



SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY
The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

Introduction to Hermeneutics

Short Prerequisite Class for SFM Biblical Studies Courses

SYLLABUS Summer Session 2021

Taught by: David Moseley, Ph.D.

2 sessions: Tuesday 10th & 17th August 2021
6:00-9:00 p.m.

** Classes will be held via Zoom **

Join Zoom Meeting

Session 1:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83308282174?pwd=c1Y3Zkcxb1NIUjNpUjFBSW03NkI3QT09>

Session 2:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87101960678?pwd=dUdFUUdJcXpDbk1sRDZZc1ZjbExjZz09>

Welcome to “Introduction to Hermeneutics”! This class will introduce you to the scholarly discipline of Biblical Interpretation.

The Mission of the Class is to Nurture Students towards a Nuanced, Critical Interpretation and Understanding of the many Texts that make up the Biblical Literature by Learning and Applying the Skills of the Academic Discipline of Hermeneutic.

These two classes are a short prerequisite to the four semester-length Biblical Studies classes (Hebrew Bible 1 & 2, and New Testament 1 & 2) that are part of the core of the School for Ministry (SFM) curriculum. During these sessions on Hermeneutics (the Science of Interpretation), we will be exploring together the basic principles used by scholars to read and interpret the Scriptures. Texts are never self-explanatory, as we shall discover; and reading Biblical texts, in particular, is an exercise that is fraught with potential pitfalls that requires patience

and nuance on the part of the student who seeks to hear the “Word” of God in the words of these ancient manuscripts. Having familiarized ourselves with the basic principles of “Hermeneutics” – Genre (*what sort of text is this?*), Isegesis (*what do we bring to the text?*) and Exegesis (*what do we take out of the text?*) – we will be ready to move on to the substantial work of exploring and interpreting the Biblical texts for ourselves, and will hopefully be properly equipped to tackle the central **Course Objectives** of the SFM Scripture classes, namely:

- Distinguishing between various Interpretative Methods used to Study, Examine, Analyze, Research, and Comprehend Biblical Texts
- Understanding the Historical Context within which the Religious Texts of Ancient Israel and Early Christianity were Created and Read / Heard
- Appreciate the various Literary Genres found in the Texts of the Bible, and Understand their Functions for Interpretation
- Be aware of the Social and Cultural Issues Relevant to the Formation of the Texts, and their Ethical Implications
- Comprehend the Significance, Relevance, and ongoing Influence of the Biblical Texts on Contemporary Life and Debates, both inside and outside of the Church

This introductory Pre-Requisite course will be taught in two three-hour units:

Week 1: The Challenges of Interpretation

(August 10th)

We will begin by thinking about and examining the challenges of interpreting any and every facet of human experience – whether it be music and lyrics, art, advertising, political rhetoric, as well as written texts. Through a series of multimedia exercises that are intended to be provocative and engaging, we will be exposed to many of our explicit and implicit preferences and prejudices that impact and shape acts of interpretation, and the instability and fluidity of the idea of an objective "meaning" of a text. A detailed reading and discussion of Genesis 22 and John 1 will serve to introduce and opens up these concepts in the sphere of Biblical Interpretation.

Week 2: The Principles of Hermeneutics

(August 17th)

Students will be introduced to the main Principles of Hermeneutics through an historical and conceptual exploration of the emergence and evolution of this academic discipline, a subject that originated in the sphere of Biblical Studies during the Enlightenment, but eventually spread to all intellectual disciplines throughout the Academy. By examining the ideas and insights of the great progenitors and innovators of Hermeneutics, students will be introduced to the basic building blocks of the discipline: the ideas of Genre, Isegesis and Exegesis. Examples of all these principles and concepts will be provided from the world of movies, art and literature, as well as Biblical texts. We will conclude by attempting to develop some distinctively Episcopalian hermeneutical principles and will use as an illustration a detailed deconstruction of The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25).

Materials and Class Format

Our main text for this class is the Bible, and we will be using the following translation and edition:

The New Oxford Annotated Bible - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the Apocrypha (5th Ed.) edited by Michael Coogan (Oxford, 2018)

The required text for Introduction to Hermeneutics will be:

A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics by David Jasper (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004)

[The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* is about \$35 new in hardback on Amazon, and contains a wealth of useful introductory essays, maps, and annotations – and will be required for all Bible Classes at SFM. I strongly urge you to get the hardback edition as this will be a well-worn book over the next two years, and you should get a sturdy copy! The Jaspers book is \$17 new on Amazon (from \$10 used from Amazon Marketplace).]

Handouts and Outlines will be provided, as well as access to other Online Resources, and you are expected to complete assigned Readings and Written Assignments, and pay attention and take notes during class, which will form the basis for your Study for Assessments.

The Class Format will be Discussion in a Seminar-Style Setting rather than Lectures. The class is designed according to the “Five Pedagogical Characteristics” of the School for Ministry:

1. *The Seminar Table* - Classes at the SFM take place around the seminar table. Different from the lecture hall, the classroom that gathers around the seminar table is necessarily interactive between faculty and students.

2. *An Inquiry-Based Curriculum* - The curriculum of the SFM is an inquiry-based curriculum wherein academic material is critically explored by the student body in preparation for and during class time via the leadership of faculty who act as facilitators to the critical inquiry of their students.

3. *A Place-Based Curriculum* - The ministry contexts for students are seen as sources of a two-way interaction between classroom theory and ministerial practice.

4. *An Integrated Curriculum* - Recognizing that theology and ministry make an integrated whole, the SFM's curriculum encourages the cross-fertilization of ideas between subject areas.

5. *A Skills-Based Curriculum* - The cultivation of critical thinking skills for ministry lies at the heart of the SFM's pedagogical philosophy. Successful completion of a course of study at the SFM should result in a student having grown in the use of such skills and an ability to apply them across academic disciplines and in their everyday practice of ministry.

Procedures and Grading

Grades for the class will be based on weekly Assignments (usually in the form of brief written reflections). Because the class is a Seminar-Style class based on Discussion, Students will also be evaluated based on their Contributions to Class, as well as other ways in which they enrich the class through their Curiosity, Cooperation, and Citizenship.

Every student is expected to attend class on time, complete assigned reading, be prepared for assessments, turn in completed work done to the best of your ability before the deadline in hard copy (not by e-mail), and show an interest in learning. *If you don't think you will be able to make a deadline for whatever reason, please contact your teacher immediately in person or by e-mail. Indeed, if there are any issues or concerns that you have that might prevent you from performing at your*

best in the class, please contact your teacher immediately so that we can try to figure out a solution. All Assignments and Assessments will be explained in detail both in class and through postings on the SFM class website ahead of time. Please feel free to ask for help when you do not understand class material or assignments.

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Best Wishes for the Class!