



BLST 602 Introduction to Biblical Interpretation Fall 2025

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Class Time: Tues, 6:30-9:30 p.m. CST
Course Delivery Method: Online

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the principles and practices of biblical interpretation, including a discussion of basic hermeneutical theory, the interpretation of different genres, and the application of practical Bible study skills.

COURSE TEXTS

Required Textbooks

The Bible, in one of the following translations: NRSV / ESV / RSV; NIV; NASB; CEB; CSB; KJV / NKJV. You are required to bring a *paper* copy to class each day.

* Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2014.

* Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. 3d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

** Montague, George T. *Understanding the Bible: A Basic Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 2d ed. New York: Paulist, 2007.

* These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/bookstore>.

** This text is available as an e-book only, through Amazon Kindle or Google Play Books:

<https://www.amazon.ca/Understanding-Bible-Introduction-Biblical-Interpretation-ebook/dp/B005VCFDJU>

https://play.google.com/store/books/details/George_T_Montague_Understanding_the_Bible?id=BVK5oxGwjwYC

Other Readings (on Canvas or the Internet)

Augustine, Saint. *Excerpts from On Christian Doctrine*. Translated by J. F. Shaw. *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Vol. II*. Edited by Philip Schaff.

Davis, Ellen F, and Richard B. Hays. "Beyond Criticism: Learning to Read the Bible Again." *The Christian Century* 121, no. 8 (2004): 23–27.



- Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." Pages 3-30 in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. (Also online: <http://cscs.res.in/dataarchive/textfiles/textfile.2009-08-14.2117562205/file>)
- Hays, Richard B. "Can the Gospels Teach Us How to Read the Old Testament?" *Pro Ecclesia* 11.4 (2002): 402–18.
- Hays, Richard B. "How Shall We Use the Texts?" Pages 291-312 in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.
- Jenson, Robert W. "Scripture's Authority in the Church." Pages 27–37 in *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Edited by Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Provan, Iain W. "Literary Competence and Biblical Authority." *Word & World* 26.4 (2006): 375–82.
- Radner, Ephraim. "Reading Scripture Well." *Covenant*, January 14-15, 2020. Online: <https://covenant.livingchurch.org/2020/01/14/reading-scripture-well-part-1/>; <https://covenant.livingchurch.org/2020/01/15/reading-scripture-well-part-2/>
- Webster, John. "Canon." Pages 97–100 in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. Edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Wright, Nicholas Thomas. "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?" *Vox Evangelica* 21 (1991): 7-32. (Also online: <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/how-can-the-bible-be-authoritative/>)

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/documents>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

SEMINARY-WIDE OUTCOMES

Students will graduate:

1. Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
2. Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.
3. Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigour), and strength (vocation).

COURSE OUTCOMES

This course offers an apprenticeship in the craft of reading Scripture. Students will reflect self-consciously on the task of careful textual analysis, develop sensitivity to specific challenges involved in interpreting the ancient collection of texts that Christians receive as the word of God, and cultivate reading practices that foster effective Bible study and sermon preparation.

The craft of reading Scripture requires more than skills and knowledge; it demands the development of habits, dispositions, discipline, and a willingness to listen attentively to others. This is especially true for Christians who affirm that the Bible is the Word of God that challenges and summons to a response. As you progress through this course, then, it is my hope that . . .

- You will be convinced of the practical value of wide reading in, and careful study of, Scripture.
- You will realize what you inevitably bring with you to the task of interpretation, including your presuppositions, your social and historical context, and your past experiences. As you do so, you

will become more sensitive to the kinds of things that your background helps you see clearly, as well as to the kinds of things your background (and your bent human nature) keeps you from seeing.

- You will be eager to let your horizons be widened by encountering Scripture, and to let your readings be challenged by others whose backgrounds differ from your own.
- You will recognize the importance of reading as part of the community of the Spirit, and of listening attentively to other readers past and present.
- You will nurture an open mind that is willing to revisit questions and the evidence, as well as the humility that strives to learn from and be gracious towards those who arrive at different conclusions.
- You will seek actively to acquire the wisdom needed to apply Scripture faithfully.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT

Date	Class Topic	Readings
9 Sept	Introducing Hermeneutics & Exegesis	Davis & Hays 2004; Fee & Stuart ch. 1; Gorman ch. 1; Montague ch. 1
16 Sept	An Invitation to Close Reading: Literary & Historical Contexts	Fee & Stuart ch. 3; Geertz 1973; Gorman ch. 3-4; 1 Thessalonians 1-5
23 Sept	Close Reading: Analysing Sentences, Paragraphs & Discourses	Gorman chs. 5-6
30 Sept	Close Reading: Analysing Words & Synthesis	Fee & Stuart ch. 2; Gorman chs. 2, 7
7 Oct	Early Jewish Interpreters & the NT Use of the OT; Which Texts? The Christian Canon	Hays 2002; Montague ch. 2; Webster 2005
14 Oct	Hermeneutics and the Church Fathers; Medieval Hermeneutics	Augustine Part 1; Montague chs. 3-4, 13; Radner 2020
21 Oct	<i>Modular Week (No Class)</i>	
28 Oct	The Rise of Historical Criticism; The 20th Century and Beyond	Jensen 2003; Montague chs. 5, 7
4 Nov	The Authority of Scripture & the Holy Spirit Application: How do we live these texts?	Augustine Part 2; Fee & Stuart ch. 4; Gorman ch. 8; Hays 1996; Wright 1991
11 Nov	<i>Remembrance Day (No Class)</i>	
18 Nov	Genre: Narrative & Poetry	Fee & Stuart chs. 5, 11; Provan 2006; Genesis 12-22; Pss 3, 11, 15
25 Nov	Genre: Wisdom & Prophecy	Fee & Stuart chs. 10, 12; Amos 1-9
2 Dec	Genre: Law & Parables	Fee & Stuart chs. 8-9; Exod 21; Lev 19
9 Dec	Genre: Apocalypse Reflections on Reading Scripture	Fee & Stuart chs. 8, 13

ASSIGNMENTS

Note:

- Because I am interested in what *you* think and in your own learning—including learning to communicate effectively in writing—the use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot, Gemini, Grammarly Pro, etc., is ***strictly forbidden*** in this course.
- All written assignments for this course must be your own work presented in your own words. Occasional quotations from secondary sources and the Bible, etc., are permitted, as long as all quotations, including partial sentences, are placed within quotation marks and followed by a reference to the correct page number (or Bible reference).
- Students must be able to talk cogently about their written assignments and their research process. At the professor's discretion, an oral interview may be required before a grade is assigned for any assignment. Failure to participate in the interview process will result in a 0 on the assignment.
- Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

A. Readings (10%) – Fill in the course “reading log” on Canvas as you complete the assigned readings.

B. Hermeneutical Reflections (15%) – Reflect on the previous week's readings and class discussion, noting ‘aha!’ moments, points of disagreement, and lingering questions about the practice or theory of Biblical interpretation. You may also use this space to reflect on your own approach to interpreting the Bible in preparation for your final “Personal Hermeneutic” assignment. Length: One paragraph / week. ***Due each Friday at 5 pm.***

C. Close Reading Assignments (55%)

1. New Testament Close Reading (1 Thessalonians) (25%): Select a passage from the following list that you would like to study in detail: 1 Thess 2:1-12; 2:13-16; 2:17-3:5; 3:6-13; 4:1-8; 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 5:12-24. Perform a close reading of the passage without the aid of secondary sources, focusing on *what* Paul is saying, *how* he says it, and how it contributes to the message of the letter as a whole. Length: 5-7 pages (1500-2100 words). ***Due Friday 24 October.***

2. Old Testament Close Reading & Application (30%): In consultation with your instructor, select a passage from either Genesis 12-22 or Amos 1-9. (a) Perform a genre-specific close reading on the passage without the aid of secondary sources, focusing on *what* is said, *how* it is said, and *how* the passage contributes to its wider context; (b) Reflect on how the passage should be heard by the church today. Length: 5-7 pages (1500-2100 words). ***Due Friday 19 December.***

D. Personal Hermeneutic (20%) – In 5-7 pages (1500-2100 words), formulate your own practical and theoretical approach to interpreting the Bible. What, in your view, are best practices in Bible interpretation? Explain *why* the Bible *should* be read in this way (or in these ways). Relate your approach to reading the Bible to other approaches in the history of interpretation that we have considered in this course. Reflect on how your approach to reading the Bible has changed (or will change) as a result of what you have learned in this course. Be sure to interact with course readings and class discussion. ***Due Friday 19 December.***

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current [Seminary Calendar](#):

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Modular Course Schedules

Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Arnold, Bill T., and H. G. M. Williamson, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005.
- Boda, Mark J., and J. Gordon McConville, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 2012.
- Bromiley, G. W., ed. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-1988.
- Cohick, Lynn H., Nijay K. Gupta, and Scot McKnight, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. 2d ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023.
- Doob Sakenfeld, Katharine. *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. 5 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006-9.
- Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- _____, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Green, Joel B. , Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Green, Joel B., Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. 2d ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993.
- Longman III, Tremper. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*. Downers Grover, IL: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Marshall, I. Howard, ed. *New Bible Dictionary*. 3rd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.
- Martin, Ralph P., and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997.

Exegesis How-To Books

- Abernethy, Andrew. *Savoring Scripture: A Six-Step Guide to Studying the Bible*. InterVarsity Press, 2022.
- Bartholomew, Craig G. *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.
- _____. *Listening to Scripture: An Introduction to Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2023.
- Brown, Jeannine K. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.
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- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic, 1981.
- _____. *The Art of Biblical Poetry*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.
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- Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
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Hermeneutics and Theological and Philosophical Issues

Achtemeier, Paul J. *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999.

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