

NT 4350h/CH 5350h
HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION:
READING THE BIBLE, THEN AND NOW
Austin Graduate School of Theology
Fall 2019

Thursdays 1:00–3:40

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I want you to do well in this course, so please let me know if you are having difficulty with the class material.

Course Description:

This course examines the history of biblical interpretation, beginning with the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament, and then moving chronologically through patristic, medieval, Reformation, and modern methods of exegesis. Attention is given to both primary and secondary sources.

Course Objectives:

In light of the school's mission and objectives, the student who successfully completes this course should be able to:

1. Describe the distinctive characteristics of premodern and modern exegesis.
2. Illustrate the characteristics of each type with concrete examples of exegesis.
3. Assess the advantages and disadvantages of each type and how they should affect our interpretive methods.

Course Textbooks:

Required Texts

Stanglin, Keith D. *The Letter and Spirit of Biblical Interpretation: From the Early Church to Modern Practice*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.

Bring this text and your Bible to each class meeting.

Additional Requirement for Graduate Students

Gregory of Nyssa. *The Life of Moses*. Trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson. The Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend classes regularly. In the event of illness, family emergency, or an extenuating circumstance, it is the responsibility of the student to **notify the instructor as soon as possible** of the reason for the absence.

One unexcused absence is allowed in this course. Each additional absence above one automatically reduces your final grade by six percentage points.

You will be considered tardy if you are not present when the roll is checked or if you leave during class. 3 tardies = 1 unexcused absence. Please take care of all business before class begins or during the break.

Academic Honesty:

Austin Grad places a high priority on honesty and a biblical commitment to truth. Incidents of **cheating, plagiarism**, or any other activities deemed dishonest will result in penalties. These penalties may range from receiving a zero (0%) on the assignment to failing the course or dismissal from the school. (According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, to "plagiarize" is to steal and use as one's own the ideas, words, etc., of another. Collaborating on written assignments that should be done individually would fall under this category of dishonesty.)

Classroom Expectations and Decorum:

I expect all students to behave in a Christian manner in and out of the classroom. Turn off all cell phones. Laptops may be used for note-taking purposes only. Be prompt and ready to begin. Class will be dismissed when I finish.

Course Requirements:

1. **Reading and class participation. 10 pts.** You are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to the class meetings. Additional readings required for MATS students are listed between [brackets]. The lectures will assume you have read the assignments, and part of the grade is dependent on your participation in discussing the readings. Evaluation criterion: Demonstrate your preparedness.
2. **Seminar paper: 50 pts.** On the week of your choosing, write a paper (800-1,000 words, single-spaced, approx. two pages) that analyzes and discusses **at least two** of the primary-source readings for that week. The paper should summarize the reading and then address and answer at least the following issues about the assigned documents: what the author is trying to accomplish (thesis), how he develops his argument (structure), what the writer's assumptions are concerning the biblical text and its interpretation, and what questions the writer puts to Scripture. The paper should conclude with *at least two* questions or issues for further class discussion. On its due date, you will provide copies of your paper to each member of the seminar and present your thoughts to the class. Be ready to take questions from the seminar members. **Late papers/presentations are unacceptable.**
3. **Research paper: 150 pts.** Write an original research paper on the reception of your particular biblical passage.
 - a. Undergraduate: Read one premodern (died before 1650) interpreter on the selected passage. Compare and contrast the interpretation with modern methods and commentators (such as Anchor Bible, Hermeneia, International Critical Commentary, OT/NT Library). Sum up the findings and present to the class.

b. Graduate: Trace the interpretation of the selected passage diachronically through writers of four different periods—early (before 500), medieval (500-1500), Reformation (1500-1650), and modern (1650-present). Compare and contrast the interpretive methods and emphases. Present the findings to the class.

Additional guidelines:

a. 4-5 pages (BACS), 8-10 pages (MACM) (Times New Roman, double-spaced, not including bibliography).

b. Not optional. A course grade of “F” will be assigned to anyone not turning in a paper.

c. Use Turabian style footnotes and proper, academic English style.

d. Read the handouts on writing papers. Assessment criteria will include such things as: clearly stated purpose, logical organization, faultless style, evidence of research, and interaction with sources.

e. No fewer than 3 (BACS) or 7 (MACM) sources are to be used. These sources should include the primary sources, relevant surveys, special monographs, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Do not cite sources in the bibliography unless they are used in the paper.

f. Papers are due at the beginning of class on **Nov. 21**. A penalty of 10% each half week will be assessed to late papers. A paper will not be accepted more than two weeks after its due date.

4. **Outline, annotated bibliography and research paper discussion: 10 pts.** An outline and a bibliography of primary sources and at least one secondary source for your paper is due **Nov. 7**. In addition, take about five minutes to tell the class about your paper. Tell about the passage, why you chose it, which interpreter(s) you will examine, and what challenges you will face. In other words, if someone asks you what your research paper is about, this is what you would say in five minutes. Be ready to answer questions and take suggestions.
5. **Two exams: 150 pts.** (75 pts. each). Study: Lecture notes and readings.
6. **For MACM students – Gregory of Nyssa paper: 50 pts.** After reading Gregory’s *Life of Moses*, write a 1,000-word paper that analyzes Gregory’s approach to Scripture, interacts with it, and draws lessons for biblical interpretation from its strengths and weaknesses. What is Gregory doing, and what are his assumptions about the biblical text? The paper should cite relevant passages from the book. No outside research is necessary.

Optional Extra Credit: Attend the Austin Grad - First Things Lecture (Monday, Sept. 30, 7 pm) and write a reflection paper that summarizes the lecture and interacts with the ideas, especially as they relate to history or biblical interpretation. The paper should be at least 1,000 words. Points earned will be commensurate with the accuracy of the summary and depth of the reflections. Due Oct. 3. Late work will not be accepted for extra credit. (up to **15 pts.** on final exam)

Grading Scale:

Total points: 370/420.

90-100% = A 80-89 = B (“Good”) 70-79 = C (“Average”) 60-69 = D 0-59 = F

It is your responsibility to keep up with your grades and absences.

Course Schedule:

Additional readings required for MACM students are listed between [brackets].

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Jewish Exegesis and New Testament Use of the Old Testament

Benjamin Jowett, at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/jowett_b/scripture.iii.html, skim the whole thing, but then read carefully around pp. 1-2, 9-10, 54, 60, 90

Stanglin, 1-16

Letter of Aristeas, sections 128-71, 301-15, in Charlesworth, *OT Pseudepigrapha* 2:21-4, 32-3 [reserve]

[Selections from Philo, in Yarchin ch. 3] [reserve]

Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 6-35 [reserve]

Matt. 1:22-23; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 28:25-28; 1 Cor. 9:7-10; 10:1-13; Gal. 4:21-26

Week 3: Early Christian Exegesis

Epistle of Barnabas, ch. 1-17, at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0124.htm> [reserve]

Stanglin, 19-45

[Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 31-53] [reserve]

[“Christian Allegorizations,” in Froehlich, pp. 79-81] [reserve]

[Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.27.1–2.28.3; 3.18.7–3.20.3; 4.26.1–4.26.5; 5.20.2–5.21.3] at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103.htm> [reserve]

[Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, pp. 206-23] [reserve]

Week 4: Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis

Origen, *De principiis* IV.ii-iii [reserve]

Selections from Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus, in Yarchin, ch. 8 [reserve]

Stanglin, 47-68

R. L. Wilken, “How to Read the Bible” [reserve]

[Diodore of Tarsus, “On Ps. 118,” in Froehlich, pp. 87-94] [reserve]

[John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Matthew,” #17 in Fowl, ed., *Theological Interpretation of Scripture*] [reserve]

[Frances Young, “Alexandrian and Antiochene Exegesis,” in Hauser and Watson, pp. 334-54] [reserve]

Week 5: Later Patristic Exegesis

Stanglin, 68-76

[Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*]

Week 6: Medieval Exegesis

Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, preface 1, 9; I.1-5, 28-29, 38-44; II.1-28, 60-3; III.1-26, at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1202.htm>

Gregory the Great, "Letter to Leander" [reserve]

Stanglin, 77-111

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* Ia.i.10, at <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1001.htm#article10>]

[Nicholas of Lyra, Commentary on Exodus, #8 in Fowl, ed., *Theological Interpretation of Scripture*]
[reserve]

[Muller, "Biblical Interpretation: The View from the Middle Ages," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation*, pp. 3-16] [reserve]

Week 7: Exam 1

Week 8: Early Protestant Exegesis

Stanglin, 113-32

[Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, Gal. 4:21-31, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, pp. 432-61] [reserve]

Week 9: Calvin and the Post-Reformation Period

John Calvin, "Letter to Grynaeus," in *Commentary on Romans*, pp. 73-77, also at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc38/cc38002.htm>

Stanglin, "Calvin and the Maccabean Psalms" [reserve]

Stanglin, 132-51

[Calvin, *Commentary on Psalm 2*] [reserve]

[William Perkins, On Gal. 4:21-26] [reserve]

[Muller, "William Perkins and the Protestant Exegetical Tradition," in *A Commentary on Hebrews 11*, pp. 71-94]

Week 10: Shift toward Modern Exegesis

Matthew Henry, Exposition, Preface to Pss. (2 pp), vol. 3, 195-6, at <http://archive.org/stream/expositionofoldn03henr#page/194/mode/2up>

Stanglin, "The Rise and Fall of Biblical Perspicuity: Remonstrants and the Transition toward Modern Exegesis" *Church History* 83/1 (2014): 38-59 [ATLA]

Selections from Spinoza, in Yarchin, ch. 18 [reserve]

Stanglin, 153-68

[J. P. Gabler, in *The Flowering of OT Theology*, pp. 492-502] [reserve]

Week 11: Student Paper Discussions

Week 12: Assumptions of Modern Exegesis

[Alexander Campbell, "Principles of Interpretation," in *Millennial Harbinger Abridged* 1:155-67] [reserve]

Stanglin, 168-87

Week 13: Differences between Premodern and Modern Approaches

Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis," *Theology Today* 13/1 (1980): 27-38 [ATLA]

Stanglin, 191-210

Week 14: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15: A Way Forward

Davis and Hays, "Nine Theses on the Interpretation of Scripture" [reserve]

Stanglin, 211-45

Stanglin, "Baptism in the Sea: An Invitation to Typological Interpretation," *Leaven* 21/2 (2013): 70-4, at <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2221&context=leaven>

HISTORY OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by Keith Stanglin

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Baird, William. *History of New Testament Research*. 3 volumes. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992–2013.

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II. EXAMPLES OF PREMODERN INTERPRETATION¹

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¹ See also the excellent primary-source bibliography, arranged by canonical book, in Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead*, 274-301.