

BE504: Introduction to Hermeneutics
SHEPHERDS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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SYLLABUS
Fall 2024
Monday--Friday 8am to 4pm MDT
AUGUST 26-30

FINAL DATE FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS IS SEPTEMBER 8 (11:59PM)

I. Course Description

An introduction to the science and art of hermeneutics. Surveys the major approaches of interpreting the Bible. Develops general and specific principles of interpretation for reading the various types of literature in the Bible. Equips the student to read and interpret the Bible competently while developing a greater love for God and His Word.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

After taking this class, the student should be able to:

1. Trace the history of hermeneutics through church history.
2. Explain how hermeneutics relates to the major genres in the Bible and areas such as figures of speech, parables, symbols, and types.
3. Compare hermeneutical systems.
4. Demonstrate the application of proper hermeneutical skills to a particular passage.

III. Course Requirements

a. Application Assignments (#1 Sept 4; #2 Sept 6; #3 Sept 11, #4 Sept 13)

- i. The application projects are designed to put into practice the principles learned in class.
- ii. **Application project #1** [answer each of the three questions with 1000-1200 words, using good grammar and paragraphing appropriately]
 1. A friend has discovered that you are taking a class on Hermeneutics. But he has no idea what hermeneutics is. Explain to him (a) what hermeneutics is; (b) why hermeneutics matters; and (c) why hermeneutics is important for every Christian and the church as a whole. Consider giving examples to help explain the importance of hermeneutics.
 2. You heard someone make a comment that studying hermeneutics in church history sounds like an academic exercise that has no practical benefits. Explain whether you think the study of

- hermeneutics in church history is helpful or not. Do so by (a) giving examples of hermeneutics in church history; and (b) offering what you think are important lessons that can be learned from church history (use specific examples/persons and consider discussing various eras in church history).
3. Discuss how important you think “context” is for interpreting the Bible. Address the following: (a) what is context?; (b) how important is understanding “culture” for context?; and (c) give an example or two of how ignoring context can lead to a wrong interpretation of a Bible passage.
- iii. **Application Project #2** [answer each of the three questions with 1000–1200 words, using good grammar and paragraphing appropriately]
1. Discuss the issue of genre when it comes to properly understanding the Bible: What is genre? Why is understanding genre(s) important for understanding the Bible? List various types of genres in the Bible? List a couple of principles for interpreting 3 different genre types in the Bible. What can go wrong if the concept of genre is not understood correctly?
 2. A person you know told you that we should not take Old Testament prophecies literally, especially those about national Israel, the land of Israel, and physical blessings. He says Old Testament prophecies should be understood “christologically,” and “typologically”, and that we must let the New Testament interpret the Old Testament which gives us a non-literal understanding of Old Testament prophecies. Explain to your friend your view of how we should interpret Old Testament prophecies. How should Old Testament prophecies be interpreted? And what hermeneutics principles should we use to understand Old Testament prophecies. Consider giving an example or two.
 3. One of your friends says that they grew up using the KJV, but a coworker is encouraging them to read the Message Bible. Help your coworker by addressing the following issues: 1) How does the history of translations help us understand the current situation? 2) What are the criteria (with description) one would use to decide what translation to use? 3) which translation do you suggest and why.
- iv. **Application Project #3**
1. Interact with and interpret Psalm 110, using proper hermeneutics to arrive at its original meaning and to come to proper implications of this psalm.
 2. The Process is as follows:
 - a. Read Psalm 110 slowly 15 times. Each time you read, try to pick up something new you missed previously.

- b. Offer several observations (at least 3) about each of the six verses in Psalm 110, starting with verse 1. Nothing is too basic. Who is speaking in the verse? What is being referred to? etc.
- c. Offer a succinct sentence on the meaning (authorial intent) of each verse.
- d. Offer 2 or more implications or significances of each verse that stem from the meaning of that verse. This can be in the form of a positive or negative. ("This verse teaches...". This verse does not teach that....")
- e. Look at quotes and allusions to Psalm 110 in the New Testament. List any significant findings concerning the meaning and/or significances of Psalm 110 in the New Testament. Does the NT reaffirm the meaning of Psalm 110?
- f. Explain how 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and Psalm 2 may or may not be related to the message of Psalm 110 (about half a page for this part)
- g. Offer a half to one-page summary of the meaning of Psalm 110 as a whole, taking into account the context of the entire psalm.

v. Application Project #4

1. With this assignment, you will study a biblical person and a biblical theme from proverbs.
2. Instructions for this assignment are provided on Canvas.

b. REQUIRED READING Due September 13 (11:59pm)

Students are expected to complete all of the required readings. You will submit the percentage of reading you accomplished by last day of class. *No audio books or any other method of listening to the material is allowed.* Also, class discussion will involve interaction with the required reading so make sure you have completed the required reading assignments for each day we meet.

1. Zuck, Roy. *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*. Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1991. (324 pages)
2. Virkler, Henry A. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991, 2nd Ed. 2007. (256 pages)
3. Vlach, Michael. *Dispensational Hermeneutics*. Theological Studies Press, 2023. (111 pages)

c. FINAL EXAM Due September 8 (11:59 pm)

The exam for this course will be an open-note examination. A study guide for the exam will be provided, and students will be able to use the study guide and any

hand-written notes for the exam. There is an academic reason for this. My goal for the exam is for you to re-engage with the notes, thinking through what we talked about one more time. Because it is too easy to copy/paste, I am asking for handwritten notes, which require you to think and summarize in your own words. The design is to make an exam that is easy to do well on if you put in the work.

IV. ATTENDANCE AND CLASS DISCUSSION

The nature of this class as intensive requires students to be present each day. Absences must be communicated to the professor.

V. COURSE SCHEDULE

	Topic
Monday Morning	Intro to Hermeneutics; Nature of Scripture
Monday Afternoon	Dangers of Improper Hermeneutics; History of Interpretation
Tuesday Morning	Dispensational Hermeneutics; NT use of the OT
Tuesday Afternoon	Words and Context
Wednesday Morning	Bible Study Tools and Translations
Wednesday Afternoon	Testing Interpretation and Application
Thursday Morning	Genre Study
Thursday Afternoon	OT Genre
Friday Morning	NT Genres
Friday Afternoon	Catch-Up

VI. Grading

Grading Scale:	
96-100 A	80-83 C
94-95 A-	78-79 C-
92-93 B+	76-77 D+
88-91 B	72-75 D
86-87 B-	70-71 D-
84-85 C+	69-69 F

Grade Distribution:	
Application Projects	60%
Exam	30%
Reading	10%

VII. Other Information

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attendance is expected at all class sessions, except with emergency. Students should contact the professor prior to the day of class or as soon after as possible. A student who misses more than 20% of the class will receive a grade of F.

LATE COURSE WORK POLICY: Late work will be accepted with the penalty of 10% off the total points that could be earned on the assignment, each day it is late, up to a maximum of 50%. Because of the intensive nature of the program, students cannot be more than one week late.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY: Seminary education is based upon certain shared values concerning the nature of learning and the pursuit of knowledge. One of the most basic assumptions is the respect for intellectual property and right of recognition for this pursuit of knowledge. Violation of this basic assumption includes such practices as cheating, plagiarism, abuse of technology, falsification of research data, unapproved collaborative research, and other deceptive academic practices. Sometimes these abuses are unintentional, but much intentional abuse is found in higher educational institutions, even Christian seminaries.

VIII. ACADEMIC SUCCESS

It is the desire of STS that all students have academic success. If you are failing to meet the institutional academic standards or seek personal academic development, please see your faculty academic advisor. Assistance can be provided for individual students in study habits, time management, course tutoring, and peer collaboration. If a particular learning disability is verified, the institution will assist in creating acceptable academic options that will meet both student needs and fulfill course objectives.

IX. ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, the law requires that all students with disabilities be given a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the VP of Academics TMiller@shepherds.edu

X. Credit Hour Calculation

STS follows the Carnegie Method for Credit Hour calculations. This means that for every credit hour, there should be 15 hours of instruction and 30 hours of work outside the classroom. Therefore, a 3-credit course requires 135 hours of workload, while a 2-credit course requires 90 hours. This course meets these requirements in the following way:

ASSIGNMENT	HOUR LOAD
Class Lectures	40
Reading (700 pages)	42
Application Assignments (4)	40
Exam	10
EXPECTED HOURS: 135	TOTAL HOURS: 132

XI. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used ethically or unethically. In this course, we allow students to use AI with restrictions: 1) it cannot be used as source material; 2) it cannot be used to create content for submission; 3) it cannot be used to rewrite student work; 4) it can be used as a logical or grammar check as long as the student is learning in the revision process. The overall goal is to ensure that AI is used to support learning, not to replace it.

For more clarity on these principles and why we have embraced them see the student handbook. Any more specific questions on the policy should be directed to your professor.