

COS Bible 121: Introduction

Instructor: Rev. Dyan Dietz

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, 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 will be emphasized.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
- Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
- Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
- Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Texts to read in full:

- Anderson, Bernhard W. *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*. Fourth edition. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. (To be read as part of the pre-class assignment.)
- Hayes, John and Carl Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007.

Texts for reference: (These resources will be used throughout your coursework in the COS program so I would suggest you purchase them or find someone you can borrow from.)

- Buttrick, George A. and Charles M. Laymen, ed. *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971. ISBN: 978-0687192991.
- Harrelson, Walter J. *New Interpreter's Study Bible: NRSV*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-0687278329.
- Powell, Mark Allan, ed. *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary. Revised and Updated*. New York: Harper One, 2011. ISBN: 978-0061469060.

EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to do assigned readings before class, participate respectfully in class discussion, and turn in written work on time.

GRADING

1. Attendance and Participation-----**10%** “Students are expected to attend all class sessions during Course of Study. There are no excused absences from Course of Study classes. Per the policy set by the Board of Higher Education and Ministry, a student missing more than three hours of any twenty-hour course shall not receive a grade for the course. It is a student’s responsibility to tell you that he/she must miss a class, as well as to alert the class representative (who will take attendance in your class),” from “Course of Study, Guidelines for Faculty.”

2. Three Pre-Class Reading Assignments-----**15%** Students will be expected to finish the assigned readings before class. Students will be expected to spend five hours per week outside of the classroom time. This expectation includes ten hours of reading to be done in the two weeks preceding class, and ten hours of written work to be done in the two weeks following each class.

3. Three Papers -----**75%** Students will be expected to turn in a 5 to 6-page paper within two weeks of each class period. These papers will include a 2 to 2 ½ page answer to an essay question as well as a 3 to 3 ½ page exegesis. Each paper will be 25% of your total grade for the class.

CLASS TIME

We will be beginning this class online through Zoom. A link will be sent to students before the September 5 class so they can join. It is unclear whether we will be able to meet in person in October or November, but if we are able, those classes will meet at the conference center. We will be starting class at 9:00 am and ending at 4:00 pm on days when we have class. There will be a one-hour lunch break from noon-1:00, and a short break both mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

COURSE OUTLINE

September 5: [This class will be done online through Zoom. A link will be sent to you before class]

- Reading assignments to be done before class: Genesis 1-11. Holladay, chapters 1-7. Anderson, chapters 1, 2, and 4.
- The morning session will include introductions, orientation, an overview of assignments, a discussion of the canon, Tanak, Septuagint, and the Masoretic text.
- During the afternoon session we will be looking at Genesis 1-11 through the lens of ‘how we read scripture’, with discussion of translations, interpretation, the task of biblical exegesis, and textual criticism and grammatical criticism.
- Paper #1 is due before midnight on Saturday, September 19.

October 3:

- Reading assignments to be done before class: Genesis 12-50. Hosea 8-9. Amos 7-9. Holladay chapters 8-10. Anderson chapters 3 & 6.
- The morning session will cover the matriarchs and the patriarchs, bareness, covenants, children, family issues, and historical criticism.
- During the afternoon session we will look at the role of the prophet, justice and righteousness, disobedience and love, marriage and the model of Yahweh and Israel, and form criticism.
- Paper #2 is due before midnight on Saturday, October 17.

November 7:

- Reading assignments to be done before class: The Gospel of Mark. Paul's letter to the Philippians. Anderson chapters 5,7, & 8.
- The morning session will cover the New Testament canon, non-canonical materials, Marcion, the synoptic gospels, Q, Mark as story and literary criticism.
- During the afternoon session we will look at the significance of the apostle Paul and his letters, tradition criticism and redaction criticism.
- Paper #3 is due before midnight on Saturday, November 21.