

# Bible Study Methods

Horizon College And Seminary, Winter 2010

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## Course Description

This is a three credit-hour course that encompasses both Bibliology and Hermeneutics. Bibliology deals with the questions of how the Bible came into being, as well as the claims people make about the Bible (inspiration, inerrancy, authority). Hermeneutics deals with the questions of how people go about reading, understanding, interpreting, and applying the Bible.

## Course Textbooks

Geisler, Norman L., and William E. Nix. *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible*. Chicago: Moody, 1974.

Robbins, Vernon K. *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. Valley Forge: Trinity, 1996.

Holy Bible (RSV or NRSV are good translations)

## Course Objectives

Cognitive (what one should know and understand):

- Have a general understanding of how the Bible came into being and how it has been transmitted and interpreted through the centuries
- Have a basic understanding of the various skills required to understand, interpret, and apply the Bible more accurately and effectively
- Be aware of some of the unfortunate and problematic dimensions of poor Bible study methods
- Be aware of the scholarly resources available to assist the interpreter in their effort to understand and apply the Bible

Affective (what one should feel and appreciate):

- Confidence in one's ability to read, understand, and expound the biblical text to others
- Increased respect for how scholarship has contributed to our understanding of the Bible
- Increased appreciation for the depth of the biblical message and how the message comes to bear on our lives and on the world we live in

- Increased appreciation for how scripture has remained relevant for thousands of years despite its use in a diversity of social and cultural contexts

Conative (what one should be able to do with this knowledge):

- Use the hermeneutical tools presented in the course to intelligently interpret scripture in a variety contexts
- Effectively use the biblical studies resources available to them
- Be able to effectively communicate the biblical message accurately and creatively in all venues of Christian ministry

## Course Outline

Week 1: Bibliology (inspiration, inerrancy, authority of scripture)  
Readings = Geisler and Nix, chapters 1-5

Week 2: Bibliology (canonization of the Hebrew and Christian Bibles)  
Readings = Geisler and Nix, chapters 6-10

Week 3: Bibliology (transmission of the Bible)  
Readings = Geisler and Nix, chapters 11-20

Week 4: Hermeneutics (why interpret the Bible; Prelude to interpretation)  
Readings = Robbins, preface and introduction

Week 5: Hermeneutics (the world of the text)  
Readings = Robbins, chapter 1

Week 6: Hermeneutics (the world of the text)  
Readings = Robbins, reread chapter 1

Week 7: Hermeneutics (the world behind the text)  
Readings = Robbins, chapter 2

Week 8: Hermeneutics (the world behind the text)  
Readings = Robbins, chapter 3

Week 9: Hermeneutics (the world behind the text)  
Readings = Robbins, chapter 5

Week 10: Hermeneutics (the world in front of the text: the canonical context)  
Readings = Robbins, chapter 4

Week 11: Hermeneutics (the world in front of the text: the ecclesial context; the interpretation of scripture through the ages)

Readings = Robbins, reread chapter 4

Week 12: Hermeneutics (the world in front of the text: making scripture make sense in our present context)

Readings = Robbins, reread chapter 5, conclusion

## **Course Requirements**

Required readings:

Students are required to read all portions of the course textbooks as assigned by the instructor (see above). Although no formal grades will be assigned for the completion of these readings, the course texts form a valuable supplement to the class lectures. As such, it is expected that the student will interact with the text and prepare him/herself for any related questions that might appear on class quizzes or the final exam.

Pop-Quizzes (6x5%):

In place of a midterm exam, students will be required to write six pop-quizzes that will test their knowledge of class material and the assigned readings.

Quizzes will be 15 minutes in length and will be distributed at the professor's discretion at either the beginning or end of class. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, students who miss a quiz without making prior arrangements with the professor will automatically receive a grade of "0."

Research Essay (30%):

Students will be required to submit one research essay of no less than 7 pages in length (MLA format; 12 pt font, Arial or Times New Roman; double spaced) on the date assigned by the Academic Dean. In consultation with the instructor, students will perform an analysis of a biblical text, using (some of) the methodological tools outlined in class discussions and/or by V.K. Robbins in his book on socio-rhetorical analysis.

Final Exam (40%):

Based on class lectures and assigned textbook readings.

## **Bibliography**

See the bibliography listed on pages 133-138 in V. K. Robbins' *Exploring the Texture of Texts*.