

1-1-2005

BS 502 Introduction to Biblical Studies

Ruth Anne Reese

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Reese, Ruth Anne, "BS 502 Introduction to Biblical Studies" (2005). *Syllabi*. Book 772.
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BS502 Introduction to Biblical Studies

Draft Copy: Subject to Revision

Version 1.1

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Teaching Intern:

Spring 2005
Office Hours:
Tues. 10:00-11:00/Wed. 10:00-11:00
Other hours by appointment
Lyle McCoon

Course Description: The two-course sequence, BS501-502, comprises three interrelated sections: (1) an introduction to the concept and significance of the canon of Scripture, the discipline of hermeneutics, and a contextual, text-centered approach to biblical interpretation; (2) an introduction to the Old Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts; and (3) an introduction to the New Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts. Course participation, reading, and projects will be configured in part so as to reflect the character of the degree specialization represented among the course participants.

Objectives

1. The student will be able to trace the development of canonization, discuss the meaning and significance of the canon and of canonicity, especially the canon and canonicity of the New Testament, and articulate the major issues involved in the relationship between the testaments.
2. The student will be able to discuss the historical background of the Bible, including the historical setting of the biblical story, and especially the story of the New Testament, and the critical historical issues surrounding the production of the various New Testament books, and will demonstrate the ability to make appropriate use of this historical information in the interpretation of the biblical text.
3. The student will be conversant with the major issues in hermeneutics (i.e., will be able to identify these issues, articulate the main contemporary positions surrounding these issues, and present in a reasonable and informed fashion his/her own perspective regarding these issues), and will demonstrate the ability to make use of these hermeneutical insights in the actual interpretation and application of the New Testament text.
4. The student will demonstrate the ability to observe, interpret, and apply the New Testament text, and to show the significance of this interpretation and application of the biblical text for the tasks of his/her ministerial vocation. Specifically, the student will be able (a) to identify the macrostructure of a

biblical book (including the structural development of the book in terms of its units and sub-units, and major structural dynamics within the book) and show the significance of these insights for the interpretation of the New Testament text; (b) to engage in a “close reading” of individual passages so as to make relevant observations useful for interpretation; (c) to employ various kinds of exegetical determinants, e.g., context, word usage, historical background, literary genre, the history of interpretation, for the interpretation of the New Testament text; (d) to move from interpretation of the New Testament passage to specific and creative application to contemporary Christian life, including the ability to exemplify principles that must be kept in mind in the use of the New Testament for Christian application.

5. The student will demonstrate the ability to show how the teachings of individual passages within the New Testament contributes to the flow of biblical revelation in the large, and to trace, in at least a general way, the development of major biblical themes and motifs throughout the whole of scripture so as to articulate a biblical theology of these major themes and motifs.
6. The student will be able to articulate the issues involved in the integration of biblical studies and ministry.

Course Requirements:

On matters of style consult Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, and Theses* (11th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Turning in assignments on time is a high priority. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e., A paper becomes A-, B paper becomes B-, etc.). Any late papers **must** be handed to me in person OR turned into Melanie Feltner-Reichert, the faculty secretary in BC 226. She will note the day and time that they are turned in.

1. **Preparation, Attendance, and Participation:** Attendance is expected and will be recorded. It is the students’ responsibility to make sure that they record their attendance in class. The professor will not record attendance at a later time. Students who miss more than 6 class sessions will not be eligible for a passing grade. Students should come to class prepared by completing reading and assignments prior to the beginning of the class period. Each student will have the opportunity to participate in group discussions and projects during class time (5%).
2. **Interpretive Assignments:** These assignments will consist of various close readings of the biblical text and practice using particular interpretive tools (50 %).

3. **Mid Term:** The midterm exam will consist of short essay questions addressing course material and the reading. It will be a take home exam. (20%).
4. **Final Exam:** The final exam will consist of two parts: (1) a short take home essay exam. Answers to the questions should demonstrate familiarity with the course materials (textbooks, lectures, discussion, etc.), facility with the text of the New Testament, and awareness of one's own interpretive location. (2) a creative group project undertaken with other students from your MA program and presented during the class period in the finals week. This creative project will show integration between the NT class and your MA program (25%).

Grading:

Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives

B= Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives

C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

F= Unacceptable work: failure of course work

A plus (+) or minus (-) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C- = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

Required Reading:

The New Testament (RSV or NRSV or a similar translation)

Bauer, David. *Biblical Resources for Ministry*. Napanee, IN: Evangel, 1995.

DeSilva, David *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Thompson, David. *Bible Study that Works*. Napanee, IN: Evangel, 1994.

Willimon, William. *Shaped by the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1990.

Recommended Reading:

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

Schedule:

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| Feb 8 | Introduction to the Course and Scriptural Formation of the Reader
Required: Willimon |
| Feb 10 | Reading the Canon of Scripture
Required: deSilva, pp. 29-36 |
| Feb 15 | The First Century World
Required: deSilva, pp. 37-144 |

- Feb 17 The First Century World
Required:
- Feb 22 Issues of Interpretation: Reading the Text
Required: deSilva, pp. 145-196
- Feb 24 Issues of Interpretation: The 4 Gospels
Required:
- Mar 1 Matthew's Gospel
Required: deSilva, pp. 234-297
- Mar 3 Matthew's Gospel
- Mar 8 Mark's Gospel
Required: deSilva, pp. 194-233
- Mar 10 Mark's Gospel
Required
- Mar 15 Luke-Acts: The story in two volumes
Required: deSilva, pp. 298-390
- Mar 17 Luke-Acts

READING WEEK

- Mar 29 John's Gospel
Required: deSilva, pp. 391-448
- Mar 31 John's Gospel
Required:
- Apr 5 The Ministry of Paul and the Book of Acts
Required: deSilva, pp. 475-492
- Apr 7 Epistles – Philemon – A Sample Study of an Epistle
Required: deSilva, pp. 668-684
- Apr 12 The Corinthian Correspondence
Required: deSilva, pp. 555-597
- Apr 14 The Corinthian Correspondence
- Apr 19 Women in the New Testament – Reading in the Whole Canon
- Apr 21 Women in the New Testament – Reading in the Whole Canon
- Apr 26 General Epistles
Required: deSilva, pp. 814-840

- Apr 28 General Epistles
Required:
- May 3 Revelation
Required: deSilva, pp. 885-931
- May 5 Revelation
Required:
- May 10 The New Testament and the MA Programs – Articulating Integration
Required:
- May 12 The New Testament and the MA Programs – Articulating Integration
Required:
- May 17 Final Exam