



Grace Communion Seminary

BI501 Biblical Interpretation

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Michael Morrison, PhD

Course description

This course surveys various methods of analyzing the biblical text, gives a brief introduction to using biblical Greek, and discusses how to use various forms of analysis in exploring the original meaning and contemporary applications of biblical passages.

In order to do well in this course, students are expected to put in at least 12 hours of study each week.

Required textbooks

Please obtain these books before the class begins. To find the lowest prices on these books, you may find it helpful to use www.bookfinder.com.

Bartholomew, Craig G., and Heath A. Thomas, eds. *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016. [978-0-8010-3087-1](https://www.bakerbook.com/product/9780801030871). \$17. 233 pages.

Camery-Hoggatt, Jerry. *Reading the Good Book Well: A Guide to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007. 240 pages. ISBN: [0687642752](https://www.abingdonpress.com/product/9780687642752). Cost: about \$23 (Amazon); from third-party seller, about \$17. This is an easy-to-read introduction to biblical studies.

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017. 576 pages. ISBN: [9780310524175](https://www.zondervan.com/product/9780310524175). Amazon, \$31, third party seller \$25. The second edition is also OK and costs less.

Also read: the book of Hebrews in a modern translation (not a paraphrase).

Recommended reading

Deddo, Gary. *Scripture: God's Gift*. Charlotte, NC: Grace Communion Seminary, 2013, 2019. ISBN: 978-1301126286. 34 pages. Free at <http://bit.ly/1orqJTX>.

Keener, Craig S. *The Bible in Its Context: How to Improve Your Study of the Scriptures*. Word document, available at <https://bit.ly/KeenerContext>.

Morrison, Michael. *Inspiration, Authority, and Reliability of Scripture*. Grace Communion International, 2013. Articles from the GCI website. PDF and e-book formats free at <https://bit.ly/InspirationAuthority>.

———. *Exploring the Word of God: The Letter to the Hebrews*. A collection of articles from the GCI website. PDF and e-book formats free at <https://bit.ly/MorrisonHebrews>.

Student learning outcomes

Through this course, students will...

1. Describe three major areas of focus for a systematic study of the biblical text: the historical setting, the literary setting, and the setting of the reader.
2. Describe scholarly critical methods of study, including those focusing on the history behind the text, the literary composition of the text, and the role of the reader in grasping the meaning.
3. Describe the structure of biblical Greek, enough so that the student is able to use lexicons, concordances, and understand basic grammatical terms used in exegetical commentaries.
4. Learn to analyze biblical texts using various Bible-study websites, with awareness of the limitations of the resources.
5. Analyze the philosophical foundations of hermeneutics, including the question of where “meaning” is to be sought.
6. With a sample passage from the book of Hebrews, demonstrate sound analysis of a text for use in a sermon.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday for ten weeks. See the *Academic Catalog*, section VI, for study suggestions.
2. **Participate.** Part of the learning that occurs in a course comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online course, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. Each week that we have a forum, you should reply to the initial question by the end of Thursday, and reply to at least one other student by the end of Sunday. This counts for 10 percent of the final grade.
3. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 1000 pages, or about 100 pages each week, or 14-15 per day. Schedule time each day!
4. **Four quizzes.** These open-book quizzes will help you review some of the lectures. 10 percent of the grade.
5. **Website research assignment.** This project will help you become familiar with some websites useful in biblical studies. 5 percent.
6. **Observations about a text.** To prepare for your exegetical paper, you will need to examine a biblical passage several times, and post your observations. These observations are not graded on quality, but merely whether you have done them. 5 percent.
7. **One 10-page paper, done in two parts.** This counts for 55 percent of the final grade. You will need about 50 hours to work on this – an average of 5 hours per week – some weeks more, some less.
 - 1) Part 1 – due at the end of the seventh week
 - a. Choose one of the passages from the book of Hebrews (see separate document for options and instructions).
 - b. Describe the original setting of the readers.
 - c. Identify the main point being made in that passage for the original readers, and why that point was needed in the original setting.
 - d. Outline the passage with 2–5 subpoints, with attention to

- the grammar of the passage.
 - e. Describe the literary setting.
 - f. This paper accounts for 25 percent of your final grade.
- 2) Part 2 – due at the end of the 12th week
- a. Verse by verse, explain how the words of the passage help support the point being made in the passage.
 - b. Comment on how our own context affects the way we read this passage.
 - c. Select one point from the passage that is appropriate in our own context, and outline a message designed to make that point to a contemporary audience.
 - d. This paper accounts for 30 percent of the final grade.
- 3) For further details, see the document titled “Exegetical Assignment for BI501.”
8. **One final exam.** The exam must be proctored; see proctoring instructions on the last page of this syllabus, and in the *Academic Catalog*, section VI, part 12. This open-book exam will help you review the lectures and readings; it counts for 10 percent of the final grade. There will be 20 multiple-choice questions and three short essays about a passage of Scripture.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	20	
Reading discussions and making responses	5	10
Taking quizzes	3	15
Website research project	2	5
Taking the final exam	2	10
Reading the textbooks	53	
Studying for quizzes and the final exam	7	
Making observations about the passage	3	5
Writing research papers	45	55
Total – about 12 hours each week	140	100

Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

Week	Topic	Assignments during the week
Week 1	Lecture 1A: Introduction to hermeneutics, and why study the Bible? 1B: How do we study the Bible? – a brief guide	Camery-Hoggatt, chapters 1-9 Discussion forum Observations on the text
Week 2	2A: Scholarly study methods that focus on history 2B: Scholarly methods that focus on the text 2C: Scholarly methods that focus on the readers	Camery-Hoggatt, chps. 10-18 Quiz 1 , on biblical criticisms Observations on the text
Week 3	3A: The purpose of sermons 3B: Studying for sermon preparation	Klein, Blomberg, & Hubbard (KBH), chapters 1-4 Discussion forum Observations on the text

Week 4	4A: Greek nouns, pronouns and adjectives 4B: Greek verbs, adverbs, conjunctions & prepositions	KBH, chapters 5 & 7 Quiz 2 , on Greek Observations/research on the text
Week 5	5A: Bible concordances B: Lexicons C: Dictionaries & encyclopedias D: Interlinear & literal versions E: Introductions & handbooks F: Commentaries G: Translations	KBH, chapters 10-11 Discussion forum Observations and research on the text
Week 6	Lecture 6: Bible study websites	KBH, chapters 8-9, “General Rules” and “Genres of the Old Testament” Discussion forum Quiz 3 , on paper formatting
Week 7	7A: Suggested strategy for using Bible study websites: Mark 8:31-38 as example. 7B: Word studies, and mistakes to avoid	KBH, chapter 12, “Application” The book of Hebrews Research Paper , part 1 Due by end of week 7
Week 8	8A: Hermeneutical horizons and spirals 8B: Philosophical issues: where is meaning to be found?	KBH, chap. 6 Bartholomew and Goheen, “Manifesto” and chapter 1 Website research project
Week 9	9A: How do theology and biblical studies interact? 9B: Theological interpretation	B&G, chaps. 2-4, 6 Discussion forum Quiz 4 : citations and bibliography format
Week 10	10A: Application: 1 Tim. 5 as an example of the challenge 10B: Using the Old Testament	B&G, chaps. 7-9, 11-12 Discussion forum

Week 11	Final exam must be proctored, and taken by the end of Tuesday, Nov. 23.
Week 12	Final paper is due by the end of Monday, December 6, 2021.