BI5101 Interpreting God's Word

3 credits. Prerequisites: none.

On Campus, Saskatoon

Livestream

Video on Demand

January 11 – April 5, 2027
Winter 2027
Mondays, 5:30 – 8:30pm SK

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Course Goals

Course Description

This course introduces students to the theory and practice of biblical interpretation. By exploring the genres, historical contexts, and theology of various books of the Bible, students will engage in the complex process of interpreting these texts in order to communicate them effectively to a contemporary audience.

Relationship to Horizon's Mission

The course prepares Christian leaders for Spirit-empowered life and ministry by equipping them with the skills necessary for thoughtful sermon and Bible study preparation. This involves an introductory consideration of philosophical and methodological approaches to hermeneutics, as well as a series of practical exercises that hone specific interpretive skills.

Course Competencies and Learning Outcomes

To demonstrate competency in biblical and theological literary, students will

1. Describe and plan to avoid common mistakes people make when interpreting the Bible.
    - *Assessment*: Exegetical Fallacies Presentation
2. Explain the significance of genre for accurate interpretation of biblical texts.
    - *Assessment*: Fee and Stuart Book Review
3. Summarize, evaluate, and use some basic concepts and approaches to hermeneutics.
    - *Assessment*: Brown Book Review
4. Carefully exegete a passage of Scripture for the purpose of communicating the message of Scripture effectively.
    - *Assessment*: Research Project

Course Work

Required Readings

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth.* Fourth Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. ISBN: 978-0310517825.
DTL

Brown, Jeannine K. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics.* 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2021. ISBN: 978-1540962478.
DTL

Recommended Resources

Carson, D. A. *Exegetical Fallacies*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2026. ISBN: 978-1540969224.
DTL

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. Revised and Expanded edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006. ISBN: 978-0830828265.
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. *Fee and Stuart Book Review* (25%)
    a. Carefully read Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* in its entirety. When Fee and Stuart introduce a passage of Scripture that they are going to discuss in detail, stop and read that passage prior to continuing in the textbook. Feel free to make a list of questions that the book raises in your mind and ask them during class.
    b. On page 13, Fee and Stuart write: "Our concern is to help the reader to read and study the psalms as poems, and the epistles as letters. We hope to show that these differences are vital and should affect both the way one reads them and how one is to understand their message for today." In a carefully written essay, choose any two of the biblical genres, *other than narrative*, that Fee and Stuart discuss and demonstrate how understanding each genre's distinct features is vital to handling the Word of God responsibly and understanding its message. Your primary resource for writing this essay is *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. You may use two or more Scripture passages to illustrate the importance of keeping the form and function of the two genres in mind as you interpret. On the Title Page of this essay, please confirm that you read this book in its entirety.
        - Related learning outcome: #2.
        - **Assignment length:** 4-5 pages.
        - **Due date:** January 22, 2027.

2. *Exegetical Fallacies Presentation* (15%).
    a. Take the worksheet provided in class and on Populi and prepare at 15-minute presentation for the class on your assigned Exegetical Fallacy. Individual fallacies will be assigned during the previous class. Your presentations will be made in class

on February 1. VOD students will need to submit their videos by February 7 at 8pm SK, and they will be shown to the class on February 8. Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions here) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi. There is no need to share this video publicly.

b. Prepare a presentation based on your assigned fallacy. Make sure it includes: specific scriptural references, how you know it's a fallacy, what the result would be of believing that fallacy, and how to be prepared to notice this fallacy in the future.
c. You can prepare handouts, Power Points, use the white board, or do a verbal report. All notes/visuals must also be submitted on Populi prior to the presentation.
    - Related to learning outcome: #1.
    - **Assignment length:** 15 minutes & submission of notes.
    - **Due date:** February 1, 2027.

3. *Brown Book Review* (20%).

Read *Scripture as Communication* in its entirety. As you are reading through the book, take special note of the following requirements for your book review.

a. On the title page of your essay, please confirm that you read this book in its entirety.
b. Watch for her thesis statement. On the first page of your review, include a brief overview of the book and how her thesis was (or was not) achieved in the book. (one page)
c. *Part 1 of the book*: Summarize how this theory of hermeneutics will help you to study the scriptures. Make sure to apply it to your real-world situations (devotions, Bible study, sermon preparation, whatever is applicable to your life). (2 pages)
d. *Part 2 of the book*: Summarize Part 2, showing how the application of her theory applies to contemporary understandings of scripture. Pick one chapter in Part 2 of the book and prove through interpreting a passage of scripture using that hermeneutical principle that you understand the practical application of that chapter/principle. (2 pages)
    - Related learning outcome: #3
    - **Assignment Length:** 4-5 pages.
    - **Due date:** March 1, 2027.

4. *Research Project* (40%).

Choose one of the following options to demonstrate a growing ability not only to handle Scripture responsibly, but also to use it effectively in a ministry context.

Option #1 – Bible Study Project

Choose a passage (a portion of the biblical text that has a clear beginning and end, not a single verse) from the Bible that you have never studied in-depth or taught on before. Using what you have learned in class, complete a detailed study of the passage that identifies, in a compelling manner, what it likely meant to the original readers and then shows how it speaks to the Church today. Be sure to make use of at least *five* commentaries and *one* scholarly journal for this project.

- First, summarize your findings in a verse-by-verse commentary that interacts with both relevant background information and the context in which the passage occurs. This portion of your work should be 4–6 pages (1200–1800 words) in length.
- Next, show how you would teach this in a context of your choice (adult Sunday school class, youth group, children's Sunday school class, small group, sermon, etc.). Be sure to clearly identify what the teaching context will be. In this part of the assignment, you are not simply conveying what the passage means but also communicating what God might be saying through the passage, i.e., spiritual truths that impact our lives today. Your goal is to demonstrate how a careful study of a passage can translate into a compelling proclamation of the Scriptures in a particular context. Be sure that the lessons from the passage that you highlight are anchored in a careful handling of the text.
    - This part of the assignment will be completed by submitting a video or written script of you teaching the passage. The video should be 15–20 minutes in length. If you choose a video, upload your video to OneDrive (instructions here) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.
    - If you choose the written option, you will present how you would teach the passage in script form. If submitting a written script, make sure that when you read it out loud, it falls in the 15–20-minute requirement, which is approximately 2100–2800 words.
- To summarize, submit a 4–6-page paper **AND** a 15–20-minute video *OR* 2100–2800-word manuscript.

Option #2 – Annotated Sermon Project

Effective sermon preparation requires diligent preachers to leave much of what they learn in their studies out of their sermon. As much as they may have been impressed by academic insights from the commentaries and other resources they consulted, such insights often do not fit well with proclaiming what God is saying to a particular congregation through a passage of Scripture. This can be frustrating at times, but with this assignment you can leave your frustrations behind!

- Choose a passage (a portion of the biblical text that has a clear beginning and end, not a single verse) and complete careful research to determine the meaning of each part of the passage and the message of the passage as a whole. Be sure to determine how all of the parts fit together to communicate the message. Either include an outline of the passage or make use of headings and subheadings within the sermon to show the flow of thought and how the parts fit together.
- Prepare a well-crafted sermon that not only helps God's people understand the message of the passage, but also helps them clearly understand the *implications* of that message for their lives today.
- For every claim you make in the sermon, be very careful to show your hearers *how* that claim flows naturally out of the biblical text and use detailed footnotes to provide *additional* arguments for those claims and to cite relevant scholarly sources supporting your claim. Be sure to make use of at least *five* commentaries and *one* scholarly journal for this project. If there are alternative interpretations, be sure to mention those in the footnotes, cite scholars who take that view, and explain why they are less compelling than the view you adopted in your sermon. You should generally avoid presenting more

than one view in your sermon. Do not be concerned if you have two sentences of sermon on a page and the rest is made up of footnotes (annotation).

- Use as many illustrations as needed to help drive home the message of the passage but be sure that they support the key teaching points. The sermon manuscript when read aloud should be 15–20 minutes in length (not including the annotations). The total length of the paper will depend on your footnotes/annotation. Submit both a video of you 'preaching' the sermon and the full annotated manuscript. Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions here) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi.

Option #3 – Research Paper

Using what you have learned in class and what you can glean from your own research, carefully analyze one of the parables below from Luke's Gospel or another passage of Scripture (subject to instructor approval):

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35)
The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8)
The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21)
The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32)
The Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1-9)
The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
The Unjust Judge (Luke 18:1-8)
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-10)

Your findings should be presented in a 10–12-page research paper that explains the message of the parable in detail. To complete this assignment, you will need to consult reliable commentaries and specialized studies that focus on the parables. You should also try to locate any relevant journal articles that relate to your specific parable using the Digital Theological Library. Where scholars disagree on an issue, briefly summarize the competing views and explain why one of them is more compelling. You must include *ten* different sources, including at least *two* scholarly journals.

A good approach for organizing your paper is to begin by briefly summarizing what the parable means. This will represent the "thesis" of your paper, e.g., "In the Parable of the Lost Coin, Jesus teaches his disciples that …" To formulate your thesis statement, you essentially need to ask what Jesus was *doing* with the parable, i.e., what lesson he was intending to communicate. Then, carefully work through the parable in a verse-by-verse fashion explaining how all the pieces fit together to communicate this message. Be sure to comment on any insights you gain regarding how the parable might have been heard in light of Jewish and/or Greco-Roman socio-cultural backgrounds. For general instructions on how to interpret parables, the volume by Blomberg, (*Interpreting the Parables* Second Edition, Craig L. Blomberg) is highly recommended. For Jewish backgrounds, the work by Kenneth E. Bailey (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes; Cultural Studies in the Gospels)* will be particularly helpful. You might also attempt to comment on how the parable fits into the argument in the immediate context and/or larger context of Luke's gospel. Be sure to conclude your paper with a significant section summarizing what you think the parable has to say to the church today or include such applications throughout your paper.

- Related learning outcome: #4.
- **Assignment length:** Varies by option chosen.
- **Due date:** April 5, 2027.

Video-on-Demand (VOD) Student Requirements
As indicated on the course schedule, this class is offered by VOD. Students taking the course through VOD are required to indicate this during their course registration. While VOD recordings are available for any student who may be absent from class, non-VOD students are expected to attend class live following the class attendance policy. All class videos will be posted to the Video Centre according to the dates outlined in the VOD Lesson on Populi.

- For this course, VOD students have *the same and different* assignment due dates as in-class students:
  - Fee and Stuart Book Review: due January 22, 2027.
  - Exegetical Fallacies Presentation: due February 8, 2027 (adjusted).
  - Brown Book Review: due March 1, 2027
  - Research Project: due April 5, 2027
- By Saturday at 11:59PM each week, VOD students are required to watch and engage with all lecture content and in-class activities from the previous week's class. VOD students will submit a 2–3-minute video report that 1) affirms you have watched the required recording, 2) summarizes one thing you learned that will help you reach the course learning outcomes, and 3) explains at least one question you had after watching the class recording.
- Students registered to attend by VOD will fulfill the course attendance requirements through their video report submissions. They must submit their VOD reports on time to be registered as present for class.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

Classroom time	30 hrs	N/A	Assignment Weighting
1. Fee and Stuart Book Review	24 hrs	Jan 22	25%
2. Exegetical Fallacies Presentation	10 hrs	Feb 1	15%
3. Brown Book Review	26 hrs	Mar 1	20%
4. Research Project	35 hrs	Apr 5	40%
Total =	125 hrs		

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

COURSE OUTLINE AND CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Date	**Topic**	**Secondary Readings**
Jan 11	Introductions & Definitions	Brown, 9-111
	Authors, Texts, & Readers	Fee & Stuart, 21-56
	Translations & Canon	

Jan 18	Hermeneutical Spiral	
Jan 25	Exegetical Fallacies	Brown ,163-187
Feb 1	NT Letters (Philippians) Fallacy presentations	Fee & Stuart, 57-92
Feb 8	NT Letters (Philippians) Fallacy presentations	Fee & Stuart, 57-92
Feb 15	No Class	
Feb 22	No Class	
Mar 1	No Class	Fee & Stuart, 57-92
Mar 8	Gospel & Parables	Fee & Stuart, 132-167
Mar 15	OT Narrative, Psalms	Fee & Stuart, 93-111 & 212-232
Mar 22	Prophecy Mosaic Law	Fee & Stuart, 187-211 & 168-186
Mar 29	Apocalyptic Literature: Revelation	Fee & Stuart, 258-273
Apr 5	How do we live out these texts?	Brown, 236-278

- No assignments will be accepted after the course end date: April 16, 2027.

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. 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

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