

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

Course Number, Name, and Credit Hours

BI – 2201, Interpreting Scripture, 3 Credit Hours

Course Description

This course guides students in the interpretive techniques utilized in the study of the Scriptures. Emphasis is placed on understanding the primacy of the Scriptures in the intersection of text and experience, as well as the benefits and hindrances of one's own preunderstandings in the study of the biblical text. Necessity of interpreting culture and context to adequately apply the Scriptures will also be discussed.

Course Objectives

1. Apply critical observation and interpretation strategies to various biblical texts (BL3)
2. Explain the use and importance of biblical genres in interpretation (BL4)
3. Utilize practices of cultural interpretation to relate scripture to the student's society (BL3 & 5)
4. Discuss evangelical interpretive approaches in light of recent philosophical and literary thought (BL2)
5. Explore the role and position of experience in the interpretive task

Course Materials

Textbooks Required:

Duvall, J. Scott, J. Daniel Hays, and Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Mark L. Strauss. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. 3rd Edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. Print. ISBN: 978-0310492573 [GGW]

Vanhoozer, Kevin J., Charles A. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleasman, eds. *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*. Annotated Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Print. ISBN: 978-0801031670 [ET]

Additional Readings:

Precept Ministries International. *Inductive Bible Study*. Chatanooga: Precept Ministries International, n.d. Web. 03 Feb, 2015. http://precept.org/data/sites/1/PDFs/PMI_IBStudyOverview_v2.pdf [PMI]

Sumney, Jerry. "How to Use Biblical Commentaries." Fortress Press, n.d. Web. 03 Feb, 2015. <http://store.fortresspress.com/media/downloads/0800663748Commentaries.pdf> [Sumney]

Leffel, Jim and Dennis McCallum. "The Postmodern Challenge." Christian Research Institute, 10 Jun, 2009. Web. 04 Feb, 2015. <http://www.equip.org/article/the-postmodern-challenge/#christian-books-1> [Leffel]

Longenecker, Richard. "An Initial Dilemma." *New Testament Social Ethics for Today*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984. 1-15. Print. ISBN: 978-0802819925 [Longenecker]

Plummer, Robert. "Why Can't People Agree on What the Bible Means?" *40 Questions about Interpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2010. 175-84. Print. ISBN: 978-0825434983 [Plummer]

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Porter, Stanley and Jason Robinson. "What is Hermeneutics?" *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011. 1-22. Print. ISBN: 978-0802866578 [Porter]

Media/Video:

Antioch Church. 'Micah Bournes::Normal Hair.' Online video clip. YouTube. *YouTube*, 11 Oct, 2011. Web. 30 Jan, 2015 [00:04:46] http://youtu.be/gPhuYG2_gQk [Antioch]

Gustavo Karakey. 'Using an Online Bible Concordance' Online video clip. YouTube. *YouTube*, 06 Jan, 2012. Web. 06 Feb, 2015 [00:11:31] <http://youtu.be/nlsmFtgB4rA> [Karakey]

Assignments

All assignments are due according to the schedule listed on the Course Schedule.

1. CLASS PARTICIPATION: Active participation is expected in this online course. Participation includes two main areas: discussion boards and reading. Class Participation will account for 25% of final course grade.

a. Discussion Boards: You must maintain a significant presence in the discussion board. Please refer to the discussion board rubric included in the Documents section of this course for more information on how your participation in the discussion board will be assessed.

b. Course Expectations: The completion of the course reading, audio/video reviews, online articles, etc. is an important part of the course. You are expected to complete the weekly expectations prior to your discussion boards each week so you are able to discuss the concepts with others in the course.

2. ASSIGNMENTS: There will be several projects in this course requiring skills learned that may include work with Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and beginner media production tools. Specific assignment instructions are provided under the Weekly menu. Assignments are submitted through a link provided so they can be recorded as submitted through the Blackboard Grade Center. The assignments in the course are:

a. **ASSIGNMENT 1: CULTURAL AND BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION ESSAY (Due Week 1)**

The readings in Lesson 1 surveyed the multilayered task of properly interpreting and applying the Bible to today's world. The interpretive task is two-fold, comprised of the interpretation of the biblical text and our present-day world. In their own way, both GGW and ET are concerned with rightly understanding the meaning of texts and ideas in their own world. In GGW, this world is the biblical world and the text is the Bible. In ET, the world is our own world, and the texts and/or ideas are those of our own culture. What ET and GGW mutually emphasize is that we must understand both to faithfully teach and live out the Bible's message today.

In a minimum 2-page double-spaced essay explain how cultural interpretation (or cultural exegesis; ET) and biblical interpretation (GGW) relate. For this essay follow the outline given below:

1. Begin by giving your own definition of each of these terms and briefly explaining what each tries to do (Clue: review Ricoeur's definition of hermeneutics [i.e., interpretation] on ET p. 45 and the first few sentences under the heading "Basics of the Journey" on GGW p. 41.).
2. Use the bulk of your essay explaining how these two tasks overlap in their method and purpose. Pay special attention to steps 1-3 in the GGW "Interpretive Journey."

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3. Finally, conclude with a short description of why cultural and biblical interpretation are important tasks for faithfully living out and teaching the Bible today.

This assignment is due at the **end of week 1**.

b. **ASSIGNMENT 2: Biblical Genre Review – Goup Wiki** (Due Week 3)

For the reading in week 2, your instructor will place you into groups of four to five (4-5). These same groups will also be used for further assignments in this course. In these groups, you will divide up Chapters 14-22 in GGW (dedicated to biblical genres) between yourselves. Groups should do all possible to divide up the work evenly. Try assigning simpler genres to students with more chapters and more difficult genres to those with less. Or have students with less reading be responsible for formatting the wiki. It is recommended that, for the sake of your own mastery of the course material, you try to select chapters representing genres you feel you have mastered the *least*.

NOTE: This brief study of biblical genre should serve as a review for students who have already learned how to interpret various biblical genres from previous MBI-DL courses (BI-1113, 1114, 1115, 1116, GSU-1115). For others, it should be a cursory introduction in preparation for further study in subsequent courses.

For this assignment, your team will construct a wiki that surveys each of the 9 biblical genres. This wiki will be intended as a “cheat sheet” for biblical genre, a resource that you would feel confident turning to when studying the Bible in future. Dedicate at least one page to each genre with aesthetically formatted written content, pictures, flow charts, etc. For each genre include at minimum a description of the genre, examples of books (or sections of books) that contain this genre of literature, distinctive interpretive factors or details, and a step-by-step how-to guide on how to interpret the genre (feel free to reflect GGW or other resources – but **cite!**). At the conclusion of the wiki include a bibliography of the works you used for this project. There is a rubric for this assignment.

Here are some YouTube videos that may be useful for you to view:

1. How to Create and Edit Wiki Pages (in Blackboard) [00:03:53]: <https://youtu.be/vvy7LgC4MXA>
2. How to: Quick Tutorial for the New Google Drive (2015) [00:05:05]: <https://youtu.be/-HU9Z5gtQVk>
3. How to do a Google Hangout [00:07:50]: <https://youtu.be/hM3dGaRq9D8>
4. How to use Dropbox [00:02:21]: <https://youtu.be/8rxeAydwbY>

This assignment will be due at the **end of week 3**.

c. **ASSIGNMENT 3-1: Observation Assignment** (Due Week 3)

In this assignment you will utilize the study tools learned in the Lesson 3 reading to interpret two select passages: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Proverbs 3:1-8. These passages are given in the “Observation Worksheet” in the Lesson Resources folder on Blackboard. In these passages utilize the study tools you learned in all 3 chapters. A condensed list can be found at the conclusion of GGW chapter 5 (pp. 103-4).

This assignment will be completed in the **groups made for Assignment 2**. Each of the two passages must be worked on by each student in the group – do not merely divide up the work. The intent of using groups in this assignment is that you will learn from your peer’s perspectives. Therefore, once the assignment has cycled through every student in the group each student must again review it so that they can see what others have added. How this will be done depends on the digital method used for this group assignment.

Students may use any digital service they believe will be best to work on this assignment together. It is recommended that students use a cloud service that allows seamless mutual editing of files like Google Drive (or Docs). Other good options are cloud services such as DropBox or OneDrive. If these options are not possible, email can work. If you have technological restrictions, contact your instructor as soon as possible. Foreseeable tech problems will not be an acceptable excuse for late work.

For more information on the requirements for completing this assignment, see the “Observation Worksheet”.

This assignment is due at the **end of week 3** and will be submitted as a group through Blackboard.

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d. **ASSIGNMENT 3-2: Interpretation Quiz** (Due Week 3)

This quiz is designed to help you discern the differences between observation, interpretation and application. Read each statement and select if the statement is an observation, interpretation or application. Use the “Inductive Bible Study” document in week 3 to study for this assignment. This quiz can be completed with the use of a Bible **only**.

e. **ASSIGNMENT 4: Historical Background Assignment** (Due Week 4)

In this assignment you will utilize the tools you learned in GGW Chapter 6 to compile an in-depth study guide for a single passage of scripture. Using the questions you have learned to ask in this chapter you will compile two to three (2-3) pages of background information that will help you properly interpret Matthew 5:13-16.

In similar fashion to **Assignment 2**, this assignment will be completed in a group. Unlike the previous assignment, division of labor is permitted, however, each student must read through and edit the final product. Please see **Assignment 3-1** for a list of prospective online tools to help you with this coordinate this assignment. For more information on the assignment requirements, see the rubric in the lesson resources folder.

This assignment is due at the **end of week 4**.

f. **ASSIGNMENT 5-1: Literary Context Assignment** (Due Week 6)

Romans 12:1-3 is one of the most well known and loved passages in the book but readers often read it independent of its literary context. In this assignment you will do a thorough literary study of the entire book of Romans to attempt to understand 12:1-3 as part of the literary flow of its chapter, its book, and the theological message of the New Testament.

In similar fashion to **Assignments 2, 3-1, and 4**, this assignment will be completed in a group. Division of labor is permitted, however, each student must read through and edit the final product. Please see **Assignment 3-1** for a list of prospective online tools to help you with this coordinate this assignment.

For this assignment you will lean heavily on the readings in week 5, specifically GGW chapter 8. You will complete this assignment using the “Literary Context Worksheet” and submit it through Blackboard by the **end of week 6**.

g. **ASSIGNMENT 5-2: Word Study Worksheet** (Due Week 5)

In this assignment you will complete assignments 9-2 and 9-2 from GGW (pp. 185-188) using the “Word Study Worksheet” in the Lesson Resources folder. This assignment will be completed individually and is due to be submitted at the **end of week 5** through Blackboard.

h. **ASSIGNMENT 5-3: Final Interpretive Paper** (Due Week 8)

In this assignment you will utilize all the tools learned in this course to create a comprehensive study guide for a select passage. This passage will be one of the four already studied in **Assignments 3-1, 4, and 5-1**: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 3:1-8, Matthew 5:13-16, and Romans 12:1-3.

NOTE: Your choice of passage in this course could also carry over to BI 4402 “Teaching the Scriptures,” where you will create a teachable lesson off of this same text that you have so thoroughly studied. Consequently, make sure to choose your passage carefully, as you may later come back to it in BI 4402.

For this project, you will present your compiled research on your selected passage into a multi-staged paper. This paper will include separate sections that include:

1. A statement of why you believe interpretation is necessary for accurate study and faithful teaching
2. A description of the passage’s genre
3. Key considerations for your genre that you must keep in mind to interpret it properly
4. A presentation of your observations in the text in similar style to **Assignment 3-1**

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5. A study upon the historical background of the passage following the parameters of **Assignment 4**
6. An outlined examination of the literary context of the passage in line with the requirements of **Assignment 5-1**
7. A completed word study from your passage following the requirements of **Assignment 5-2**

It is recommended that you devote **at least** one double-spaced page for each of the requirements given above (seven (7) total pages not including Works Cited page). It is expected that you will have already completed part of this project through one of your previous group assignments. You may freely use this group work in your own project and are encouraged to even add to it.

This assignment is due at the **end of week 8** and will be submitted individually through Blackboard.

i. **ASSIGNMENT 6: Is there a Meaning in this Text?** (Due Week 6)

The most common critique of Evangelical biblical interpretation comes from recent trends in philosophical and literary thought. Broadly speaking, many people believe that meaning has more to do with a person's perspective (drawing from their individual experience) than it does with the text itself. This sentiment is no doubt true **to an extent**. Often multiple people come away with different interpretations of paintings, songs, or poetry. But is this true about the Bible and its message for mankind?

In a minimum 2-page double spaced paper provide an answer to the following question: How is it possible for me to know for certain what the Bible means? In your response indicate your view of the roles authorial intent and reader response play in interpretation. Utilize and cite the readings from week 6. It is recommended that you investigate the optional readings for this assignment.

This assignment is due at the **end of week 6** and will be submitted through Blackboard.

j. **ASSIGNMENT 7: Pastoral Interview and Blog** (Due Week 8)

For this assignment students will interview a pastor/teacher to ask them how they prepare their lessons from Scripture. Once the interview is completed, students will blog about their experience and discoveries.

Find a local pastor/teacher (someone who teaches in front of a church congregation on a regular basis) who is able to meet with you and talk about how they make the journey from the biblical text to his or her weekend sermon. This person may be someone you already know, however, students who interview someone from a **different Christian tradition or denomination** will be awarded up to 5% extra credit on this assignment. If you pursue the extra credit option, be sure to select someone from a tradition that is not very similar to your own (e.g., Anglican and Episcopalian are considered similar). **Please include** a statement at the beginning of your blog indicating your own tradition and the tradition of the person interviewed. Your interview may be over the phone, over Skype, in person, etc., but must be done in real time with voice contact (i.e., not email). Your instructor must confirm any exception.

Your interview should gravitate around the following four questions:

1. What is the process for you to get from the biblical text to your sermon?
2. What are some of the characteristics of your congregation you keep in mind when applying the Bible to their lives?
3. What kinds of commentaries do you use? How academic, what tradition, recent or historical?
4. What are some of their "go to" Bible study tools for their own teaching

You should take notes during the interview (or record it) to ensure you are prepared to write a detailed response. After completing the interview, post a blog (minimum 250 words, maximum 400 words) summarizing your findings from the above four questions and detailing what you learned or what might have surprised you. After completing your blog post, skim the blogs of at least 2 other students. Feel free to leave comments, encouragements, or questions on other students' posts.

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This assignment is due at the **end of week 8** and will be submitted as a blog on Blackboard.

k. **ASSIGNMENT 8: Course Reflection**

A reflection paper develops complex insights and theories, and allows you to speculate about the future. In this type of a paper you are allowed to write about your experience(s) and how it is in harmony or disharmony with perspectives experienced in the course. In a reflection paper emphasis is placed on experience and the vivid articulation of that experience.

In this paper you will reflect on what you have learned in this course and how you will integrate it into your existing understanding of interpreting the Bible. In doing so, reflect upon your development concerning **one** of the three themes of this course:

- 1) the philosophical task of the interpreter: to move beyond cultural, literary, and linguistic limitation toward a fuller understanding of the biblical text; **OR**
- 2) the practical task of the interpreter: to use existing study tools and practices to effectively exegete a passage; **OR**
- 3) the ministerial task of the interpreter: to translate biblical truth into culturally meaningful language, messages, and symbols.

This paper will be no longer than three (3) pages double-spaced. Your reflection paper will have the following:

1. **Orientation:** Tell the reader by giving background on the experience on which you are reflecting.
2. **Connections:** Identify and clearly describe the most meaningful connections you had through this study. Describe any connections between your study and previous studies you have had. What new things did you learn? Then compare it to what you thought before. How was this like (or unlike) anything you have thought before?
3. **Insights and Impacts:** Describe new understanding or insights you have gained. What do you better understand that you didn't before? What do you know now that you have made connections? What is new actions or reactions will you now have as a result of your new found insight?
4. **Conclusions:** How will you use what you have learned? In what way have your beliefs changed as a result of this experience? How might you change?

This paper is due at the **end of week 8** and will be submitted through Blackboard.

Writing Style

Undergraduate students at Moody Bible Institute are to follow the Modern Language Association (MLA) style for all written assignments. Your instructor may waive this requirement for specific assignments such as discussion boards, blogs, emails, and the like, but if not stated otherwise, follow MLA guidelines. Assignments not in proper MLA format may be returned with a request to redo the assignment and could be subject to a late penalty.

At a minimum, all assignments submitted as a document are to be in a standard 12-point font (limited to Time New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Century Schoolbook), 8½ x 11 page size, and double-spaced and are to be submitted as a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx). Papers that cite other works should include a Works Cited page.

Students should follow the latest version of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (currently the 7th edition) or use the OWL website at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

Assessments

Students' grades for this course will consist of:

Class Participation	25%
Assignment 1	10%
Assignment 2-1	5%
Assignment 3-1	5%
Assignment 3-2	5%
Assignment 4	10%
Assignment 5-1	3%
Assignment 5-2	2%
Assignment 5-3	15%
Assignment 6	5%
Assignment 7	5%
Assignment 8	10%
	100%

Letter grades are determined by the following scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage Equivalent	Letter Grade	Percentage Equivalent
A	96% or higher	C	73 - 76.9%
A-	90 - 95.9%	C-	70 - 72.9%
B+	87 - 89.9%	D+	67 - 69.9%
B	83 - 86.9%	D	63- 66.9%
B-	80 - 82.9%	D-	60 - 62.9%
C+	77 - 79.9%	F	Below 60%

Course Resources

Online students have access to the Moody Library. Though students may wish to check out books via inter-library loan, the online database has a number of articles and reviews available for download. You can access the online database by logging into your account at my.moody.edu. If you have not previously accessed the library database you may wish to complete the database tutorial at <http://library.moody.edu>. Here are additional tutorials on how to use the Crowell Library and do digital research: <http://libguides.moody.edu/aecontent.php?pid=245942&sid=5129214>.

In addition to the resources available at the Moody Library, you may wish to visit <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk> or www.bible.org. These sites contain content on various topics written by competent biblical scholars. It is also suggested that you download a free version of the NET Bible at bible.org.

The final resource that deserves mention here is iTunes University. Apple has developed a platform for colleges and universities to post audio and video content. There are a number of lectures available on iTunes U from various schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Seattle Pacific University, Duke, Yale and the like have posted content related to biblical and theological studies.

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ADA Compliance Statement

Moody Bible Institute complies with the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, by providing appropriate accommodations to qualified students with disabilities. We value diversity and inclusion and recognize disability as an aspect of diversity. Our shared goal is to create learning environments that are accessible, equitable, and inclusive. If you anticipate barriers related to the format, requirements, or assessment of this course, you are invited to address the professor with your concerns; additionally, you are encouraged to contact Gayla Gates, our disability services provider, at the Student Resource Center to discuss possible environmental modifications or adaptations. Please note, accommodations are not retroactive, therefore we encourage you to contact our service provider within the first two weeks of the semester. Contact Gayla Gates at ggates@moody.edu or 312-329-2177.

Course Bibliography

Suggested reading/listening/viewing on the course subject. This is for further study and reference for the student. **NOTE:** The bibliography does NOT include required textbooks or readings.

Bauer, David R. *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. Print.

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 2 edition. Carlisle, U.K. : Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996. Print.

Detweiler, Craig. *Into the Dark: Seeing the Sacred in the Top Films of the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008. Print.

Detweiler, Craig, and Barry Taylor. *A Matrix of Meanings: Finding God in Pop Culture*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. Print.

Hiebert, Paul G. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. Print.

Jasper, David. "Varieties of Postmodern Hermeneutics" *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. 119-13. Print. ISBN: 978-0664227517 [Jasper]

Johnston, Robert, and William Dyrness. *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline*. Edited by Robert K. Johnston. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. Print.

Jr, Stanley E. Porter, and Beth M. Stovell, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012. Print.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 2001. Print.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and Expanded edition. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006. Print.

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- Sandy, D. Brent, and Ronald L. Giese, eds. *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 1995. Print.
- Schultz, Richard. *Out of Context: How to Avoid Misinterpreting the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012. Print.
- Smith, James K. A. *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009. Print.
- . *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014. Print.
- Spencer, F. Scott. 'The Literary/Postmodern View.' *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovall. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012. 48-69. Print. ISBN: 978-0830839636 [Spencer]
- Taylor, Barry. *Entertainment Theology (Cultural Exegesis): New-Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy*. Baker Academic, 2008. Print.
- Thomas, Robert L. "The Principle of Single Meaning," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 12/1 Spring 2001: 33-47. Web. 07 Feb, 2015. <http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/tmsj12c.pdf>
- Virkler, Henry A., and Karelynne Ayayo. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. 193-215. Print. ISBN: 978-0801031380 [Virkler]