

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
MATS Degree Completion Program
BIBD 637 Current Issues in Biblical Interpretation:
Dealing With Hermeneutical Challenges

James D. Hernando, Ph.D.

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A careful analysis and critique of important issues and challenges that confront the biblical interpreter today. Emphasis will be given to establishing the criteria and presuppositions that define a responsible hermeneutic from an Evangelical-Pentecostal perspective.

OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to help students to make informed judgments regarding numerous methods and approaches to biblical interpretation. To accomplish this, the student will be led to identify the components and presuppositions belonging to a legitimate hermeneutic that is both coherent and cogent. A critical survey of selected issues and methodological approaches, both past and present, will allow the student to critically assess what is being advocated in terms of the goal, task and method of biblical interpretation. Finally, the student will have opportunity to discuss whether or not Pentecostals and Charismatics bring anything distinctive to the table of biblical interpretation.

Upon the successful completion of the course the student should be able to do the following:

Cognitive Domain Goals:

1. Discuss the nature, goal, and task of hermeneutics from one or more hermeneutical approaches presented in this class.
2. Identify several major issues in biblical interpretation today and discuss the nature of the challenge for Christians seeking to live in response to the authoritative teachings of Scripture.
3. List and define the major terms used in the debates on the above issues.
4. Explain what Walter Kaiser means by the “crisis in hermeneutics” and how it reflects the transition from modernity to post-modernity.
5. Identify and evaluate the unspoken presuppositions behind a hermeneutical approach or method.
6. Evaluate the internal consistency of a particular hermeneutical approach, and the consistency with which it applies its interpretive method to the text.
7. List and define the basic components of any hermeneutical approach. Identify and explain which ones have particular relevance for those in the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition.

¹This course meets on Thursday evenings (6:00-10:00pm) on the following dates: March 27, April 3, 10, 17, 24.

Affective Domain Goals

1. Appreciate the wide diversity of hermeneutical approaches operating within Christianity today.
2. Realize more fully that no hermeneutical stance is without hermeneutical and theological presuppositions which may be critiqued independently of its hermeneutical methodology.
3. Appreciate more deeply the need to approach the Scriptures with reverence and faith as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative standard for faith and practice.

TEXTBOOKS

Required Textbooks:

Carson, D. A. *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996. (**GOG**)

Hernando, James D. *Dictionary of Hermeneutics: Concise Guide to Hermeneutical Terms, Names, Methods and Expressions*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005. (**DOH**)

Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1993, Revised and Expanded ed. (**IBI**)

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991. (**HS**)

Recommended Texts

Carson, D. A., and Woodbridge, John D., eds. *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books (Zondervan), 1986. (**HAC**)

_____. *Scripture and Truth*. Grand Rapids: Academie Books (Zondervan), 1983.

Kaiser, Walter C. and Moisés Silva. *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

OUTLINE

Date	Topics Covered on Class Days
Mar. 27 Week 1	<p>Hermeneutics, Nature, Task, and Method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Defining the terms and the discipline B. One vs. Many Meanings – the Search for Authorial Intent C. Presuppositions and Praxis of a Hermeneutical Method <p>Read: <i>IBI</i>: 3-21; 135-67; <i>HS</i>: 5-16, <i>DOH</i>: (entires on all unfamiliar terms in your reading) = ca. 81 pp.</p> <p>Reading Reports: Kaiser, Walter. "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in <i>A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics</i>. Edited by D.K. McKim (Eerdmans, 1986): 111-141; Stein, Robert "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics." <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> 44, 3 (September, 2001): 451-66; Erickson, M. "Presuppositions of Non-evangelical Hermeneutics," in <i>Hermeneutics, Inerrancy and the Bible</i>. Edited by E. Radamacher and R. Preus. (Zondervan: 1984): 591-612.</p>
Apr. 3 Week 2	<p>Hermeneutics: Foundational Issues and Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. God, Scripture and revelation B. The authority of Scripture C. The nature of truth <p>Read: <i>IBI</i>: 169-212; <i>GOG</i>: 13-54; 141-191; <i>DOH</i>: (entires on all unfamiliar terms in your reading) = ca. 150 pp.</p> <p>Reading Reports: Nicole, Roger. "The Biblical Concept of Truth." In <i>Scripture and Truth</i>, ed. by D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983, 287-302; Geisler, Norman. "The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate." <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> 137 (1980): 327-39</p>
Apr. 10 Week 3	<p>Hermeneutics and Modernity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Hermeneutics and History B. Schleiermacher to the New Hermeneutic C. Barth's continuing influence <p>Read: Hernando paper on "Schleiermacher to the New Hermeneutic" (on reserve in library); <i>GOG</i>: 57-140; <i>IBI</i>:50-62; <i>DOH</i>: (entries on all unfamiliar terms in your reading) = ca. 135 pp.</p> <p>Reading Reports: Yamauchi, Edwin. "History and Hermeneutics," <i>Evangelical Journal</i> 5 (Fall, 1987): 55-66; Bromiley, Geoffrey W. "The Authority of Scripture in Karl Barth," in <i>Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon</i>, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 271-94.</p>
Apr. 17 Week 4	<p>Hermeneutics and Postmodernity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The New Hermeneutic and Contemporary Relevance B. Literary and Reader-oriented Approaches C. Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Deconstructions

	<p>D. Contextualized Hermeneutics</p> <p>Read: <i>GOG</i> Review 57-92; <i>IBI</i>: 63-101; <i>HS</i>: 366-96; <i>DOH</i>: (entires on all unfamiliar terms in your reading); Hernando, James D. "Modern Literary Approaches and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Theological Concern," an unpublished seminar paper presented at the 1992 A/G National Educators' Conference in Minneapolis (on reserve in Library) = c. 133 pp.</p> <p>Reading Reports: Cargal, Timothy. "Beyond the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy: Pentecostals and Hermeneutics in a Postmodern Age." <i>Pneuma</i> 15.2 (Fall, 1993): 163-87; Menzies, Robert. "Jumping Off the Postmodern Bandwagon." <i>Pneuma</i> 16.1 (Spring, 1994): 115-20.</p>
Apr. 24 Week 5	<p>Hermeneutics and Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspectives and Insights</p> <p>A. Hermeneutics and The Holy Spirit</p> <p>B. Is there anything Pentecostal about Pentecostal hermeneutics?</p> <p>Read: <i>IBI</i>: 477-504; Pinnock, Clark, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," <i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i> 2 (1993): 3-23;</p> <p>Reading Reports: Anderson, Gordon D. "Pentecostal Hermeneutics," vol. 2 Conference Papers for the 1992 Society of Pentecostal Studies. (on reserve in library)</p>

METHODOLOGY

This course will pursue its objectives via the following:

1. Individual reading, research and writing
2. Class lecture in order to:
 - a. provide a framework for integrating the readings
 - b. explore other relevant areas of study
3. Oral presentations by students over assigned readings.
4. Guided discussion of issues raised by the readings and lectures.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ***Class Participation-*** Attendance at all class sessions is required. Because of the schedule of this class and modular format, absences will adversely affect your course grade. Any exemptions due to extenuating circumstances will still require that missed lecture and assignments be compensated. Student input to the class discussions are vital to the group learning experience of this class. The entire class benefits when each member comes prepared to make informed comments and ask thought-provoking questions. The scheduled course readings and assignments are necessary preparation for meaning reflection in class discussion. Come prepared.
2. ***Timely completion*** of all scheduled reading, and oral and written assignments are the foundation for class lecture and discussion. Please be diligent to complete all reading

assignments *before* the scheduled class date for which they are due.²

3. **Oral Reading Report** - Beginning on the 2nd class date³, one or more students will be assigned to do a 15-minute summary evaluation of a supplemental reading related to one of the topics of the day. The student will prepare a 1-2 page full-sentence outline of their presentation which will include a bibliography of supplemental readings they consulted in the preparation of their report. After the presentation the class will have 5-8 minutes to direct questions to the presenter.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Oral Presentation Itself (30 pts)**
 1. Articulation: clear, coherent sentences; logical sequence of thought.
 2. Quality of Speech: spoke loud enough to be heard by all, pleasant conversation style of speech (Do NOT read to us), voice inflection/modulation varied.
 3. Eye Contact: consistent and engaging of entire class.
 4. Use of visual and/or audio aids.
- **Content of Presentation (70 pts)**
 1. Clear presentation of the author's thesis or focus: clearly stated and defined.
 2. Logic and Coherence of thought: made sense, easy to follow, defined new terminology.
 3. Adequate summary of the author's main points and/or the structure of his/her argument.
 4. Student(s) exhibited a clear understanding of the subject matter – made clarifying comments and valid critical remarks supported by evidence.
- **Prepared Outline (30 pts)**
 1. Thesis/focus of work clearly stated.
 2. Full sentence outline – clear/intelligible.
 3. Outline develops the subject presented in a logical and coherent fashion.
 4. Oral content fit and expanded outline.
 5. Included a bibliography of additional sources used.
- **Question and Answer (20 pts)**
 1. Careful to understand the questions before answering.
 2. Well-informed responses.
 3. Candor and humility – did not pretend to know more than you did.

² Any written assignment that is turned in late will receive a grade no higher than a "C".

³ Readings listed for March 27 under Reading Reports are required reading and should be read the week following that class date.

4. Respectful of dissenting opinion or views.
4. **Analytical Essays** (see Essay Topics below)⁴ – These (5) written assignments are exercises in critical reflection and synthesis of the material covered in your course reading. At the start of each class (including the first) you are to hand in a short analytical essay on one of the topics suggested in the table below. These topics raise probing questions related to the broad issues covered in the weekly unit. In addition to the assigned textbook reading, collateral reading is often suggested. However, you may use and cite any source consulted. Be sure your essay goes beyond a descriptive summary of the authors' views and arguments. At some point you must give evidence of your own critical assessment and reflection. Essay specifics:
- a. 2-3 page (single-spaced) essay.
 - b. Modified APA documentation (See attachment)
 - c. Bibliography of all sources cited and consulted – format consistent with K.Turabian's Manual for Writers, 6th ed.

Evaluation Criteria:

- **Clarity** –
 1. The paper is well-written and easy to understand.
 2. The sentence structure is not overly complex or vague.
- **Content** –
 1. The paper adequately addresses the subject under discussion.
 2. The paper is well-researched and documented.
 3. The argument is clear, and convincing.
- **Structure** –
 1. Paragraphs develop your topic or thesis in a logical and coherent manner.
 2. The paper moves the reader along and arrives and builds evidence toward a viable conclusion.
- **Format** - conformed to given instructions.
- **Mechanics of writing** – does not contain numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, syntax, grammar, etc.

Essay Topic Options

⁴ I am indebted to Dr. Rob Starner for the general description and goals of this assignment as seen in his May 2005 syllabus for BIBD 637 Current Issues in Biblical Interpretation.

Date	Essay Topic Options
Mar. 27	Hermeneutics, Nature, Task, and Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s behind the “modern crisis” in hermeneutics? • Epistemology and hermeneutical method • Debate over the “locus of meaning” in hermeneutics? • What are presuppositions and how do they impact hermeneutics? • Foundational presuppositional for Evangelical interpreters of the Bible
Apr. 3	Hermeneutics: Foundational Issues and Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The clash between Christianity’s God and modern religious pluralism • Scripture and the nature of religious authority • Can truth about God be known? – Dissenting Opinions
Apr.10	Hermeneutics and Modernity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can an ancient and culturally-laden book speak universal eternal truth? • What makes Schliermacher the “father” of modern hermeneutics? • Hermeneutics and Christian existentialism • The limitations of the historical-critical method
Apr. 17	Hermeneutics and Postmodernity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining postmodernity: essential characteristics and presuppositions • Does Scripture teach/contain objective propositional truth? • Hermeneutics: Does the reader determine the meaning of a text? • _____ hermeneutics critiqued (fill in the blank) • Hermeneutics: Does the interpreting community determine the meaning of a text?
Apr. 24	Hermeneutics and Pentecostal/Charismatic Perspectives and Insights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The epistemological role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation • What is Pentecostal about Pentecostal hermeneutics? • Do Spirit-filled Christians have a hermeneutical advantage?

5. **Final Exam Essay-** On the last day of class (Apr. 24) a block of one hour and fifteen minutes will be given to writing a critical evaluation essay. An anonymous article will be given that should take you no longer than 15 minutes to read. You are to spend one hour critiquing the author’s views. You are to specifically target his/her hermeneutic. Questions to ask are: What are any underlying presuppositions regarding theology, the Scriptures and the nature and task of hermeneutics itself? Is the interpretation of Scripture in the article valid? If not, why not? The student should seek to use and reference the insights and knowledge gained from the class in his/her essay.

GRADING PROCEDURE

1. Grade Weights:

Course Readings	200 points =	20%
Class Participation	100 points =	10%
Oral Reading Report	150 Points =	15%
5 Critical Essays	400 points =	40%
Final Exam/Essay	150 points =	15%
2. The total number of possible points to be earned in the semester is 1,000. The grading scale for this course is as follows:

1000-950 =	A+	799-770 =	C+
949-930 =	A	769-730 =	C
929-900 =	A-	729-700 =	C-
899-870 =	B+	699-670 =	D+
869-830 =	B	669-630 =	D
829-800 =	B-	629-600 =	D-

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SPECIFIC DATA

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