Theological Interpretation: Theory and Practice

Course Number: 3000/6000
Course Name: Theological Interpretation: Theory and Practice
Campus: Wycliffe College

Instructors: Joseph Mangina -- joseph.mangina@wycliffe.utoronto.ca
Ephraim Radner – e.radner@wycliffe.utoronto.ca

TA:

Course Prerequisites

For Basic Degree students: OT and NT Introduction and Systematic Theology 1 and 2.
Open to all Doctoral and MA students

Enrollment Limit: 15

Course Description

“Theological Interpretation” is a contemporary catch-phrase for an approach to scriptural interpretation that stands in general contrast to historical-critical approaches. Less a method in its own right than a set of (not necessarily uniform) values with respect to reading Scripture, theological interpretation has often been seen as a protest movement against the exclusive hold of historical-criticism on Christian reading of the Bible. It has variously emphasized ecclesial and doctrinal contexts or referents for interpreting the Scriptural text, and has made use of several traditional methods of exegesis, including typology, figure, and sacrament in addition to historical criticism. Behind the application of these methods are a range of theological presuppositions about the nature of God and divine revelation in Christ. This course seeks to sort out some of the background and meanings associated with the broad movement called “theological interpretation”, by looking at some theoretical and historical discussions. More importantly, the course will engage actual practice of theological interpretation, examining different approaches to a given Scriptural text, in order to gauge continuities and discontinuities among theological interpreters, to evaluate critically their approaches, and finally to help students develop a clear theological understanding of the nature and presuppositions of faithful Scriptural interpretation.

Course Methodology:

This is a seminar-style course, with instructors leading and students engaged in discussion of readings and the ideas involved. The first part of the course is given over to readings on the theoretical aspects of theological interpretation, from both a general and historical perspective. The second, and larger part of the course, involves the study of a series of biblical texts, aimed at investigating their interpretive possibilities. For each biblical text, several theological readings
of that text will be studied; students will also be asked to frame their own interpretations of the
text, critically engaging these exemplars.

Course Outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE OUTCOMES</th>
<th>COURSE ELEMENT</th>
<th>PROGRAM OUTCOMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the course, students will be able to</td>
<td>This outcome will be demonstrated through these course elements</td>
<td>This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe’s statement of outcomes</td>
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- Understand the various meanings of “theological interpretation” and some of its major historical and contemporary exemplars

  - Assigned readings and discussion
  - M.Div/MTS: 1.1; 1.2; 1.3
  - PhD: 1.1; 2

- Analyze the presuppositions behind these approaches

  - Discussion and weekly (and final doctoral) written assignments
  - M.Div/MTS: 1.1-5; 2:1,2 (MTS: 2.3)
  - PhD: 1.1; 2; 5; 6

- Evaluate their faithfulness to the Scriptural text, inner consistency, and illuminative potential, based on coherent claims about the nature of Scripture

  - Discussion and weekly (and final doctoral) assignments
  - M.Div/MTS: 1.1-5; 2:1,2 (MTS: 2.3)
  - PhD: 1.1; 2; 5

- Apply this knowledge to their own interpretation of biblical texts

  - Weekly writing assignments (weeks 5-12) and final doctoral assignment
  - M.Div/MTS: 1.1-5; 2:1,2 (MTS: 2.3)
  - PhD: 1.1; 2; 5

Requirements:

Attendance at all classes; prepared reading of assigned texts; participation in discussion; timely completion of 11 weekly assignments (approx. 3 pages each).

Weekly assignments: for weeks 2-4, 2 pages of summary and critique of the readings; for weeks 5-12, 3 pages relating the readings to the student’s own reading of the weekly Scriptural text. Doctoral students will, in addition, write a final 10-page interpretive paper on an assigned scriptural text, with a scholarly apparatus.
Grading:

All students: Participation (attendance, preparation as demonstrated in informed discussion, discussion) -- 30%
MDiv/MTS: Weekly assignments -- 70%
PhD/Masters: Weekly assignments – 30%
Final Paper – 40%

Required Texts:


All other required readings will be available on Quercus or online.

Course Website:

This can be found on your Quercus dashboard.

Class Schedule

Week 1

Theory: Background (readings to be read for the first class)

Essential background & clarification of terms:

Sensus literalis
Figural
Typology
Fourfold sense

Readings:


Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ialae, q.1, aa. 9-10 (1947 Benziger ed.)– posted on BlackBoard; [http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP001.html#FPQ1OUTP1](http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP001.html#FPQ1OUTP1)

Begin reading Stanglin.
Week 2

Theory: Contemporary Usage: example from Philippians (4:1-9)


*Life Application Commentary* – section on Philippians


Paul Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians: Philosophical Sources and Rhetorical Strategy* (Cambridge, 2001) *ad loc.* (Intro on ancient genres of “consolation” is optional)

Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Louisville: WJP, 2002), *ad loc.*

Week 3

Theory: The development of modern “theological interpretation”

Calvin: *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses* (transl. Charles William Bingham): Preface to the Harmony of Exod-Deut; at: [https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom03.iii.html](https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom03.iii.html)

Exod.1:1-7, at: [https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom03.iv.i.i.html](https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom03.iv.i.i.html)


(For AD Students) Coleridge: Lay Sermon 1 (Statesman’s Manual) and Appendices A and C, in Coleridge, *Lay Sermons* (London: Moxon, 1852), at Internet Archive: [https://archive.org/stream/laysermons00colegoog#page/n8/mode/2up](https://archive.org/stream/laysermons00colegoog#page/n8/mode/2up)


“Interpretation of the Bible in the church” (Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1993), II and III (A-B) at: [https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.HTM](https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/PBCINTER.HTM)

Week 4

Theory: Modern debates


(For AD Students): David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), cc. 7-8; electronic resource at UoT library

Hans Boersma: *Joshua as Sacrament: Spiritual Interpretation in Origen*, in *Crux* 48:3 (Fall, 2012), pp. 23-40

Daniel J. Treier and Uche Anizor, “Theological Interpretation of Scripture and Evangelical Systematic Theology: Iron Sharpening Iron?”, in *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14:2 (Summer, 2010), pp. 4-17


Week 5 -- (Weeks 5-12: Practice)

Genesis 2

Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, transl. John Hammond Taylor (New York: Newman Press, 1982), Bk 6 (Adam) or 9 (Eve): *students may choose which of these two sections to read*


Week 6
Exodus -- 33:12-23


**Week 7**

Leviticus 14, 16


**Week 8**

Psalm 127


**Week 9**

**Isaiah 6**

Eusebius of Caesarea, from his *Commentary On Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), pp. 27-33.


Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle To Understand Isaiah As Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 75-89 (Eusebius); 299-324 (conclusion)

**Week 10**

**John 9 – the man born blind**


**Week 11**

**Ephesians 4:1-16**
Chrysostom on Ephesians, Homilies 9-11, at https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf113.iii.iv.x.html

Calvin’s Commentary on Ephesians, at: https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom41.iv.v.i.html


Week 12

Revelation 12

Nicholas of Lyra, Nicholas of Lyra’s Apocalypse Commentary, trans. Philip D. W. Krey (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), ad loc..


Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Equivalents</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
<th>Grasp of Subject Matter</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90–100%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Profound &amp;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85–89%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80–84%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77–79%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73–76%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70–72%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FZ</td>
<td>0–69%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grades without numerical equivalent:
CR Designates credit; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value
NCR  Designates failure; has no numerical equivalent, but has a grade point value of 0 and is
included in the GPA calculation
SDF  Standing deferred (a temporary extension)
INC  Permanent incomplete; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value
WDR  Withdrawal without academic penalty
AEG  May be given to a final year student who, because of illness, has completed at least 60%
of the course, but not the whole course, and who would not otherwise be able to convocate; has
no numerical equivalent and no grade point value

Policy on Assignment Extensions

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which
they are registered. Under exceptional circumstances, with the written permission of the
instructor, students may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An
extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond
the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be requested no later than the last day of
classes of the term in which the course is taken. The request form is available on the college
website or from the Registrar’s office.

One percentage point per day will be deducted on the course grade if an extension has not
been requested by the stated deadline.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades
submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being
posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy
or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation.
Students must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information
is available at http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/. The sooner a student seeks accommodation,
the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full
documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations
should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they
should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation
still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism,
which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who
discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually
but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST Basic
Degree Handbook (linked from http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks and the
University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* [http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm), a student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges [http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm](http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters [http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm).

**Writing Style.** The writing standard for the Toronto School of Theology is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), which is available at Crux Books.

**Course Evaluations.** At the end of the course students are expected to complete a course evaluation. The evaluation is done online and instructions will be contained in an e-mail message that will be sent out by the Wycliffe College registrar.