

BI6200 Special Studies in Biblical Interpretation: Advanced Hermeneutics

3 credits. Prerequisites: BI5105 Interpreting God's Word

 Directed Study



September 14 – December 18, 2026

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Course Goals

Course Description

This course introduces students to the history and practice of biblical criticism, with a particular focus on critical methodologies for studying the New Testament. Students will learn a broad spectrum of perspectives, goals, and techniques of biblical interpretation and practice applying different critical methods to biblical texts.

Relationship to Horizon's Mission

The course prepares Christian leaders for Spirit-empowered life and ministry by equipping them with the advanced skills required for thoughtful sermon and Bible study preparation. This involves a consideration of historical, philosophical, and critical methodological approaches to hermeneutics.

Course Competencies and Learning Outcomes

To demonstrate competency in biblical and theological literacy, students will

1. Recognize differing theoretical approaches to understanding the process of interpretation.
 - *Assessment:* Course Readings and Notes; Critical Book Review of *Biblical Hermeneutics*
2. Grasp some of the basic contours in the development of scriptural interpretation in church history.
 - *Assessment:* Critical Book Review of *Reading Sacred Scripture*
3. Study the goals and methods of older critical methods (source, form, and redaction criticism) and newer methodologies (structuralist criticism, canonical criticism, deconstructive readings).
 - *Assessment:* Course Readings and Notes; Critical Book Review of *Biblical Hermeneutics*
4. Articulate the strengths and limitations of different critical methodologies and gain practice in applying them.
 - *Assessment:* Methods Paper; Exegetical Paper

Course Work

Required Readings

Hayes, John and Carl Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. 4th edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2022. ISBN: 978-0664266981.

[DTL](#)

Porter, Stanley E. and Beth M. Stovell. *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0830839636.

[DTL](#)

Westerholm, Stephen and Martin Westerholm. *Reading Sacred Scripture: Voices from the History of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. ISBN: 978-0802872296.

[DTL](#)

****While students have the benefit of accessing many of their textbooks online through the [Digital Theological Library](#), they will not have access to the Digital Theological Library upon graduation. Therefore, we encourage students to purchase select textbooks to build their personal library.**

Course Assignments and Activities

1. Check-In with Professor

You will meet two times with your professor (likely via Zoom). Ideally, these meetings will occur with your classmates as well, as schedules permit. At each meeting you will discuss the reading for the coming written assignment. You should prepare notes and questions for your meeting, but you do not need to hand these in. The aim of the meeting is to discuss some of your questions and to help you be confident in writing your assignments. Your professor will contact you to confirm the meeting dates. This assignment will be regarded as complete or incomplete based on your participation in the two meetings.

- **Due dates:** TBD

2. Course Readings and Notes – 20%

Students will read and take point-form notes on the assigned textbooks by Hayes.

- Related learning outcomes: #1, 3
- **Assignment length:** ~371 pages of reading; ~5 pages of notes
- **Due date:** Oct. 9, 2026

3. Methods Paper – 30%

Students will complete a 12-page paper in which they choose a scriptural passage and apply one critical methodology to it. The paper should begin by discussing the critical methodology of choice, its history, goals, methods, and any limitations; students should show they have read

widely from the bibliography (and perhaps other works) on the methodology they have chosen to use. Students will state how their methodology is practiced then apply it to their chosen portion of Scripture, interacting with commentaries and other scholarly work as they do so.

- Related learning outcome: #4
- **Assignment length:** 12 pages, Times New Roman, double-spaced
- **Due date:** Nov. 13, 2026

4. *Critical Book Reviews* – 50%

Students will write two critical book reviews: one on Westerholm's *Reading Sacred Scripture* and the other on Porter and Stovell's *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Please see instructions for the book reviews in the Appendix.

- Related learning outcomes: #1, 2, 3
- **Assignment length:** 10-12 pages (5-6 pages for each book review), Times New Roman, double-spaced
- **Due date:** Dec. 4, 2026 (Westerholm) and Dec. 18, 2026 (Porter and Stovell)

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

1. Check-In	2hrs	TBD	Assignment Weighting
2. Course Readings and Notes	20hrs	Oct. 9	20%
3. Methods Paper	28hrs	Nov. 13	30%
4. Critical Book Reviews	70hrs	Dec. 4 and 18	50%
Total =	~120hrs		

All assignments are due at 8pm **SK time**, unless otherwise indicated.

- No assignments will be accepted after the course end date: December 18, 2026.

Academic Policies

General Assignment Guidelines

Please see the [Horizon](#) & [MCS](#) Format Guide for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines. The length of papers should fall within +/- 10% of the stated length. Papers that fall outside the length guidelines may not be graded. Assignments should be submitted via Populi under *Submissions* (not *Comments*). The resource at this [link](#) explains how to submit assignments on Populi.

Late Assignments and Extensions

Please contact the professor well in advance if you would like to request an adjustment to any of your due dates. No extensions will be granted beyond the course end date unless approval is granted by Horizon's Assistant Academic Dean.

A late penalty will be assessed for all overdue assignments: 1-3 calendar days late, penalty of 10%; 4-6 calendar days late, penalty of 20%. After six days late, an assignment receives a grade of 0.

Grading

Grade	Percentage	GPA	Descriptor
A+	97-100%	4	Exceptional
A	93-96%	4	Excellent
A-	90-92%	3.7	Excellent
B+	87-89%	3.3	Good
B	83-86%	3.0	Good
B-	80-82%	2.7	Good
C+	77-79%	2.3	Satisfactory
C	73-76%	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	70-72%	1.7	Satisfactory
D+	67-69%	1.3	Minimal Pass
D	63-66%	1.0	Minimal Pass
D-	60-62%	0.7	Minimal Pass
F	<60%	0	Failure

Academic Integrity

Students learn best when practicing academic integrity. A lack of integrity is displayed in acts such as deception, abuse of confidentiality, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the words or ideas of another person or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in such a way as to give others the impression that it is their own words or ideas. In academic writing, there should be no doubt which words or ideas are the student's and which are drawn from other sources or AI. Students are expected to submit their own original work and give due recognition to sources from which all substantial phrases, sentences, or even ideas are drawn. Note also that you may not submit work done in one course to satisfy the requirements of another course (unless both instructors agree beforehand to accept such work). See [here](#) for examples of plagiarism and further guidelines in the [Student Handbook](#).

Horizon has a subscription to software that ensures the originality of academic writing, verifies the proper citation of all sources, and detects AI-generated content. When you submit an assignment, you will automatically receive a summary on Populi that includes your submitted files along with an originality score (a high originality score is positive).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage

In keeping with the Academic Integrity policy above, students must disclose on the title page of all assignments whether or not they have used AI and how they have used it. If the assignment has no title page, the student must disclose this to the instructor by some other means, such as in a comment on Populi. Students are expected to follow the policy for acceptable use of AI that is published in the [Student Handbook](#).

Accessible Learning Services Information

Horizon is committed to provide safe and inclusive learning environments which equalize the opportunity for students with disabilities to meet the requirements of the institution, programs, and courses. The application for Academic Accommodations begins with a student disclosing a medical diagnosis or professionally documented learning disability during the application process. Enrolled students may contact Horizon's Academic Accommodations Coordinator, Richelle Bekkattla at rbekkattla@horizon.edu or library@horizon.edu. All Academic Accommodations will adhere to the Guiding Principles listed in the [Student Handbook](#). Students with documented accommodations on file pertaining to accessing course readings in alternate formats are encouraged to contact the librarian for assistance with as much advanced notice as possible.

Class Attendance

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. Students are expected to be present through the delivery method that they registered for. Students registered to attend on-campus or via livestream must be present for the full duration of a class period to be marked as present for the class. Students registered to attend by VOD must submit their VOD reports on time to be marked as present for class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss up to twenty percent of the total class time (e.g., one day of a module course, two 3-hour classes, etc.) without academic penalty. Students who are absent for more than this will automatically fail the course. Students wishing to be exempted from this policy due to extenuating circumstances may make an academic appeal, where they will need to document and verify those circumstances. Students who miss a class are responsible to get missed notes or handouts from another student, rather than from the professor.

Livestreaming Etiquette

Students taking the course through livestreaming are required to indicate this during their course registration. While livestreaming access is available for on-campus students who are unable to attend class due to illness, on-campus students are expected to attend class in person following the class attendance policy.

If attending class online via livestream, in order to be marked present for class, you must keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session, extending the gift of full engagement. Access your class with a computer (preferably) or tablet, not a cell phone. Arrive to class on time, and dress as you would if you were attending class on campus. Join the class from a quiet space with minimal background noise, and mute your microphone until you wish to speak to the class.

Use of Technology

Horizon encourages the use of electronic devices in the classroom to enhance learning. Careful consideration must be given to privacy issues, copyrighted materials, and the general care and concern for others. Please respect the following classroom policies:

- Please use online access for course learning only. This is a matter of respect for the instructor's teaching, your own learning, and fellow students who may be distracted by other uses.

- Students should secure permission from the instructor to record any teaching material. This includes PowerPoint slides, white board illustrations, notes, and any form of audio or video.
- Student feedback is a valuable input for course improvements. Please resolve any classroom grievance about the instructor or course with the instructor personally, through the Horizon College and Seminary grievance procedures, or the Populi-based course evaluations. It is inappropriate to air classroom grievances on a social media platform.
- When instructors use recording mechanisms in the classroom, recorded materials will be used for the sole purpose of instruction (potentially including future online video courses) and cannot be released to any social media outlet without the written consent of the students whose images have been recorded.
- In general, it is not acceptable to share photographs or videos of students in the classroom setting without permission from those whose images appear in such media.

Library Support and Research Assistance

Library staff are available to meet with students (online or in person) who need assistance with

- citing sources and identifying credible resources;
- developing research and information literacy skills;
- searching DTL and other library resources.

Select Bibliography

Narrative and Criticisms, Narratology, and Discourse Analysis

Anderson, Janice Capel and Stephen D. Moore, eds. *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

Bailey, James L. and Lyle D. Vander Broek. *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheemen, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985.

— (1991) *On Story-Telling: Essays in Narratology*. Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press.

Barclay, John M.G. “Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity.” *JSNT* 47 (1992): 49-74.

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978.

Davis, Ellen F. and Richard B. Hays. *The Art of Reading Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

Gee, James Paul. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Jaworski, Adam and Nikolas Coupland, eds. *The Discourse Reader*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Johnston, Barbara. *Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Malbon, Elizabeth Struthers and Adele Berlin, eds. *Characterization in Biblical Literature* Semeia 63. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993.

Moore, Stephen D. *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge*. New Haven: YUP, 1989.

Petersen, Norman R. *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.

- Powell, Mark Allan. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990.
 ———. *The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography*. Westport: Greenwood, 1992.
- Porter, Stanley E. and D. A. Carson, eds. *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament*. JSNTSS 170. Sheffield: SAP, 1999.
- Rhoads, David and Donald Michie. *Mark As Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

Historical-Critical Method

- Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eye-Witnesses: The Gospels As Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Collins, John J. *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Downing, F. Gerald. “Historical-Critical Method,” in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. ed. R.J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden. London: SCM, 1990.
- Gerhardsson, Birger. *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*. Uppsala/Lund: Gleerup, 1964.
- Sanders, E. P. *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*. Cambridge: CUP, 1969.
- Stanton, Graham. *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*. Cambridge: CUP, 1974.
- Stuhlmacher, Peter. *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. London: SPCK, 1979.
- Wright, N. T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. London: SPCK, 1992. ———. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.

Sociological Approaches

- Balch, David L. *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*. LEC. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.
- Davies, Douglas. *Anthropology and Theology*. Oxford: Berg, 2002.
- Elliot, John H. *Social-Scientific Criticism of the New Testament and Its Social World*, *Semeia* 35. Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986.
- *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Horrell, David, ed. *Social Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.
- Kee, Howard C. *Knowing the Truth: A Sociological Approach to New Testament Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Malina, Bruce J. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, Revised Edition. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1993.
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- Meeks, Wayne A. *The Moral World of the First Christians*. LEC 6. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.
- Neyrey, Jerome H. ed. *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991.

- Lawrence, Louise J. *Reading with Anthropology: Exhibiting Aspects of New Testament Religion*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005.
- Pilch, John J. *Introducing the Cultural Context of the New Testament*. Hear the Word, vol. 2, New York: Paulist Press, 1991.
- Roberts, Richard H. *Religion, Theology and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: CUP, 2002.
- Rohrbaugh, Richard L. ed., *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996.

Rhetorical Criticism

- Black, Clifton C. *The Rhetoric of the Gospel: Theological Artistry in the Gospels and Acts*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2001.
- Burke, Kenneth. *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.
- Mitchell, Margaret M. *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox: 1991.
- Kennedy, George A. *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Post-Colonial and Feminist Criticisms

- Bhabha, Homi K. (1992) "Postcolonial Criticism." in Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn (eds.) *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and Literary Studies*, New York: Modern Language Association of America, 437-65.
- Brenner, Athalya and Carloe Fontaine, eds. *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods, and Strategies*. Sheffield: SAP, 1997.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism*. Philadelphia: JPS, 2006.
- Lapsley, Jacqueline E. *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.
- Levine, Amy-Jill. *A Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings*. Sheffield: Continuum, 2001-2004.
- Reid, Barbara E. *Taking UP the Cross: New Testament Interpretations through Latina and Feminist Eyes*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
- Schuessler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001.
- _____. *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context*. Boston: Beacon, 1998.
- Segovia Fernando F. and Stephen D. Moore. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*. London: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Sugirtharajah, R. S. *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford: OUP, 2002.
- Vander Stichele, Caroline and Todd Penner, eds. *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical Critical Discourse*. SBL Global Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship 9. Atlanta: SBL, 2005.

Appendix:

Definition of a critical book review: A paper that describes what the author of a book has attempted to do, and an evaluation of how well the author succeeded in his or her attempt. The assessment component of the review requires evidence to support its conclusions.

Instructions for preparing the book reviews are as follows:

1. Read carefully and record notes on the main ideas of each chapter and the overall purpose of the book.

(Note: A close reading of the book usually means reading it more than once.)

2. As you read, think about and note the following elements:

- the author's (or authors') main purpose or thesis – This information will usually be stated near the beginning of the book (or at the beginning of each chapter), especially in the introduction. Determining the author's thesis is key to understanding the aims, overall structure, and argument of the book as a whole.
- the author's (or authors') perspective and methodology – What method or approach does he take? Why does the author (or authors) value or use the particular perspective or approach that he does?
- the primary audience of the book as a whole and how this relates to the purpose of the book
- the content, main themes, style, organization, and presentation of the book as a whole – How effective are these elements and how do they contribute to the author's (or authors') purpose?
- the particularly strong and weak parts of the book, especially those related to the cogency of the author's (or authors') argument(s)
- an assessment of the quality of the evidence and method that the author (or authors) uses – Do his conclusions follow logically from the method and evidence provided? Do you view them as useful?

(At this stage, gather your evidence by taking thorough notes and collecting key citations that will furnish you with evidence for evaluating the author's purpose.)

3. Once you complete steps one and two, attempt to draw up an outline of your review that includes two parts: description of the book and evaluation of the author's (or authors') purpose.

Part 1 – Describe the Book and Summarize its Content (2-3 pages of book review)

- Begin with a sentence that indicates the editor's name and the full title of the book. Subsequently offer a very brief introduction (1-2 sentences) and then launch directly into your summary of the content of the book.

- Provide a brief summary of the content of each chapter. This should fill approximately one page.
- Describe the book by answering the following questions: What type of book is it? What is the purpose of the book? Who is the main intended audience of the book? What is the particular perspective of the author (or authors)?

Part 2 – Evaluate the book (2-3 pages of book review)

Discuss the extent to which the author (or authors) succeeds in fulfilling the purpose of the book. Along the way, note the particular strengths and weaknesses of his argument as you see it.

- Evaluate the quality of the evidence that the author (or authors) uses to support his thesis. Were you convinced by his argument? Why or why not?
 - Is the method of the author (or authors) logically sound? Does he handle the evidence in a manner that adequately supports his argument? Why or why not?
 - Comment on the overall structure and organization of the book. Was this effective? Why or why not?
 - Indicate how the author's (or authors') perspective and method influences his purpose, argument, and conclusions.
 - Explain how the author's (or authors') intended audience influences his purpose and choice of topics.
- 4. Using the outline you have created, write a 5–6-page review. Please use 8 ½ x 11 paper, double-spaced, Times New Roman font. Make sure to include your name on the first page of the review.**
- 5. A title page and outline are not necessary.**