



Trinity International University
Online – Undergraduate

BI 210:
Biblical Interpretation (online)

Version 4.0

2065 Half Day Road
Deerfield, IL 60015
www.tiu.edu

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Note Well: The course site will be available on the web at least *two weeks* before the course begins. However, please order your course materials at least *three weeks* before the course begins.

I. Trinity's Course Management System: Moodle

To access this course, please follow these steps:

1. Visit: <http://www.moodle.tiu.edu>
2. In the upper right corner, click on the "login" button.
3. Enter your GroupWise username and password to login.
4. On the right of the page, select "Online – Undergraduate".
5. Select this course from the list of courses.
6. Enter the enrolment key – which is a one-time password that you will receive via email about three weeks before the course begins.
7. Click on "Enrol me in this course."
8. Read the instructions on the main course page and proceed as indicated.

II. Course Description

This course is designed to acquaint the student with a basic understanding of the principles of biblical interpretation, as well as with the primary tools of biblical research. The student will then apply these principles and tools to the study of a selected New Testament epistle. Prerequisites: BI 110 and BI 120. *Three hours.*

III. Course Overview

Phillip asked the Ethiopian court official who was reading Isaiah as he rode along in his chariot, "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian responded frankly, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:28-35). As we have read the Scriptures, how often have we wished someone would help us to understand! Just like Phillip helped the court official, the readings and exercises in this course will help you to interpret the Bible like never before. You will develop healthy habits of how to approach the world of the Bible in order to understand what it is saying, and then how to cross the bridge back into your own world with principles that you can apply with confidence to the world of today.

This course consists of six units. The first five correspond to Parts One through Five of the book by Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God's Word*. As you read each unit, your assignments from the Workbook will enable you to practice the principles presented in the readings. The discussion forums will invite you to stretch your critical faculties and interact with your fellow students and the professor on questions which are more open-ended. The sixth and final unit will be spent putting all the elements together in the creative act of an Applied Learning Paper, an interpretation of a passage from the New Testament.

Part One introduces the authors' principal or governing methodology: The Interpretive Journey, a metaphor of the interpretation process. Simply understood, it presents the original biblical audience who first received the text as a town – a town divided from our own contemporary town by a river of time, cultural differences, and language. The

interpretation process, say Duvall and Hays, is a matter of measuring the width of the river that separates us from the biblical milieu, identifying the text's universal theological principle – which they call *the principlizing bridge*, and applying that universal principle to our own context, what they call “grasping the text in our own town.” Part One then goes on chapter by chapter describing how to do word studies, sentence studies, paragraph studies, and discourse studies.

Part Two focuses on contexts: first our own, the readers' context, is brought to the forefront of our attention, for we must recognize that we bring preunderstandings (or preconceptions) to whatever we read, so we often attribute meanings to the author that he never thought of. Then we seek to identify the text's historical and cultural contexts. We also focus on the literary context – how any given part of a work of literature fits together with the rest of the parts of that whole. In light of that near literary context, word studies are shown to be most valid when they reveal what this particular *author* meant with this *word* in this particular *text*. Finally, we look at the relative value of several Bible translations.

Part Three deals with many of the “thorny” issues of interpretation. Who decides the meaning? Are there different levels of meaning? What about the Holy Spirit – where does his ministry fit in this methodological process of interpretation? And who's to say what a “valid application” is and what is not? This may be where the computers will light up with lots of interaction between students with differing views!

Part Four explains the different genres that make up the books of the New Testament and suggests how (and why) one might interpret a verse from Acts, for example, about a serpent that fastened itself on Paul's hand, differently from how one might interpret a verse about a serpent in the Book of Revelation.

Finally, Part Five tackles the more difficult subject of how to interpret the even more widely diverse genres of literature that make up the Old Testament.

In the last unit of the course, you will draw forth out of your treasure things new and old, and produce a magnificent exegetical paper using your newly acquired interpretive tools!

How important is it to “rightly divide the word of truth”? Have you ever heard an explanation of part of the Bible that was simply *wrong*? Whether you could or could not explain it at the time, you just knew that the Word of God does not say what the person was attributing to it. Did your heart not break, and you wished you could do something about it? With the principles you put into practice from this course, you can do something about biblical misinterpretation. You can train yourself to grasp what the word meant to its earliest readers, summarize what it is saying to all readers in all ages, and grasp how you may apply it today.

IV. Course Materials

Required

- a. Duvall, J. S. & Hays, J. D. (2005). *Grasping God's word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- b. Duvall, J. Scott & Hays, J. Daniel. (2005). *Workbook: Grasping God's word: A hands-on approach to reading, interpreting, and applying the Bible* (2nd ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- c. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (2003). Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman. ISBN-13: 978-0805428360
- d. The Strongest NIV Exhaustive Concordance (2007). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN-13: 978-0310262855
- e. Zondervan NIV Study Bible (rev. ed.). (2008). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0310938965

V. Course Policies

1. APA Documentation

All written work (e.g. worksheets/essay questions, reflection papers, final projects, etc.) must conform to the APA parenthetical notation style. This includes:

- In-text citations – with author(s), date, and page number (if applicable)
Note Well: Even discussion board postings and PowerPoint presentations, for example, must use in-text citations when you cite another person's work or ideas.
- a "References" page (it is not called a "bibliography")
- one inch margins
- 12 point font
- double spaced

Failure to use and cite others' work or ideas properly will lead to charges of academic dishonesty. See below for more information.

2. Academic Integrity

As a member of the Trinity community, we ask you to hold yourself and others to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Violations take many forms, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plagiarism: using another's work or ideas without proper documentation, which requires citing the author or authors' name(s), date of publication, and page number (if applicable)
- Cheating: using notes, books, or crib sheets during closed-book quizzes or exams, or copying from another's student's work
- Submitting Previous Work: submitting your work that was previously turned in for credit
- Ghosting: writing a paper or taking a quiz (or any other evaluation) in place of another student
- Aiding and Abetting: helping others to commit acts of academic dishonesty, or failing to report those who have committed dishonest acts or plan to do so

Faculty members will investigate all violations of academic integrity, whether deliberate or non-deliberate. If a violation is confirmed, the student may receive an “F” for the assignment and the course. In such a case, the student may not drop the course. The faculty member will document the case of dishonesty, explaining the incident and the action taken. A copy will be placed in the student’s file. In serious cases of academic dishonesty, an academic dean or administrator may choose to meet with the student and faculty member to review the case. Multiple violations may lead to a student’s dismissal from the school.

3. Late Work

All assignments must be turned in on or before the date they are due. Any assignment turned in late will be deducted as follows:

- a. 10% off for up to one day late
- b. 20% off for up to two days late
- c. assignments more than two days late will receive a zero

An extension on the time needed to submit final course requirements will be granted only in unusual circumstances.

4. Attendance Policy

For online courses, students must participate actively in all class discussion forums. Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction of one-half to a full letter grade at the discretion of the instructor.

VI. Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, the students will be able to

1. use basic tools of biblical exegesis and research to identify the original, or authorial, meaning of a text.
2. recognize their own preunderstandings that influence interpretation of any given text.
3. explain historical-cultural backgrounds to biblical texts and apply the understanding gained to the interpretation of those texts.
4. identify, classify, and organize constituent elements within the text that divulge its meaning.
5. analyze the literary context of any given Scripture to recognize the structure or order of the author’s thoughts in the larger work of which the text is a part.
6. recognize different literary genres in the Bible and apply that knowledge to interpreting specific texts.
7. differentiate between meaning and application, using “the principlizing bridge.”

VII. Course Schedule and Course Requirements

See course site on Moodle.

VIII. Grading Scale

Your final course grade will be based on the total number of points that you earn throughout the course:

Percentage	Grade
92-100	A
90-91	A-
88-89	B+
82-87	B
80-81	B-
78-79	C+
72-77	C
70-71	C-
68-69	D+
62-67	D
60-61	D-
0-59	F