

BS862 Reading Scripture

Fall 2016

St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute
in partnership with Ashland Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. Amy Richter & Dr. Michael J. Gorman

Thursday evening/all day Friday: September 15-16; October 6-7; November 10-11

Subject to minor adjustments

Course Description

An exploration, for D.Min. candidates, of approaches to reading Scripture for Christian faith, formation, ministries, and mission. Special emphasis will be given to (1) selected parts of the canon (Psalms, the Prophets, Matthew, and 1-2 Thessalonians and Philippians); (2) various approaches to reading the Bible as Scripture, including the main Christian traditions and several different cultures; (3) recent developments in theological and missional hermeneutics; and (4) the connection between Scripture and your D.Min. project.

Prerequisite

Acceptance into Ashland Theological Seminary's D.Min. program.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to as demonstrated by
Identify and use various approaches to reading the Bible as Scripture, and articulate their own sense of responsible (rigorous, faithful, thoughtful, and creative) biblical interpretation	Participation in class discussion and completion of papers, especially for sessions 1 and 2
Identify and articulate an understanding of the approach(es) to biblical interpretation at work in their own faith community and/or tradition	Participation in class discussion and completion of papers, especially for session 2
Examine and respond to a case study from the student's own ministry experience in a way that demonstrates responsible biblical interpretation	Participation in class discussion and completion of a case study
Articulate a robust theological understanding of several passages of Scripture—those examined by the entire class and those of particular interest to the student	Participation in class, close readings, and discussion
Identify and articulate an understanding of how biblical interpretation can inform a particular area of ministry practice (e.g., pastoral care)	Participation in class discussion and completion of papers, especially the final paper

Course Texts (* = entire text assigned; listed in order of use in class)

William P. Brown, *Sacred Sense: Discovering the Wonder of God's Word and World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015)*. ISBN 978-0802872210.

Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okorao, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010). ISBN 978-0310326199. (Do not buy the paperback; it is a different book—the pocket edition.)

Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays, *The Art of Reading Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003)*. ISBN 978-0802812698.

Michael J. Gorman, ed. *Scripture and its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* (probably a pre-publication handout available from instructor).

Patrick D. Miller, *The Lord of the Psalms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013)*. ISBN 978-0664239275.

Walter Brueggemann, *Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014)*. ISBN 978-0802870728.

Erasmus Leiva-Merikakis, *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word: Meditations on the Gospel According to St. Matthew, vol. 1 [chs. 1-7]* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996). ISBN 978-0898705584.

Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). ISBN 978-0802868848.

Course Assessment

15% each 6-page paper (45%)

20% class participation

35% final paper

Course Assignments and Schedule

- General
 - Ashland expects that the student will devote roughly 150 hours to each D.Min. course. An approximate breakdown of these hours is: 30 hours in the classroom, 70 hours of reading the required texts and other related works, and 50 hours of writing.
 - For intensive courses (which last one week), students are encouraged to allow 120 days for each course: approximately 60 days prior to the class to read assigned texts and approximately 60 following the class to complete the assignments, depending on assignment due dates. Because this is not an intensive course, there will be both reading and writing assignments before each of the three class meetings, and a final project will be due after the last class, no later than December 31.
 - Ashland expects a minimum of 1500 pages of assigned reading and 30 pages of writing (minimally).
 - All papers should be double-spaced and submitted as directed for each assignment.

- Specific
 - Use of the daily prayers from *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* from September 1 to September 15 and then at least three days per week through November 10.
 - For September 15-16
 - Six-page paper, approx. 2,000 words (details below). Bring two hard copies to class.
 - For October 6-7
 - Six-page paper, approx. 2,000 words (details below). Bring two hard copies to class.
 - For November 10-11
 - Six-page paper, approx. 2,000 words (details below). Submit via Canvas for the entire class by November 6.
 - December 31
 - Final paper: 15-20 pages, approx. 5,000-7,000 words. Guidelines to be distributed October 7. Submit electronically via Canvas.

Class Schedule

Session 1, September 15-16: Reading the Bible as Scripture: Praxis and Principles

- Reading
 - Brown: *Sacred Sense* (all = 160 pages)
 - Davis and Hays, *Reading Scripture*, xiv-273
- Assignment
 - Write a two-page theological reflection on one essay from each of the first three parts of *Reading Scripture* (part 1 = How Do We Read and Teach Scripture?; part 2 = A Living Tradition; part 3 = Reading Difficult Texts) for a total of six pages. Use the following questions as guidelines for your reflections on each essay, though you do not need to follow them slavishly:
 - What is the thesis of the essay, and what are its two or three main sub-points within that thesis?
 - What are the possible contributions of this essay to your own reading of Scripture?
 - What concerns or questions does the essay raise for you?
 - The reflections will be used as part of the discussion of the book on Friday.
 - Bring two hard copies to class Friday.

SCHEDULE

- Thursday Evening
 - Introductions
 - Close reading of a Scripture text together, with “help” from *Sacred Sense*
 - Discussion of *Sacred Sense*
 - Presentation on *Sacred Sense* by Dr. Richter
- Friday Morning
 - *Common Prayer* together
 - Presentation on theological interpretation by Dr. Gorman
 - Discussion of “How Do We Read and Teach Scripture?” section of *The Art of Reading Scripture*, part 1

- Friday Afternoon
 - Presentation by Dr. Richter
 - Discussion of “A Living Tradition” section of *The Art of Reading Scripture*
 - Discussion of “Reading Difficult Texts” section of *The Art of Reading Scripture*
 - Close reading of a text together, with “help” from *The Art of Reading Scripture*
 - Closing: looking back and ahead
 - Closing prayer

Session 2, October 6-7: Reading the OT as Scripture

- Reading
 - Eight chapters of Gorman, ed., *Scripture and its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible: Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, African, African-American, Asian/Asian-American, Latino/Latina hermeneutics* (approx. 100 pages)
 - Patrick D. Miller, *Lord of the Psalms* (all = 104 pages)
 - Walter Brueggemann, *Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks* (all = 165 pages)
 - Approx. 25 pages on the Bible and the student’s own church/tradition
 - Part 4 = Sermons of *The Art of Reading Scripture* (43 pages)
- Assignment
 - Write a six-page essay on the interpretation of one of the scriptural texts provided by the instructors on September 16 that considers how (1) three of the eight perspectives on reading Scripture from the Scripture book would, in your view, approach the text and (2) how these approaches might inform your own reading of Scripture in general going forward.
 - Bring two hard copies to class Thursday.

SCHEDULE

- Thursday Evening
 - Discussion of eight essays from *Scripture and its Interpretation*
 - Presentation on intertextuality by Dr. Gorman
 - Presentation on reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture by Dr. Richter
- Friday Morning: The Psalms
 - *Common Prayer* together
 - Discussion of *Lord of the Psalms* and relevant sermons in *The Art of Reading Scripture*
 - Close reading of a Psalm text together, aided by *The Lord of the Psalms*
 - Presentation on the psalms in the life of the church by Dr. Richter
- Friday Afternoon: The Prophets
 - Discussion of *Reality, Grief, Hope* and relevant sermons in *The Art of Reading Scripture*
 - Presentation on the prophetic tradition in the NT by Dr. Gorman
 - Close reading of a scriptural text together, aided by *Reality, Grief, Hope*
 - Closing: looking back and ahead
 - Closing prayer
- Optional: 7 pm lecture with Ellen Davis and others

Session 3, November 10-11: Reading the New Testament as Scripture

- Reading
 - *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word: Meditations on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, vol. 1 [chs. 1-7], through 157.
 - Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 1-141
 - Individualized reading: ca. 100 pages on the Bible and the student's own subject area (e.g., Bible and pastoral care; Bible and preaching; Bible and Christian formation; etc.—may be essays, part of a book, etc.)
 - Assigned sermons from *The Art of Reading Scripture* and from Amy Richter and Joseph Pagano, *Love in Flesh and Bone*, 28-32, 59-66.
- Assignment
 - Prepare a six-page case study of an issue involving the interpretation of Scripture in the context of your own church experience or ministry. Here are the guidelines:
 1. Choose an incident, something that actually happened, to serve as the basis of your study. In narrative (story) form, describe succinctly what happened, focusing on what your reader needs to know. Identify the pastoral, theological, or ethical issue the incident raised for you that you are interested in thinking through (up to one page).
 2. In the remaining pages, write a reflection in which you address the following:
 - Identify Scripture texts or themes with which to be in conversation as you reflect on the incident (if themes, identify where in Scripture you find these themes).
 - On what basis did you choose the texts (e.g., similar theme, narrative arc, situation of participants, outcome)?
 - What do the texts ask of the participants or what claim would they make on participants?
 - What means of, or approaches to, interpretation do you employ when considering how the Scripture texts speak to the situation?
 - On the basis of your reflection, how would you respond to the incident now?
 - Submit for the entire class via Canvas by Nov. 6, and bring copies of page 1 for the entire class.
 - Read at least the first page of all other case studies.

SCHEDULE

- Thursday Evening: more on hermeneutics
 - Discussion of case studies
 - Presentation by Dr. Richter on spiritual reading
 - Presentation by Dr. Gorman on missional hermeneutics
- Friday Morning: Matthew
 - *Common Prayer* together
 - Presentation on how to read NT narrative by Dr. Richter
 - Discussion of *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word*
 - Group lectio divina on a text from Matthew, aided by *Fire of Mercy, Heart of the Word*
- Friday Afternoon: Paul
 - How to read the rest of the NT, especially the letters, by Dr. Gorman
 - Discussion of *Becoming the Gospel*
 - Close reading of a scriptural text together, aided by *Becoming the Gospel*

- Closing: looking back and ahead, including the final paper
- Closing prayer
- Breaking bread together

Bibliography:

Bibliographies will be distributed at class sessions as appropriate.