

**Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary**  
**Course of Study School**  
**July 22-26, 2019**

**SYLLABUS**

**COS 121 Bible I: Introduction**

Instructor: Rev. Dr. Osvaldo D. Vena

*This course is designed to introduce the student to biblical interpretation. Attention will be given to the formation and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity is illustrated from a survey of representative biblical materials.*

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scriptures using books from the Old and New Testaments, e.g., Isaiah, Mark, Galatians, and Philemon.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

- Homework assignments are due by June 15.
- Online hours (5) must be completed as indicated in syllabus.
- Daily attendance and class participation in Residential hours (15).

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Anderson, Bernhard. *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (revised edition). Fortress, 1988.

Robertson, Anne, *Introducing the New Testament*. Newton Center, MA: Massachusetts Bible Society, 2014. (ISBN: 978-0-9882481-6-8)

-----, *Introducing the Old Testament*. Exploring the Bible. The Dickinson Series. Newton Center, MA: Massachusetts Bible Society, 2013.

Tiffany, Frederick C., and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996. (ISBN: 0-687-01608-8)

**REFERENCE:**

Bible dictionary:

*The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary Harper Collins Bible Dictionary*

Bible versions (any of the following):

*New Interpreters' Study Bible (NRSV)*

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible (NRSV)*

*The Harper Collins Study Bible (NRSV)*

### **GRADING SYSTEM**

Pre-Course Homework Assignments 45%

Pre-Course Online Assignments 20%

In-Class Assignments and Participation 35%

### **COS 121 BIBLE I: INTRODUCTION**

#### **PRE-COURSE HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS**

**\*Due by June 15.**

1. Read the first three sections of *Introducing the Old Testament* (pp.1-71). In each section find a couple of issues with which you agree and a couple with which you disagree. Give the reasons behind your approval or your disapproval. Compare the author's treatment of the OT with that of Bernhard Anderson in *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* (3 pages max).
2. Do the same as # 2 above for sections 4-6 of the book *Introducing the Old Testament* (3 pages max)
3. Using the article on Isaiah" in the *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* and the notes in your study Bible answer the following questions (3 pages max): a) Who was the author or authors of the book of Isaiah? b) What were the historical circumstances that occasioned the writing of the book/s? c) Why was Isaiah important for the NT writers? d) Think of a couple of contemporary issues that are being addressed by the book of Isaiah.
4. Read the article "gospel, Gospels" in the Harper's Bible Dictionary. How is your understanding of scripture as *inspired* informed by the theory of the formation of the gospels? How do you reconcile divine inspiration and human production without falling into dictation and determinism in the writing process? (1 page)
5. Study the Gospel of Mark. Answer the following questions (3 pages max):
  - a. What is Mark's Christology? How does he present Jesus? Describe any unique characteristics of how Mark tells the story of Jesus.
  - b. What is the main theme in the Gospel of Mark?
  - c. What does the Gospel of Mark reveal about the first audience? What seems to be their historical situation?
6. Study the letter to the Galatians and the letter to Philemon. Answer the following questions (3 pages max):
  - a. What are the two problems Paul is facing in these letters?
  - b. What do you think was going on in these communities at the time? How is that reflected in the text?
  - c. In your opinion, were the problems solved? Is there any way to tell that from the text? Is there any way to tell that from the history of the church?
  - d. How is this relevant, or not relevant, for today?

7. Write a sermon or a Bible study that you can use in your congregation based on a text from Isaiah, Mark, Galatians, or Philemon. Incorporate some of your readings and observations from the work you have done into your sermon. Indicate your audience for this sermon. (3-4 pages)

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR FORMATTING HOMEWORK**

1. Adhere to the approximate length given for each item of written work.
2. Format your homework for 8 1/2 x 11, one side, double-spaced with one-inch margins all around. Use a 12-point font, either Times New Roman or Arial. One page equals approximately 250 words. Do not use script, condensed, or all caps print.
3. On each page of your work, include a header with your name, the class number, and the page number. Begin each numbered item on a new sheet of paper, writing that number at the beginning of your answer. Do not type the questions before your answers.
4. Do not quote extensively from the texts you read. Digest the ideas and information, and then put them in your own words. You can disagree with the authors, but make sure that you understand and have articulated their main insights.
5. If you quote from a printed text, you must use quotation marks and note the source (including pages) in parentheses at the end of each usage. Quotations should never be more than a sentence or two long. Ideas and information should be stated in your own words, not in the words of the authors you have read. For assigned texts, you may abbreviate the titles by using the first letter of each word in the title. For example, if the source is Harper's Bible Dictionary, then use (HBD, p. 34-35). If you refer to books that are not listed on the class reading list, then you must give full bibliographic information.
6. The due date for written work is listed on the COS homework main page. Late work is only accepted with prior approval of the Director of the Course of Study School.
7. Bring a copy of your homework with you for your own use during the residential portion of COS.

**NOTE:** Using other people's materials without documentation, whether from a book, journal, teacher, another student, sermon service, or lectionary aid, is unacceptable behavior. Such activity, otherwise known as plagiarism usually means failure for the course with notification sent to the Conference Course of Study Registrar and the Division of Ordained Ministry. Professors will report all instances of plagiarism to the Director of the Course of Study. The Director will arrange for a meeting with the professor and the student, and the student will be given opportunity to explain the situation. The Director in consultation with the professor will make a decision about what action is appropriate for a first instance of plagiarism. Such action could include, rewriting the material, or failure of the course. A brief summary of the meeting will be prepared by the Director and placed in the student's file in the Course of Study Office and kept there until the student completes the Course of Study Curriculum. If a second instance of plagiarism is documented, the student will fail the course and the Director will determine what other consequences may apply.

## **ONLINE HOURS (5 hrs)**

### **I. "Location, Location, Location"**

- A. Complete Student Self-Inventory on Biblical Hermeneutics.
  - The Student Self-Inventory will be available on the Moodle Site for course.
- B. Fill in your responses Complete the Self-Inventory by April 29.
- C. After completing the inventory, reflect on the following questions:
  - a. Did any of your responses surprise you?

- b. Were there any categories that you had not considered before?
  - c. What factors influence you the most in your interpreting of the Bible?
  - d. What factors do you think have the least influence on your interpreting?
  - e. What are your takeaways from completing this inventory?
- D. Share your responses to at least two of the questions under “C” and respond to at least two responses shared by other class members in a Group forum using the Moodle Course Site. Complete your participation in the Group forum by May 31.

## II. "Can Anything Good Come Out of Moab?"

- A. View the lecture on the Book of Ruth by Rev. Dr. Judy Fentress-Williams (*A Year of the Bible Series*, Trinity Church, Boston) using the following YouTube link:  
<http://youtu.be/iYcx1iqVFzA>
- B. After viewing the lecture, prepare a Children's sermon on a passage from Chapters 1 or 2 of Ruth, drawing from the Fentress-Williams lecture.
1. Your Children's sermon should be no longer than 3-5 minutes.
  2. Utilize a point(s) from the Fentress-Williams to frame your Children's sermon.
  3. Submit your Children's Sermon via the Course Moodle site.
  4. Viewing of Lecture and emailing of your Children's Sermon should be **completed by June 30.**

## III. "From Exegesis to Proclamation"

- A. View each of the three sermons below using the YouTube links provided. Sermons can be viewed at times that you determine **prior to June 15.**

**Sermon #1: Rev. Dr. James Forbes, The Riverside Church (New York)**

Sermon: "Hannah Rose" (May 12, 2014) I Samuel 1:1-18; Luke 1:39-56

[http://youtu.be/VUbp\\_adFYtU](http://youtu.be/VUbp_adFYtU)

**Sermon #2: Barbara Brown Taylor, The Riverside Church (New York)**

Sermon: "The Right Answer" (July 14, 2013) Deut. 30:9-14; Luke 10:25-37

<http://youtu.be/wds3OxzHNAI>

**Sermon #3: Rev. Dr. Walter Bruggemann, Duke University Chapel (North**

**Carolina)** Sermon: "Continuing Through the Disruptive Conjunction" (April 5, 2009) Psalm 31

<http://youtu.be/IwPhn546uQs>

- B. After viewing each sermon, record your responses to the following questions:

1. What key messages did you hear?

Do you think the preacher utilized any of the interpretive and/or exegetical approaches discussed in the book *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. (Tiffany and Ringe) If so, which ones?

2. How did the preacher help listeners connect the biblical text to their personal and/ or social contexts?

- C. We will participate together in a video conference **after June 15** to discuss our responses to the three sermons. You will be contacted via email regarding the date.