

Theological Interpretation: Theory and Practice

Course Number: WYT3612/6612HF

Course Name: Theological Interpretation: Theory and Practice

Campus: Wycliffe College

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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:

COURSE OUTCOMES	COURSE ELEMENT	PROGRAM OUTCOMES
<i>By the end of the course, students will be able to</i>	<i>This outcome will be demonstrated through these course elements</i>	<i>This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe's statement of outcomes</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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

Required Texts:

Stephen E. Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade/Wipf & Stock, 2009)

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

Course Website:

Blackboard <https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the

portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>. Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask Thomas Power for further help.

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:

Nicholas of Lyra, Aquinas, Calvin, in William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis", in Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Week 2

Theory: Contemporary Usage: example from Philippians

Stephen E. Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade/Wipf & Stock, 2009)

Life Application Commentary – section on Philippians

Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians: Two Horizons Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005)

Daniel L. Migliore, *Philippians and Philemon. Belief: A Theological Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014)

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>
 Exod.1:1-7, at: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom03.iv.i.i.html>
 Preface to Olivetan’s New Testament, at : <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom.iv.html>

Benjamin Jowett, “On the Interpretation of Scripture” (1860), extracts from John Drury, *Critics of the Bible, 1724-1873* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 137-151; electronic text version at UoT Library

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>

John Keble, “Tract 89: On the Mysticism attributed to the Early Fathers of the Church”, extracts in Elisabeth Jay, *The Evangelical and Oxford Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 131-47.

“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>

Week 4

Theory: Modern debates

Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) chapters 1-2

Supplementary: 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

Southern Baptist Journal of Theology Forum on Theol. Interpretation, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14:2 (Summer, 2010), pp. 78-84.

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)

Genesis Rabbah, Chapter 8, in *Midrash Rabbah*, transl. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1939), pp. 54-63, at:

<https://archive.org/stream/RabbaGenesis/midrashrabbahgen027557mbp#page/n7/mode/2up>

R. R. Reno, *Genesis: Brazos Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010), pp. 51-76.

Week 6

Exodus -- 33:12-23

Andrew Willet, *Hexapla In Exodum: A Sixfold Commentary...* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1608), “Questions XXV to LV”, “Places of Doctrine and Controversie”, “Morall Observations”, pp. 560-668 (skim) -- electronic resource at UoT Library, or html posted version

Ardel B. Caneday, “Glory Veiled in the Tabernacle of Flesh: Exodus 33-34 in the Gospel of John”, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 20:1 (2016), pp. 55-72.

John Goldingay, *Exodus and Leviticus for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2010), pp. 119-123.

Week 7

Leviticus 14, 16

Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2010), Homilies 8 (231), 9, and 10.

Karl Barth, “The Election of the Individual,” C.D. II/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), pp. 354-66.

Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus. Brazos Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2008), pp. 17-28; 135-147; 160-171

Week 8**Psalm 127**

Luther – Exposition of Psalm 127, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 45 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962/1999).

John Mason Neale and R. F. Littledale. *A Commentary on the Psalms From Primitive and Medieval Writers...* Vol. 4 (London: Joseph Masters, 1974), pp. 209-216 (1874 ed.); online at GoogleBooks:
<https://books.google.ca/books?id=nQg3AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 7 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), pp. 28-42. Online at GoogleBooks:
<https://books.google.ca/books?id=SxdVAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Week 9**Isaiah 41:1-9**

Eusebius of Caesarea, from his *Commentary On Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), pp. 200-203.

John Gill, *An exposition of the Books of the Prophets of the Old Testament* (London: 1757-8), vol. 1; electronic Eighteenth Century Collection, at the UoT Library.

Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), pp. 311-319.

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**

J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), pp. 27-45.

Peter Leithart, *Deep Exegesis: The Mystery of Reading Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), p. 60-73; 101-107; 124-144; 161-204.

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>

Michael Horton, "Ephesians 4:1-16: The Ascension, the Church, and the Spoils of War", in R. Michael Allen (ed.), *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives* (T & T Clark, 2011).

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..

Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible: The Meaning of the Revelation of St. John* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), ad loc..

Joseph Mangina, *Revelation. Brazos Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2010) pp. 19-34; 147-58.

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 System

Letter Grade	Numerical Equivalents	Grade Point	Grasp of Subject Matter
A+	90–100%	4.0	Profound & Outstanding
A	85–89%	4.0	Outstanding
A-	80–84%	3.7	Excellent
B+	77–79%	3.3	Very Good
B	73–76%	3.0	Good
B-	70–72%	2.7	Satisfactory
FZ	0–69%	0	Failure

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 (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>) 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>), 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).

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>).

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.