



Grace Communion Seminary

BI501 Biblical Interpretation

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Michael Morrison, PhD

Course description

This course surveys various methods of analyzing the biblical text 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.

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

Duvall, J. Scott, and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. 500 pages. ISBN: [0310109175](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0310109175). Cost: About \$35. Kindle edition OK.

Richards, E. Randolph, and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012. 240 pages. ISBN: [0830837825](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0830837825). About \$12.

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

Recommended reading

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

———. “T. F. Torrance on the Realist Reconfiguring of Theological and Biblical Studies to be Co-Servants of the Word of God,” *Participatio* 8 (2020): 1-30.

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*. Charlotte, NC: 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>.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lessons.** They will be posted each Monday for ten weeks.
2. **Watch seven video lectures** by Mark Strauss. They are posted at <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/bible-study-methods/mark-strauss>.
3. **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. This is 10 percent of the final grade.
4. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 1000 pages, or about 100 pages each week, or 14-15 per day. Schedule time each day!
5. **Observations about a text.** To prepare for your exegetical paper, you will need to examine a biblical passage several times, and post your observations on a class Wiki. 5 percent.

6. **Quizzes.** Open-book quizzes will help you review what you've read. 10 percent of the grade.
7. **Website research assignment.** This project will help you become familiar with some websites useful in biblical studies. 5 percent.
8. **One 10-page paper, done in three parts.** The paper should analyze three major contexts of the passage: the historical context, the literary data, and the context in which we read. You will need about 50 hours to work on this – an average of 5 hours per week – some weeks more, some less. Part one is due at the end of the fourth week, part 2 at the end of the eighth week, and part 3 at the end of the 12th week. This counts for 55 percent of the final grade.
9. **One final exam.** The exam must be proctored; see instructions at <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/page/view.php?id=6469>. This is an open-book exam – you may use books, notes, or internet sites – it counts for 10 percent of the final grade.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	20	
Video or audio of Mark Strauss	7	
Reading discussions and making responses	8	10
Taking quizzes	5	15
Website research project	2	5
Taking the final exam	2	10
Reading the textbooks	35	
Studying for quizzes and the final exam	12	
Making observations about the passage	4	5
Writing research papers	45	55
Total – about 12 hours each week	140	100