

Shaw University Divinity School
OTS 502-601

Theory and Practice of Old Testament Exegesis

Fall 2008
Online

Welcome!

Shaw University Divinity School students are bright, inquisitive, committed, mature learners. You have committed to serve Christ and the Church by growing spiritually and intellectually. We will seek together to understand how to interpret God’s Word faithfully for today.

Instructor

James P. Ashmore
105 Leonard Hall
(919) 546-8572
jashmore@shawu.edu

Office Hours

Tuesday, 8:00-6:00
other days and times by appointment

Participation

Courses at the graduate level always require considerable self-motivation and student initiative. Because this course will be taught online, with no regular face-to-face meetings, **it is essential to success in the course that students discipline themselves to stay up to date on readings and assignments** and communicate regularly with the instructor regarding any possible difficulties. Communicating regularly with the instructor and setting aside regular, adequate time to work on the reading and assignments is absolutely essential to successful completion of the class.

Divinity School Program Learning Outcomes

Mission Statements

MRE Program Mission	MDiv Program Mission
The mission of the Master of Religious Education degree is to equip persons for competent leadership in Christian Education to serve congregational ministries and other religious institutions. This purpose is consistent with the mission of Shaw University Divinity School; the Master of Religious Education program focuses on	The mission of the Master of Divinity degree is to prepare persons for ordained ministry, for chaplaincy, general pastoral and religious leadership responsibilities in congregations and other settings, and to prepare some students for admission to advanced programs oriented to theological research and teaching. The purpose is consistent with

MRE Program Mission	MDiv Program Mission
leadership in the “practice of ministry,” particularly in the African American Church	the mission of Shaw University Divinity School; the Master of Divinity program focuses on leadership in the “practice of ministry,” particularly in the African American church

Program Goals

MRE Program Goals	MDiv Program Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to equip students with the capacity for critical and constructive theological reflection regarding the content and processes of educational ministry; 2. to help students understand the educational, social, and behavioral sciences that undergird educational practice, as well as the cultural contexts in which educational ministry occurs; 3. to assist students with personal growth and spiritual maturity; and 4. to provides skills in teaching and in design, administration, and assessment of educational programming. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to provide students with an intellectual atmosphere and a comprehensive, discriminating understanding of our religious heritage; 2. to enhance student training for Christian ministry, mindful of global, and diverse cross cultural, and non-American Christianities, and interaction with other faith traditions; 3. to support students' development in the personal and spiritual capacities necessary for pastoral and religious leadership, advancing growth in personal faith, emotional maturity, moral integrity, and public witness; 4. to expand programmatic activities, services, and academic programming to enhance student capacity for ministerial and public leadership.

Program Learning Outcomes

MRE Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)	MDiv Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Graduates will demonstrate a capacity to articulate an understanding of the scriptural, historical, and theological traditions of particular Christian traditions and of the broader community of faith 2. Graduates will evaluate teaching and learning theories for the purpose of developing a distinctly Christian philosophy of educating God’s people; 3. Graduates will demonstrate a capacity for critical reflection on how their unique personalities, backgrounds, and gifts and abilities relate to the ministry of Christian education; 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Graduates will demonstrate a capacity to articulate an understanding of the scriptural, historical, and theological traditions of particular Christian traditions and of the broader community of faith 2. Graduates will develop a consciousness about and a capacity to reflect critically on issues of diversity, globalization, and cross cultural concerns; 3. Graduates will demonstrate a capacity for critical reflection on how their unique personalities, backgrounds, and gifts and abilities relate to the role of the minister as leader, guide, and servant of the faith

MRE Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)	MDiv Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)
4. Graduates will demonstrate a capacity to design and to carry out a lesson plan necessary for effective educational ministries	community; 4. Graduates will demonstrate a capacity to create programs and have a critical voice in ministerial and public leadership

Texts and Blackboard

Required

Brown, Michael Joseph. 2004. *Blackening of the Bible*. Trinity Press International.

Gorman, Michael J. 2001. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*. Hendrickson.

Soulen, Richard and R. Kendall Soulen. 2001. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. 3rd Edition. Westminster John Knox.

Tiffany, Frederick, and Sharon Ringe. 1996. *Biblical Interpretation: A Road Map*. Abingdon.

Weems, Renita. 2005. *Just A Sister Away*. Revised Edition. Warner Books.

Optional

Hauerwas, Stanley. 1993. *Unleashing the Scripture*. Abingdon.

Levenson, Jon. 1994. *Creation and the Persistence of Evil*. Princeton University Press.

Weems, Renita. 1995. *Battered Love*. Fortress.

The preferred Bible for this class is the HarperCollins Study Bible (NRSV). The following Bibles are acceptable for use in this class:

NRSV: HarperCollins Study Bible, New Interpreter's Study Bible, New Oxford Annotated Bible.

NIV: Zondervan's NIV Study Bible

Do not use the Authorized Version (King James), New King James, any Amplified Bible, New Living Translation, Contemporary English Version, or any paraphrased Bible (such as *The Message*) in this class.

Blackboard

This course will use Blackboard as the primary means of communicating, presenting material, and submitting weekly assignments. The new Blackboard site can be accessed from the University's main website, www.shawuniversity.edu.

Course Description

Prerequisite: OTS 501

The focus of this course is building interpretative skills. In addition to learning and applying critical methods to various texts, students will also examine the philosophical and theological presuppositions of the methods. Students will consider issues relating to the interpretation of the text, such as the canonical process, the authority of the text, the relationship of the Old Testament to the New, etc.

Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) At the completion of this course, students will be able to:	Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (Assessment Tools)	Linkage to MDiv Program Learning Outcomes	Linkage to MRE Program Learning Outcomes
1. describe at least three different contemporary approaches to the interpretation of the text and how each operates	Weekly Assignments	1	1
2. describe how her/his own context affects her/his interpretation of the text	Weekly Assignments	1, 3	1, 3
3. describe how theology and interpretation are interrelated	Weekly Assignments, Book Review	1	1
4. describe how to use the following resources for interpretation: Bible dictionary, commentary, concordance	Library Assignment, Exegesis Paper	1	1
5. write an exegesis paper using a standard format	Exegesis Paper	1	1
6. explain the possible ways one can move from the text to teaching or preaching the text	Contemporary Application Paper	1	1, 3

7. explain in her/his own words how the text of the Old Testament applies to us today	Contemporary Application Paper	1	1
---	--------------------------------	---	---

Assignments

Please Note! All assignments are due on the date(s) indicated below. Any assignment submitted after the due date for any reason cannot receive an A. The highest grade possible for any such assignment is B.

Honor Pledge

All assignments are submitted with the following honor pledge implied.

I affirm that the content of this assignment is my own work. Nothing in this work is copied from a textbook, other book or online source, or another student except where permitted and properly documented. I understand that if I violate this affirmation I will receive a failing grade on this assignment and possibly in the class.

The University Handbook states that repeated instances of plagiarism will result in suspension and/or expulsion from school.

M.Div./M.R.E. Assignments

Because this is a required course both for M.Div. and M.R.E. students, different requirements will apply. The differences in assignments will be noted below.

Pre-Instruction Assessment

As part of Shaw University's continuous assessment program, students will be asked to complete an assignment at the beginning of the course. This will be used to assess how well the course has achieved the student learning outcomes set for the course. **This assessment is required, but it will not be graded or computed in the student's final grade.** This is, in effect, a test of the *course*, not the student. The assignment will be posted on Blackboard and should be completed within the first week the student is in the course.

Weekly Assignments

Students will complete a written assignment through the Discussion Board on Blackboard each week except those weeks in which another written assignment is due (see excepted dates below). The weekly assignment will be posted each Tuesday beginning January 20 and will be due no later than the following Monday at midnight Eastern time. After the first weekly assignment, several of the assignments will involve working within small groups.

Date: each week, except Feb. 23, Mar. 16, Mar. 30, Apr. 6, Apr. 13

Weight: 20%

Book Review

Each student will write a review on one of the optional texts, as assigned by the instructor. The review will follow the format given at the end of the syllabus. It should not exceed eight pages, typed, double-spaced. The rubric for the assignment is available on Blackboard.

Date: February 23
Weight: 15%

Library Assignment

Students will complete an assignment that will require library work and will also help students understand how to use tools for exegesis. The details for the assignment are given at the end of this syllabus. The rubric for the assignment is available on Blackboard.

Date: March 16
Weight: 15%

Exegesis Paper

Each student will write an exegesis paper on a text from the Old Testament. The paper will follow the format given in Gorman. It should be approximately 12-15 pages, typed, double-spaced. The paper will be completed in the following stages: 1) each student will complete a rough draft of the paper; 2) each student will exchange her/his rough draft with an assigned member of the class; 3) each student will write a critique of the rough draft she/he has been given and return it to both the student and the instructor; 4) each student, using the comments from the rough draft critique, will write a final draft of the paper for final submission. The rubric for the assignment is available on Blackboard.

Dates: Rough Draft, March 30
Critique of Draft, April 6
Final Draft, April 20

Weight: 25%

Contemporary Application Paper

Each student will submit a paper reflecting on how the text she/he examined in the exegesis paper applies to the contemporary world.

M.Div. students will write a paper describing three ways the text might be used in the life of the church. At least one of these must be a description of how the text might be preached (but you are **not** asked to write a sermon). At least one of these must be a use of the text in a context other than preaching (use in worship such as a funeral, wedding, baptism, etc.; use in pastoral care; use in teaching; etc.). Each description of a use must include a detailed explanation of why this text is appropriate to this use, how this text speaks to the needs of the contemporary world, and what other resources one might use in conjunction with the text (e.g., which hymns would be appropriate with a sermon on the text, which other texts one might use along with this text in teaching, etc.).

M.R.E. students will write a paper describing three different creative means of teaching the text (i.e., something other than lecturing or class discussion). Each description must include a description of an age/interest group for which it is intended, a detailed explanation of why this text is appropriate to this group, how this text speaks to the needs of the contemporary world, and what resources would be needed in order to present the text in this manner.

The assignment will be graded on the following: 1) how well the student makes a case for the connections between the text and the contemporary world; and 2) how thoroughly the student demonstrates the appropriateness of the text to the context. The assignment should not exceed eight pages, typed, double-spaced. The rubric for the assignment is available on Blackboard.

Date: May 5

Weight: 25%

Class Schedule

Date	Topics	Student Learning Outcome	Assigned Reading	Mode of Instruction	Related Assignment	Resources	Assessment Tool
Week 1 Jan. 20	Introduction	2		Reading, Online interaction		Syllabus	Weekly Assignment
Week 2 Jan. 27	Self – Identity	1, 2	<i>Blackening of the Bible</i> , 1-88	Reading, Online interaction			Weekly Assignment
Week 3 Feb. 3	Self – Theology	1, 2	<i>Blackening of the Bible</i> , 89-119	Reading, Online interaction	Group Text	Assigned book	Weekly Assignment, Book Review
Week 4 Feb. 10	Self – Community	1, 2	<i>Blackening of the Bible</i> , 120-183	Reading, Online interaction	Group Text	Assigned book	Weekly Assignment, Book Review
Week 5 Feb. 17	Text – The World Behind the Text (Diachronic Methods)	1, 2, 3	<i>Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap</i> , 13-66; <i>Handbook of Biblical Criticism</i> , entries on Biblical Criticism, Diachronic – Synchronic, Exegesis, Hermeneutics, Historical – Critical Method, Form Criticism, Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis, Historical Criticism, Redaction Criticism, Rhetorical Criticism, Source,	Reading, Online interaction	Book Review Due Feb. 23	Examples of Diachronic Approaches	Weekly Assignment, Book Review

Date	Topics	Student Learning Outcome	Assigned Reading	Mode of Instruction	Related Assignment	Resources	Assessment Tool
			Criticism, Text Criticism				
Week 6 Feb. 24	Text – The World of the Text (Synchronic Methods)	1, 2, 3	<i>Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap</i> , 67-125; <i>Handbook of Biblical Criticism</i> , entries on Canonical Criticism, Deconstruction, Literary Criticism, Intertextuality, Narrative Criticism	Reading, Online interaction		Examples of Synchronic Approaches	Weekly Assignment
Week 7 March 3	Text – The World in Front of the Text (Existential Methods)	1, 2, 3	<i>Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap</i> , 129-180; <i>Handbook of Biblical Criticism</i> , entries on Advocacy Criticism, Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation, Existentialist – Existential, Feminist Biblical Interpretation, Hermeneutical Circle, Womanist Biblical Interpretation	Reading, Online interaction		Examples of Existential approaches	Weekly Assignment
Week 8 March 10	Text – Exegetical Method	1, 2, 3, 4	<i>Elements of Biblical Exegesis</i> , 1-73	Reading, Online interaction	Library Assignment Due Mar. 16		Library Assignment
Week 9 March 17	Text -- Exegetical Method	1, 2, 3, 4	<i>Elements of Biblical Exegesis</i> , 75-145	Reading, Online interaction			Weekly Assignment, Exegesis Paper
Week 10 March 24	Text -- Exegetical Method	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	<i>Elements of Biblical Exegesis</i> , 147-	Reading, Online interaction	Rough Draft Due Mar. 30		Exegesis Paper

Date	Topics	Student Learning Outcome	Assigned Reading	Mode of Instruction	Related Assignment	Resources	Assessment Tool
			236				
Week 11 March 31	Text -- Exegetical Method	1, 2, 3, 4, 5		Reading, Online interaction	Critique of Rough Draft Due April 6		Exegesis Paper
Week 12	No Assignments -- Holy Week						
Week 13 April 14	World – Exegeting the World	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	<i>Just a Sister Away</i>	Reading, Online interaction	Final Draft of Exegesis Paper Due April 20		Exegesis Paper
Week 14 April 21	Using the Text	4, 5, 6		Reading, Online interaction		Examples of sermons	Contemporary Application Paper
Week 15 April 28	Using the Text	4, 5, 6		Reading, Online interaction		Examples of Church School Lessons	Contemporary Application Paper
May 5	Contemporary Application Paper Due						

Evaluation and Grading

This course will employ a 10 point scale:

90-100 A

80-89 B

70-79 C

60-69 D

below 60 F

Please note: because this is a required course, students will have to receive a minimum grade of C to avoid repeating the course.

Incomplete

An Incomplete may be granted only when extraordinary circumstances prevent a student from completing the work before the end of the semester. A student must request an incomplete, state a reason why he/she cannot complete the work, and sign the I-Grade Form in order for the incomplete to be granted. This must be completed prior to the date for final submission of grades (May 12).

Selected Bibliography

In addition to the text books, students may find the following books useful in thinking about interpretation of the text.

Bailey, Randall, Ed. *Yet With a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation*. Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003. This collection of essays follows up on the work in *Stony the Road*. Bailey and a variety of authors (including Dr. Kirk-Duggan) examine biblical texts and issues from an Afrocentric perspective.

- Barton, John. *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Revised Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. A very good examination of the philosophical underpinnings of the various approaches to interpretation that have been applied to the Old Testament.
- Felder, Cain Hope. *Troubling Biblical Waters*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989. Before *Stony the Road*, Felder wrote this book that lays out his approach to African American interpretation.
- . *Stony the Road We Trod*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991. This collection of essays remains one of the most significant resources for understanding African American Biblical interpretation. A variety of scholars describe the issues related to interpretation in general in related to specific biblical texts.
- Gillingham, Susan E. *One Bible, Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Studies*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. This is a very readable description of the various approaches to biblical interpretation, the strengths and weaknesses inherent in each.
- Goldingay, John. *Models for Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. Goldingay organizes his study by types of literature in the Bible. This study emphasizes the theological implications of different approaches to interpretation, and is written from a self-consciously Evangelical perspective.
- Hayes, John H. and Carl R. Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987. Do not be fooled by the subtitle – this is a very complicated approach to exegesis that emphasizes Historical-Critical issues and approaches.
- Hayes, John H., Ed. *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004. This collection of essays is reprinted from the general articles in the *New Interpreter's Bible*. The articles are very uneven. Many are useful and very readable, but some are either very difficult or far too brief to cover the subject adequately.
- Steck, Odil. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology*. Second Edition. Trans., James D. Nogalski. Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998. An approach to exegesis that is steeped in the Historical-Critical Method.
- Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*. Third Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. A good alternative to Steck and Hayes and Holladay. Stuart also emphasizes the Historical-Critical Method, but his approach is much more accessible and easier to follow than either Steck or Hayes and Holladay.
- Trible, Phyllis. *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978. Although it is thirty years old, this is a very, useable examination of the Old Testament from the perspective of feminist scholarship. Tribble argues that the Hebrew Bible presents many images of God that imply feminine qualities in God's interaction with the world.
- Ukpong, Justin, Ed. *Reading the Bible in the Global Village*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002. This collection of essays from a meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, looks at how people in non-Western cultures read and interpret the text. Most of the contributors are African, and the essays challenge the Western, Euro-centric models of interpretation.

Book Review

Purpose

This assignment is an exercise in critical reading, a skill that all students should develop. The assignment has four parts, and must not exceed eight pages.

The following parts must be in the paper in the following order.

1. Identification (5 pts.)

Identify the book through standard bibliographic format.

2. Contents (20 pts.)

Briefly give a factual summary of the main points the author makes.

3. Thesis (10 pts.)

State the author's thesis, that is, the main point the author wishes to convey. Note whether the thesis is explicitly stated or only implied.

4. Evaluation (65 pts. total)

This is the most important part of the assignment and should constitute the bulk of the paper.

Does the author successfully demonstrate his/her point? (30 pts.)

How effective is the author in proving the thesis of the book? **Why** is the author's argument effective or ineffective? **What** about the author's argument is persuasive or not persuasive and why? You should make specific references to the evidence the author employs. You should also note other ways of interpreting this evidence, in so far as you are able to determine this.

What is the author's attitude toward the subject? (15 pts.)

By specific reference to the author's work, describe the author's attitude to the subject matter. Does the author generally appear objective? Does she/he reveal a particular attitude towards the subject matter? How does this effect the way he/she evaluates the evidence?

Are there others who agree or disagree? (10 pts.)

Does the author mention other positions on the issue(s) he/she discusses? How does he/she evaluate these positions? Does he/she appear to be fair in these evaluations?

Does the book contribute to your understanding of the subject? (10 pts.)

You should include consideration of whether or not this book is worth reading. Does it contribute significantly to scholarly debate? Did it help you to understand the issue better or only confuse you? Would you recommend this book to others interested in the topic?

Library Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize students with the resources available for biblical interpretation. In addition to understanding how to use these tools, this assignment will also help students differentiate among varieties of perspectives within these tools. **The whole written assignment should not exceed eight pages, typed, double-spaced.**

Text

The text for this assignment is **Deuteronomy 8:1-10**. Use this text in reference to the parts below.

Bible Translations

Read the text in the following translations:

New Revised Standard Version

Today's New International Version

Contemporary English Version

Amplified Bible

Answer the following:

What are the chief differences you note among these translations? Of these translations, is there one that stands out as significantly different from the others? If so, why? Notice that the Amplified Bible has some words in brackets. These are added to the text (that is, these are the *amplifications*). How do these words change the sense or meaning of the text? Having read over these texts, why do you think the Contemporary English Version and the Amplified Bible are not permitted for use in this class?

Bible Dictionaries

The following Bible Dictionaries will be of use in this section:

Anchor Bible Dictionary

Eerdmans Bible Dictionary

HarperCollins Bible Dictionary

New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (use the older version if you can't find the new)

Select two of these and read the entry on the book of Deuteronomy.

Answer the following:

Describe three points of agreement among the articles. Describe at least one disagreement between the two. How does this material help you understand the text (8:1-10) better? Having read the text, what other articles do you think would be helpful to read? Why? Read one other article in both dictionaries that you think would be helpful. What did you discover? Does it help you understand the text better? How?

Bible Commentaries

There are many different types of commentaries. There are several different ways of distinguishing the types, but for this assignment we will divide them into three categories: Critical Commentaries, Homiletical Commentaries, and Popular Commentaries. Within each of these broad categories, there are significant differences of theology and perspective. Some series have a strong theological commitments, others attempt to represent a broad range of theological views, and some series have a stronger commitment to academic study than theological reflection. **For the purposes of doing the exegesis paper**, students should use only critical and homiletical commentaries, but for this assignment, students will

need to consult a very common popular commentary in order to compare it with the other types.

Select from the list below **two** critical and **two** homiletical commentaries on Deuteronomy, and **get access** to Matthew Henry's commentary.

Critical:Anchor Bible (Moshe Weinfeld)

JPS Torah Commentary (Jeffrey Tigay **note** - reads from back to front)

Old Testament Library (Gerhard von Rad)

Word Biblical Commentaries (Duane Christensen)

Homiletical: Interpretation (Patrick Miller)

New Interpreter's Bible (Ronald Clements)

Smyth and Helwys Commentaries (Mark Biddle)

Read the introductory material on the book and the commentary on the text of 8:1-10 (note that the different commentaries divide the material differently, and not all have a section devoted exclusively to verses 1-10). **Also** read Matthew Henry's commentary on Deut. 8:1-9 (he groups verse 10 with the next section).

Answer the following:

How would you describe the major differences among the three types of commentaries? How much attention does each commentary pay to issues of translation, grammar, Hebrew text? Are there any items that you find in common among the critical and homiletical commentaries? What, if any, are the significant points of disagreement among the commentaries? What are the two most important things that you discovered from the commentaries that affect your understanding of the text? Having read all the commentaries, why do you think we would discourage use of Matthew Henry for exegesis?

Concordances

The purpose of a concordance is to find how a particular word or phrase is used in other texts in the Bible. Concordances are keyed to specific translations. If you are reading the text in the NRSV, then you must have an NRSV concordance. Please remember that there is little point in looking up very common words like "God" or "love" in a concordance, unless you are trying to find verses in which a very common word occurs in the same verse as a much less common one.

Select three words in Deut. 8:1-10 that you think would be useful to look up in a concordance.

Look up the word and note where these words are used in Deuteronomy, and in the rest of the Old Testament.

Read several of the other texts in which these words are used.

Answer the following:

Why did you select these words? What did you discover about how they are used in Deuteronomy? in the Old Testament? Having done this, do you still think these are the best words to look up? Why or why not? What other words might you want to look up? Why? Why do you think this assignment would restrict the examination to the Old Testament?