

BST 400 Introduction to Sacred Scripture and their Interpretation

Fall Semester – Academic Year 2016-17

Preliminary Course Outline

Class Start Date & End Date

September 07th – December 07th, 2016.

Class Meeting Time & Room & Location if Off-site

Class will meet weekly, Wednesdays 8.30 – 11.20 am; room tbd.

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the sacred scriptures of the Christian faith, their academic study and their interpretation. The various books of the Old and New Testaments of the Catholic Bible are introduced in relation to their historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds, with timely references to geographical and archaeological data. Concurrently, students are introduced to the concepts of biblical inspiration, biblical inerrancy, and the formation of the canon.

This course also includes a seminar that explores the question of the interpretation of scripture with the mind of the Church, during which key Church documents will be analyzed while some major contributions from the world of academia to the field of biblical interpretation will be considered. The aim is to equip students with the exegetical tools and building blocks that will be necessary in subsequent scripture courses in their chosen program, and indeed in their various ministries as exegetes of Sacred Scripture.

Course Objectives

This introductory required graduate level course aims at introducing students to the study of Sacred Scriptures and their interpretation with the Mind of the Church.

Academic Learning Outcomes:

In terms of intended learning outcomes, by the end of the course each student should be able to demonstrate:

- An acquaintance with the Sacred Scripture of Christianity and the methods and tools pertaining to their interpretation with the mind of the Church.
- An initial understanding of the Old and New Testaments and their interpretation, through study of selected themes (theological, historical).
- An ability to engage critically and analytically with textual, historical and theological issues raised by the material.
- An ability to communicate in a sophisticated manner, both orally and in writing, the result of their research and enquiries.
- An ability to use the skills developed to apply their knowledge and understanding of these ancient texts to the Church today.

Human and spiritual outcomes:

By the end of the course each student should be able to identify areas and articulate ways in which the course has contributed to their overall human and spiritual development, possibly including but not limited to the following:

- A contemplative, spiritual, liturgical formation that will gain an additional dimension resulting from a greater acquaintance with Sacred Scripture.
- A greater awareness of their human maturing in light of their self-immersion in the text of Scripture.
- An ability to identify ways in which the course has contributed to equip them to embrace the pastoral role that will be theirs as lay people or ordained ministers.
- An ability to identify ways in which the course content has nurtured a self-awareness of their role in the social aspect of their chosen ministries.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

This course introduces students to Sacred Scripture and their study and interpretation in the Church. As such, the course presents essential material that will be considered assimilated in subsequent scripture courses in the undergraduate (CTh; DipTh; BTh) and graduate (M.T.S., M.Div.; M.R.E.) programs. With this in mind, there will be **no research paper** in this course. Rather, the emphasis will be on developing basic skills such as writing chapter synopses, articulating informed and concise answers to a set of seminar questions, and developing hermeneutical and exegetical skills through practice, using various tools/approaches considered in the course. The written material will amount to roughly **6,250 words** [excluding the final exam]

STUDENTS MUST PROVIDE IN THE FOOTER OF THE PAPER AN ACCURATE WORD COUNT FOR EACH PIECE OF WRITTEN ASSESSMENT.

- **Two chapter-summaries** [CS] each chapter summary will be 350 words in length, for a total of **700 words**. It is due in hard copy at the start of class on the week it is scheduled.
Students must take great care to summarize *in their own words* that which they consider to be the main points/arguments of the chapter. This is an important skill which must be mastered as soon as possible at the start of your programme of studies. The average of the two chapter summaries will weight **10% of the final grade**.
- **One 10-minute oral presentation of a chapter from Duggan** [OP] each student will deliver a 10 minute presentation in class. The presentation is to be based on a chapter from Duggan's *The Consuming Fire* – assigned by the professor. **10% of final grade**.
- **Three seminar papers** [SP] for a total of **3,200 words**. Each seminar paper is due at the start of class on the week it is scheduled. Students must take great care to address the seminar question specifically. The exercise is quite different from writing a chapter summary. Instead of presenting in your own words someone else's work (like in a chapter summary), you are asked to articulate your own answer to a given question, making sure arguments are supported. This answer must be informed by the reading done, but it remains your own 'take' on the issue. See Course Schedule below for details. **30% of final grade**.
 - S1: 900 words
 - S2: 1100 words
 - S3: 1200 words
- **One paper on aspects of biblical theology**: students will submit one **2000-words** paper on a chosen aspect of biblical theology. **25 % of final grade**
- **One 'Take Home' exam**:
Students will submit a **2000-words** 'take home' exam, in which they will apply to a selected text from the New Testament the exegetical principles learnt during the course from Gorman's book and Schneider's book. **25% of final grade**.

Your final grade will be:

Chapter synopses (10%) + Oral presentation (10%) + Seminar papers (30%) + biblical theology paper (25%) + 'Take Home' exam (25%)

Textbooks

A bible with the Catholic Canon (RSV or NRSV or even Catholic Study Bible student edition)
 D. Bécard, *The Scripture Documents – an anthology of Official Catholic Teaching* (The Liturgical Press: 2002)
 M. Duggan, *The Consuming Fire – A Christian Guide to the Old Testament* (Our Sunday Visitor: 2010)
 M. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis – a basic guide for students and ministers* (Hendrickson: 2009 rev. ed.)
 S. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text – interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Liturgical Press: 1999 sec. ed.)

Recommended Reading

R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday; 1997) – this book is part of the M.Div. required reading list
 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture* (Liturgical Press: 2014)
 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana; 2002).
 Benedict XVI – Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana; 2010).
 International Theological Commission – *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria* (2011).¹
 Pope Francis, “Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World” (Pauline Books and Media: 2013).²
 X. Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (The Word Among Us: 2000 updated second edition)

Course Requirements

As per the NTC 2016-17 *Academic Calendar*.³

All graduate courses, including Intercession and Summer Session courses shall require the following:

- One 15-20 page research paper or the equivalent in the form of Student presentations, book reports and/or short reflection papers. The total amount of written work including exams cannot exceed 35 pages.⁴
- One final examination OR two term-examinations. Exams may be oral, written in class or “take-home”. Oral exams should be 15-20 minutes in length.

Written material submitted for assessment **in this course** will amount to **6,250 words** PLUS a final examination, which will be in the form of a ‘take home’ exam (due date is December 12, noon – hard copy at NTC Reception)

In addition, the following are required:

- **Participation** to ALL sessions. College policy as expounded in the *NTC Student Handbook* will be implemented.⁵
- **Class Preparation:** this must be done thoroughly and carefully.

Students must be ready to contribute to *all* seminars. This also counts as class preparation.

General Academic Information

Academic misconduct policy

Plagiarism is a serious offence and will simply not be tolerated. See *NTC Student Handbook* 2016-2017, for details of the College policy dealing with academic misconduct.

Acceptable writing style Manuals:

- American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual.⁶
- A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations – Kate Turabian (Chicago: University of Chicago).
- MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (New York: Modern Language Association of America).
- Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Style Guide.⁷

¹ Available online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html

² Available online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

³ Available online at www.newman.edu.

⁴ Based on 350 words per page, 15 to 20 pages amount to 5,250 to 7,000 words. The very maximum that could be required would amount to 12,250 words.

⁵ Available online.

⁶ APA’s style rules are set out in *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* fifth edition.

Late Submission Policy:

Please do not ask for extensions. Late submissions *are accepted*. There is, however, a hefty PENALTY for this service: 10% off the grade per day late, up to a maximum of three days. Any assignment submitted more than three days late will be graded 60% if deemed of a quality that is 'adequate' or higher. Assignments submitted more than three days late that do not meet a 'pass' standard will be graded 40%. This is non-negotiable. There is, of course, room for manoeuvre in case of genuine emergency.

For Incomplete courses regulations, see *NTC Student Handbook* 2016-2017.⁸

Grading policy:

"The generally accepted class average for the C.Th., the Dip.Th., the B.Th., M.T.S., M.Div., G.C.C.S.A. and the M.R.E., all of which are basic Degrees, diplomas and certificates, is a 'B'" (*NTC Academic Calendar 2016-2017*, available online).

NTC has adopted the Alberta Alpha Four Point Grading System. This is set out in the *NTC Academic Calendar 2016-17*, available online, and is here reproduced for your convenience. Please note that an 'A' grade is reserved for work which demonstrates **excellence**.

GRADUATE

Grade meaning	Mark	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent	90% - 100%	A+	4.0
	85 - 89%	A	4.0
	80%-84%	A-	3.7
Good	77%-79%	B+	3.3
	73%-76%	B	3.0
	70%-72%	B-	2.7
Adequate	67%-69%	C+	2.3
	63%-66%	C	2.0
	60%-62%	C-	1.7
Fail	57%-59%	D+	1.3
	53%-56%	D	1.0
	50%-52%	D-	0.0

UNDERGRADUATE

Grade Meaning	Mark	Grade	Grade Point
Excellent	90% - 100%	A+	4.0
	85 - 89%	A	4.0
	80%-84%	A-	3.7
Good	77%-79%	B+	3.3
	73%-76%	B	3.0
	70%-72%	B-	2.7
Adequate	67%-69%	C+	2.3
	63%-66%	C	2.0
	60%-62%	C-	1.7
Marginal	57%-59%	D+	1.3
	53%-56%	D	1.0
Fail	0%-52%	F	0.0

For Grade Appeal Procedure, see the *NTC Student Handbook* 2016-17.⁹

⁷ The SBL Style Guide for Students is available online at <http://sbl-site.org/publications/publishingwithsbl.aspx>

⁸ http://newman.edu/portals/newman/documents/2015_08_20_NTCStudentHandbook_WEBFINAL.pdf

⁹ Available online at www.newman.edu.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:¹⁰

PART I: FORMATION AND INTERPRETATION OF SACRED SCRIPTURE – Defining our terms

Week 1 [07 Sept] Introduction to Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics

Seminar: Hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics

Week 2 [14 Sept] The Pentateuch: Biblical geography and Archaeology

Required reading – from Duggan’s book, *The Consuming Fire* – tba
Chapter-summary #1 (350 words) – due at start of class.

Seminar: Biblical Interpretation – an ecclesial task – Part 1.

Required reading – from Bécharde’s book.

PART II: UNDERSTANDING THE OLD TESTAMENT

Week 3 [21 Sept] The Pentateuch: Biblical anthropology and Patriarchal history

Required reading – from Duggan - tba

Seminar: Biblical Interpretation – an ecclesial task – Part 2.

Required reading – from Bécharde
Seminar paper 1 (900 words) – due at start of class.

Week 4 [28 Sept.] The Law and the Land in Biblical Israel

Required reading – from Duggan - tba

Seminar: Biblical Interpretation – an ecclesial task – Part 3

Required reading – from Bécharde – tba..

Week 5 [05 Oct.] Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua; Judges; 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 and 2 Kings)

Required reading – from Duggan - tbd

Seminar: Biblical Interpretation – an ecclesial task – Part 4.

Required reading – from Bécharde – tba.
Seminar paper 2 (1100 words) – due at start of class.

Week 6 [12 Oct.] The Chronicler’s History (1 and 2 Chronicles; Ezra; Nehemiah)

Required reading – from Duggan - tbd

Seminar: Biblical Interpretation – an academic task – Part 1.

Required reading – from M. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* - tbd

Week 7 [19 Oct.] The biblical Prophets

Required reading – from Duggan - tbd

Seminar: Biblical interpretation – an academic task - Part 2

Required reading - from Gorman - tbd

Week 8: [26 Oct.] Wisdom and Poetry in Biblical Israel

Required reading – from Duggan - tbd

¹⁰ A finalized Course Schedule will be circulated at the start of the course. The professor reserves the right to amend the present Tentative Course Schedule.

Seminar: Biblical interpretation – an academic task - Part 3.
Required reading - from Gorman – tbd

Biblical Theology paper (2000 words) due at start of class

PART III: UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT

Week 9: [02 Nov.] Introduction to the New Testament
Required reading – from S. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text* - tbd
Chapter-summary #2 (350 words)

Seminar: Biblical interpretation – an academic task – Part 4.
Required reading - from Gorman - tbd

READING BREAK [07-11 Nov.]

Week 10: [16 Nov.] The Synoptic Gospels
Required reading – from Schneiders - tbd
Recommended reading – From R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*

Seminar: Biblical interpretation – an academic task - Part 5.
Required reading - from Gorman - tbd

Week 11 [23 Nov.] The Johannine Literature
Required reading – from Schneiders – tbd
Recommended reading – From Brown - tbd

Seminar: Biblical interpretation – an academic task - Part 6.
Required reading - from Gorman - tbd

Week 12: [30 Nov.] The Pauline Letters
Required reading – from Schneiders - tbd
Recommended reading – From Brown - tbd

Seminar: Biblical interpretation – an ecclesial task AND an academic task
Seminar paper 3 (1200 words) - due at start of class

Week 13: [07 Dec.] The Catholic Epistles
Required reading – from Schneiders – tbd
Recommended reading – From Brown - tbd

Course evaluations

Take-Home exam – due on Monday December 12 at noon. Submit hard copy at NTC reception. There will be no late submission allowed to the Take-Home.