**COS121**

**Bible I: Introduction**

**Spring 2025**

**March 14-15 and April 4-5, 2025**

**All classes will be held online via Zoom**

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**Course Description** (from GBHEM)**:**

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

**Course Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1.Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in

interpretation.

2.Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community

of faith.

3.Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of

literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.

4.Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

**Required Textbooks:**

Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*

John Hayes and Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*

Bernard Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*

**Required Reference Books:**

*The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary*

*HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*

*New Interpreter’s Study Bible—NRSV*

**Videos:**

Each unit in this syllabus asks students to watch a video related to the material covered in that unit (most of these videos are 45-50 minutes in length). These videos can be accessed through *Vimeo* at the links below—

Video #1—“The Bible as History, Literature, & Guide to Faith”

<http://vimeo.com/442074706>

Video #2—“The Torah”

<http://vimeo.com/444707827>

Video #3—“The Hebrew Prophets”

<http://vimeo.com/447908201>

Video #4—“The New Testament Gospels”

<http://vimeo.com/448704588>

Video #5—” The New Testament Letters*”*

<http://vimeo.com/451241259>

**Grading:**

Each student will be awarded a grade for COS121 according to the number of points accumulated for the class— A 90-100 points

B 80-89 points

C 70-79 points

D 60-69 points

F below 60 points

The various assignments discussed later in this syllabus will be assigned the following point

values— Unit I: Study Questions 10 points

1st Weekend Attendance (Zoom) 5 points

Unit II: Study Questions 10 points

Genesis Paper 10 points

Unit III: Study Questions 10 points

Amos/Hosea Paper 10 points

Unit IV: Study Questions 10 points

Mark Paper 10 points

Unit V: Study Questions 10 points

Philippians Paper 10 points

2nd Weekend Attendance (Zoom) 5 points

TOTAL 100 points

**WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS**

**Unit I.**

1.Read Fee & Stuart pp. 21-35.

2.Read Hayes & Holladay pp.5-16, 53-61, 90-100.

3.Read Anderson pp. 9-15.

4.Read HarperCollins Bible Dictionary pp.118-120.

5.Watch **Video** **#1—The Bible as History, Literature, and Guide for Faith**.

6.Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—

a. What is the difference between exegesis and hermeneutics?

b. What factors affect the exegetical process? (see especially the Hayes/Holladay book).

c. Drawing from the assigned readings, how do you understand the terms “historical context”

and “literary context”?

d. Briefly describe the “three acts” in the historical drama, according to the Anderson book.

e. How do you understand the term “canon” and its development in the early church? (see

especially the HarperCollins reading).

f. Describe one insight from these readings that encouraged and illumined your approach to

the Bible. Then discuss one idea that challenged you and made you uncomfortable.

7.Participate in class discussions with other students (Friday evening and all day Saturday of the first weekend of the class; please make every effort to be present for all sessions).

**Please note: The work for Units I and II is considered “pre-course “ work in that it should be completed and submitted before the first weekend of the class March 14-15. This work should be emailed to the instructor by midnight on Tuesday, March 11.**

**Unit II.**

1.Read Fee & Stuart pp.93-103, 168-175.

2.Read Anderson pp. 18-36.

3.Watch **Video #2—The Torah**.

4.Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—

a. What are the three levels of narrative in the OT as set forth by Fee/Stuart?

b. What guidelines shape the Christian community’s relationship to OT law, according to

Fee/Stuart?

c. The Anderson book sees the Genesis 3 narrative in the Garden of Eden as falling into three

episodes; briefly discuss each.

d. Anderson highlights critical points related to God’s covenant with Israel on pp. 34-35;

summarize these ideas in your own words.

5.Read Genesis 1:1-2:25. Write a 2-3 page paper discussing these ancient creation narratives.

You will need to draw upon *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary,* the *HarperCollins*

*Dictionary,* other books for this class, or other sources available to you. Your paper might

consider some of the following questions—why do we often see two creation stories here?

how are these two stories similar or different? what literary issues are noteworthy? what

ancient cultural understandings are evident in these stories? what are the major theological

affirmations here? Be sure to write with proper grammar and citation of any sources you

utilize.

**Please note: Unit II assignments (along with Unit I assignments) are included in the “pre-course work” that is due Tuesday, March 11.**

**Unit III.**

1.Read Fee & Stuart pp. 187-211.

2.Read Anderson pp. 39-63.

3.Watch **Video #3—The Hebrew Prophets**.

4.Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—

a. What were the major functions of the Hebrew prophets, according to Fee/Stuart?

b. What do Fee/Stuart mean by “historical context” related to these prophets? Discuss.

c. Fee/Stuart warn students of the OT against seeing the prophets as foretellers of the future.

Explain their concern. Do you agree/disagree?

d. Most Hebrew prophets spoke between the 8th century BCE and the 5th century BCE. In the

assigned pages from Anderson, what does the author see as the major political events

shaping prophecy during this period?

5.Suppose you are teaching a Bible Study on the early prophets Amos and Hosea. Using *The*

*Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary*, the *HarperCollins Dictionary*, other books from this

class, or other resources available to you, develop the introductory session for this study. You

will need to consider the historical context, literary issues, similarities and differences between

the messages of these prophets, etc. You might also consider what is known about each

prophet personally, what each says about God and about humanity, how each sees the

covenant with God. You may organize your material in outline form or in any manner that

would effectively communicate with your Bible Study group. Be sure to tell where you found

your material (i.e. cite sources).

**Please note: The work for Unit III is considered “mid-course work” and should be completed and emailed to the instructor by Tuesday, April 1; some of this material will likely be discussed in the first weekend Zoom sessions while a part of this material will be covered in the final weekend Zoom gatherings.**

**Unit IV.**

1.Read Fee & Stuart pp. 132-167.

2.Read Hayes & Holladay pp.104-114.

3.Read Anderson pp. 66-73.

4.Watch **Video #4—New Testament Gospels**.

5.Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—

a. Why do Fee/Stuart stress the importance of investigating both the historical setting of Jesus

and the historical setting of the gospel writer when studying the gospels?

b. Beginning on page 146, Fee/Stuart assert that each gospel writer employed selectivity,

arrangement, and adaptation in composing the gospels; discuss and explain each of these

terms.

c. What do Hayes/Holladay mean by the term “literary form”? How does the German phrase

*sitz im leben* relate to literary genres?

d. Anderson speaks of the Christ Event as the “denouement of the historical drama” (p.68).

What does this mean? Do you agree with Anderson? What evidence of this do we see in

the church and in society?

6.Prepare an exegesis paper (2-3 pages in length) focusing on Mark 9:2-8. Utilize the

*Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary,*  the *HarperCollins Dictionary*, other books for this

class, or other resources available to you. Look at the historical context, literary context,

parallel texts in the other gospels, etc. What does the passage say about Jesus, about God’s

kingdom, about humanity, about the church?

**Please note: The assignments for Units IV and V are considered “end-of-course work” and should be completed and emailed to the instructor by midnight on Tuesday, April 1.**

**Unit V.**

1.Read Fee & Stuart pp. 57-92.

2.Read Anderson pp. 74-89.

3.Watch **Video #5—New Testament Letters.**

4.Answer the following questions based on what you have read/heard—

a. What do Fee/Stuart mean by calling the NT letters “occasional documents”? Explain.

b. What do Fee/Stuart mean by “problem passages” in the epistles? What guidelines do they

offer for handling these passages?

c. What do Fee/Stuart see as the tension arising from historical particularity and cultural

relativity in the NT letters (pp.84ff.)? Explain.

d. Explain Anderson’s discussion of the Church as the “Israel of God”. Why would the

Jewish community likely find this idea offensive?

e. Anderson sees the Bible as a great drama moving toward a goal (pp.81ff). What is that goal

and what do you see as the implications of Anderson’s view?

5.Suppose you are preaching a sermon on Philippians 1:12-30. First, do some background

research. What situation occasioned this letter from Paul? What is known about the writer

and the recipients? Are there any literary issues here? Incorporate all of this research into

a summary paragraph. THEN, develop an outline showing the main theme and supporting

points of your sermon. You do not have to write a full sermon manuscript, but your outline

should clearly set forth the flow of your message. Submit the research paragraph and the

outline together by the deadline for this unit.

6.Participate in the Zoom gatherings with other students (times to be announced but the

gatherings will be during the weekend of April 12/13; please allow 2 hours each for sessions on Friday evening and on Saturday morning).

**Please note: The work for Units IV and V is considered “end-of-course” work in that it should be completed and emailed to the instructor by midnight on Tuesday, April 1. This material will be included in the closing Zoom sessions on April 4-5.**