COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores a wide range of subjects related to responsible interpretation of the Bible. Particular passages of Scripture are the focus of discussions and practical exercises. (3 hours.)

COURSE READING

1. Required textbooks


2. Other required reading (available on Self-Service)

   T. Desmond Alexander, “Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis”

   Todd Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God*, chap. 4

   Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible*, chap. 1

   Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, chaps. 3-5

3. Recommended resources to assist with SDEs


COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Heidelberg Catechism/Scripture memory quiz (20 % of final grade): On the first day of class, students will be required to write from memory Q & A # 1 from the Heidelberg Catechism and to write from memory the following verses: Galatians 4.4-7; 2 Corinthians 6.16-7.1; Revelation 1.5b-6 (beginning with: “To him who loves us . . .”)

2. Reading reports (30 % of final grade): Students will be required to turn in a reading report at the conclusion of the semester stating the percentage of assigned readings they have read with reasonable care by the conclusion of the semester. (NB: Students will benefit most from lectures and class discussions if they have completed Swain, Billings, and Smith before the first class meeting.)

3. Skills Development Exercises [SDEs] (50 % of final grade): The skills required for faithful biblical interpretation are to a significant degree more “caught” than “taught.” Consequently, certain assignments will be devoted to the development of interpretive skills. These assignments will have homework and classroom components. (See SDE Template below.)
SDE Template

I. Instructions

I.1. General

i. Bullet point observations (except where longer explanations are called for)

ii. Note textual evidence for observations in parentheses

iii. In general, analyze “from low to high”

I.2. Specific

II. Hermeneutical analysis

II.1. Oratio (Psalm 119.18; 2 Timothy 2.7)

II.2. Explicatio

i. Text: Where does it begin and end?

ii. Basic observations

Repeated words: What words are repeated? How many times are they repeated?

Questions and answers: Are there any? Is the text structured around them?

Dialogue: Is there any?

iii. Lexical: What key terms need definition?

iv. Grammar and syntax: What grammatical and syntactical issues in this text require clarification (compare English translations; consult commentaries)?

v. Figures of speech/imagery: What figures of speech/imagery appears in this text (identification)? What do they signify (signification)?

vi. Historical-cultural analysis: What social, geographical, political, religious, and philosophical dimensions of this text require clarification?

vii. Structural analysis

1 Adapted from Bruce Waltke’s unpublished lectures; and Al Wolters, “Confessional Criticism and the Night Visions of Zachariah.”
What are the basic structural elements of this text (smaller elements: sentences; and larger elements: scenes, paragraphs)?

What are the relationships (e.g., causal, explanatory, temporal, spatial, etc.) between the various structural elements of this text?

viii. Genre analysis

What is the genre of this text (e.g., narrative, poetry, apocalyptic, etc.)?

Analyze the text in light of its genre (e.g., for narrative, analyze the text in terms of setting, plot, characterization, and authorial perspective).

ix. Book level analysis: How does this text relate to other passages within the same book (especially those that immediately precede and follow this text) and to the book as a whole? (One or two paragraphs)

II.3. Meditatio

i. Scripture’s use of Scripture

What other biblical texts are quoted or alluded to in this text?

Where is this text quoted or alluded to in other biblical texts?

ii. Redemptive-historical analysis (GPS)

Where does this text fit in terms of kingdom epochs (e.g., pattern, perished, promised kingdom, etc.)?

What covenant administrations are in view in this text (e.g., Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New)?

How does this text relate to the climax of Scripture in Jesus Christ? What thematic progression do you see (Janus function)? What redemptive-historical adjustments are required? (One or two paragraphs)

iii. Rule of faith analysis (map): What are the major and minor theological themes of this text? (One or two paragraphs)

II.4. Applicatio

i. Theological: How does this text present God’s identity and action, and how does it promote the fear, trust, and love of the God it presents (2 Tim 3.16ff)?
ii. Ethical: What does this text teach about us and about what we are called/not called to be, think, will, and do (2 Tim 3.16ff)? What . . . corporately and individually, generally and specifically (Eph 4-6)?

iii. Evangelical: How does this text promote faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3.15; cf. HC 1)?

iv. Christian consolation: How does this text promote Christian consolation and hope (Rom 15.4)?

v. Cultural: How does this text call for cultural *iconoclasm* and *indigenization*? (One or two sentences)

vi. Imagination (refer to II.2.v): How does this text *reveal* God and the gospel (Isa 40.9)? How does this text *read* us (Heb 4.12-13) and *write* us into the messianic story of Scripture (2 Cor 3.3; 10.4-6)? (One or two sentences)

III. Summary

   III.1 In one or two sentences, summarize the *main point* that this text seeks to communicate.

   III.2. Provide a *literary outline* of this text.

   III.3. Briefly explain in one or two paragraphs how the *literary structure* of this text develops the *main point* of the text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation</strong> (oral &amp; written)</td>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preach</strong></td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
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<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings;</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.

| Church/World | Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Moderate | Interaction with contemporary challenges to a Christian approach to biblical interpretation |