and Michael D. Coogan. *The Oxford Guide to People & Places of the Bible*. New York: Oxford, 2001.
- Ray-Schwartz, Donald. *Noah's Ark: an Annotated Encyclopedia of Every Animal Species in the Hebrew Bible*. Aronson, 2000.
- Van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, et al. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*. Boston: Brill, 1999.

#### 2) Atlases

- Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Carta Bible Atlas*. 4th ed. Jerusalem: Carta, 2002.
- Curtis, Adrian, ed. *Oxford Bible Atlas*. 4th ed. NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Dowley, Tim, ed. *The Baker Atlas of Christian History*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997.
- Pritchard, James B. *The Harper Atlas of the Bible*. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.

#### 3) Concordances

- A specific concordance matches a Bible version.
- Goodrick, Edward W. and John R. Kohlenberger, eds. *NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan,
- Metzger, Bruce M. *NRSV Exhaustive Concordance*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991. Moulton and Geden. *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*. 6th edition, ed. by I. Howard Marshall. London: T.&T. Clark, 2002.
- Reference: BS 2302 .M8 2002
- Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Updated ed. Hendrickson, 2007.
- Whitaker, Richard E., and John R. Kohlenberger. *Analytical Concordance to the NRSV of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; New York: Oxford, 2000.

#### 4) Commentary Series

*Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*

*Anchor Bible*

*Berit Olam*

*Hermeneia*

*International Critical Commentary*

*Interpretation*

*JPS Torah Commentary*

*New Century Bible Commentary*

*New International Commentary, Old Testament Series*

*New Interpreter's Bible*

*Old Testament Library*

*Westminster Bible Companion*

*Word Biblical Commentary*

*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture/Old Testament*

#### 5) One Volume Commentaries

Adeyemo, Tokunboh, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

*The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.

*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990.

Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *Women's Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

*The Oxford Bible Commentary*. NY: Oxford, 2001.

*Queer Bible Commentary* (ed. Guest, Goss, West, Bohache);

*Global Bible Commentary* (ed. Patte);

*The International Bible Commentary* (ed. William R. Farmer);

*The Africana Bible* (ed. Hugh R. Page Jr.)