

Mississippi Course of Study
COS 121: The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible
September 25-26; October 9-10, 2020
Millsaps College, Jackson, MS

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SYLLABUS

Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

In order to meet these objectives, students will complete several required reading and writing assignments in addition to class discussions and group work on applying what we have learned to teaching the Bible in congregations.

About your Instructor

Rev. Aislinn Kopp is an ordained elder in the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church and serves as Pastor of Discipleship and Mission at Columbus First United Methodist Church. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Mississippi State and her Master of Divinity with a concentration in the Missional Church from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. She is newly married and lives in Columbus with her husband, who is a Ph.D. Candidate in History at Mississippi State, their dog, Bones, and their cat, Sophie.

Required Textbooks and Readings

The following are required for this class, but each will prove to be valuable tools in future Course of Study classes, and for your continued ministry. Some of these are required texts in other Course of Study classes. Recognizing the expense involved, I encourage students to purchase used copies or digital copies online for substantially less, as long as the purchase is the newest version of the book. View the book list here: <https://amzn.to/37YjNsd>

Texts: Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth**
John Hayes & Carl Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook**
Bernhard Anderson, *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible**

Christine Eaton Blair *The Art of Teaching the Bible*
 Rachel Held Evans, *Inspired*
 Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel*
Reference: *The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary**
*Harper Collins Bible Dictionary**
*NRSV – New Interpreter’s Study Bible**

**Required by GBHEM*

Grading and Assignments

Pre-Class and Midterm Assignments: 30% of Final Grade

Course of Study classes are conducted in a very concentrated time format. In order for us to maximize our class time and the time between our two weekend sessions, you are required to read the materials listed below *before you come to the first class*. The pre-course work is based on these readings. Failure to complete the reading on time will result in a penalty to your participation grade.

The following are to be read or heavily skimmed before you come to our first class:

- (1) *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee & Stuart
- (2) *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook* by Hayes and Holladay
- (3) *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible* by Bernhard Anderson
- (4) *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans
- (5) *The Very Good Gospel* by Lisa Sharon Harper

Due September 18: Summary and Reflection Questions 10% of Assignments Grade

- ⇒ Email to revaislinnkopp@gmail.com a 250-500 word (typed, double-spaced, 12-point font) summary for one of the following assigned texts: *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* or *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*. Your summary should be in your own words, referencing, but using no direct quotes from the books themselves, and using no information from other outside sources.
- Be sure to include your name in the body of the paper and in your file name.

A good summary should:

- Clearly identify which text the summary is about by stating the title and author.
- A summary of the main purpose of the text.
- A summary of the central ideas presented (there may be one or many) that support the main purpose of the text.
- A detail of the central ideas that you find useful or important for your study of the Bible.

- ⇒ Email to revaislinnkopp@gmail.com three questions, one for the author of each of the following texts: *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner’s Handbook*, and *The Unfolding Drama of the Bible*. For each of the three texts, consider at least one and up to three questions you would like for the author to answer. It can be about the content or context of the book or something you would like to ask the author about the study of the Bible.
- These should be 3 unique questions that are specific to the book and author. If you ask the same question for each author, you will only get credit for one.
 - Be sure to include your name in the body of the paper and in your file name.

Due September 25: Small Group Discussion Guide 10% of Assignments Grade

⇒ Email to revaislinnkopp@gmail.com a discussion guide for using either *Inspired* or *The Very Good Gospel* in a small group setting. After reading each chapter, write 3 questions that you would ask a small group that is studying this book together. You should end up with a list of unique questions. The final number will depend on the book choice but make sure you have 3 for each chapter. These questions should reflect the course objectives and focus on the role and authority of scripture in the lives of your congregation.

- i.e. Ask questions about how what they read helps them to
 - 1. Interpret scripture and/or
 - 2. Apply it to their lives.

*If I can tell that you haven't read the chapter or you ask the same questions repeatedly, your grade will be penalized.

Due October 2: Integration Paper 10% of Assignments Grade

⇒ Email to revaislinnkopp@gmail.com a 250 – 500 word essay (1 page) using the book *Biblical Exegesis* to identify and discuss how Rachel Held Evans in *Inspired* or Lisa Sharon Harper in *The Very Good Gospel* use a particular exegetical method in their book to talk about a particular passage of scripture. This is not a paper over the whole book, but over a chapter or section where the author exegetes a particular text. For example: Lisa Sharon Harper's exegesis of the Tower of Babel in the chapter "Shalom Between Nations."

- The essay should take this form:
 - At the top of the document, include your name, course number, and the book you have chosen.
 - What exegetical method does the author use?
 - What evidence is there that she uses this method?
 - How does the exegetical method inform her conclusions about the text?
 - What are the author's conclusions about the text?
- We will talk more about this integration paper in our first class weekend

Exegesis Paper: 50% of Final Grade

Half of your course grade is based on your demonstration of your understanding of the ideas and techniques discussed in class. This will take the shape of a required exegesis paper. The paper will be on an assigned biblical text and will follow the outline of the exegetical method that will be provided in class.

The paper will be typed, double-spaced, and not less than 8 pages or more than 13 pages. You will consult your mentoring elder for feedback on the paper, and he/she must sign it prior to your turning it in. A draft of your exegetical paper is due **the last day of class, October 10**. This draft can be VERY rough. **All students must turn in a draft**. I will return the paper to you with some edits and suggestions. The final paper is due two weeks later, on **October 24**. Late papers will be penalized.

NOTE: You will not pass if you do not do both the draft and the final copy of the paper.

Students taking the class through the Certificate of Christian Studies program are not required to complete the exegesis paper (though they are by no means discouraged from doing so).

**Note: The first exegetical paper can strike fear in the hearts of students. We will go over the whole process in class during our first weekend and answer any questions you may have. Though some of these requirements are listed in the syllabus, do not start on it prior to our first weekend.*

Class Participation: 20% of Final Grade

Class members are treated with respect and warmth. I take you seriously, and value your involvement, attention, attitude, and punctuality. To receive full credit for class participation, please arrive on time with all assignments completed; please participate in class discussions and activities with a positive attitude; and please treat other class members, as well as your instructor, with respect, humility, and kindness.

Grading:

30 points—Pre-Class and Midterm Assignments
 20 points—Class participation
 50 points—Exegesis paper **completion of draft and final paper*

Total: 100 points (A standard letter grade will be assigned, based on 100 points.)

Assignment Format

All assignments should be in the following format:

- 12 point, Times New Roman or equivalent
- Double Spaced
- 1-inch margins
- Heading that includes
 - Name
 - Course Number
 - Date
- Include your name in the filename
- Citations can be MLA or Chicago/Turabian, whichever you prefer. Citation Guides can be found here: MLA – https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_in_text_citations_the_basics.html
 Chicago/Turabian – <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian/turabian-notes-and-bibliography-citation-quick-guide.html>
 - *Online citation generators can be helpful for making sure you properly cite your work.*
 - **When in doubt, cite. See policy on plagiarism below.**

Honor Code:

The Honor Code refers to our commitment as a Christian community to maintain academic honesty and integrity. The Honor Code of MSCOS requires that all material submitted by a student must be the student's own work. Violations include cheating, turning in someone else's work as one's own, copying and pasting information directly from the internet into one's own work without citation, and plagiarism, which is to knowingly claim the work of another person as one's own (including the lack of proper citation in a paper or other assignment). Any person found guilty of violating the Honor Code may be subject to one or more of the following actions: receiving a warning, failing the assignment, being removed from the course, failing the course, being placed on probation, and being expelled from MSCOS. Regardless of what the action is,

communication about the incident will be sent to the student's district superintendent and local pastor registrar. All MSCOS students are required to abide by the MSCOS Honor Code, and to seek to uphold the highest standards of academic and pastoral integrity.

Plagiarism:

It is important to include a few words about plagiarism here since so much of the grade for this course depends on writing. Papers must reflect your own thoughts, words, sentence structure, and ideas. Any use made of another author's material must be acknowledged in the form of a citation (a footnote or parenthetical reference, appropriately formatted; if you have questions about this, please email your instructor), whether or not the material was included in the form of a direct quotation. This applies equally to information from online sources like Wikipedia and other websites. Importing online material – or any other material, whether written and published, or from a podcast, video, etc. – without formal written acknowledgement is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and a violation of the Honor Code. *Err on the side of caution and cite anything and everything you use to complete your assignments.*

Calendar:

This class is structured to have one small assignment per week for three weeks, and three weeks total for the exegetical paper. The time given to each assignment reflects the grading percentage.

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| September 18 | - Week 1 – Pre-Class Assignment: Summary and Reflection Questions Due |
| September 25 | - Week 2 – Pre-Class Assignment: Small Group Discussion Guide Due |
| September 25-26 | - Class Weekend
The Bible and Cannon, Biblical Exegesis, Writing an Exegetical Paper |
| October 2 | - Week 3 – Midterm Assignment: Integration Paper Due |
| October 9-10 | - Class Weekend
Journey through the Scriptures, Biblical Interpretation in Small Groups |
| October 10 | - Week 4 – Draft of Exegetical Paper Due |
| October 24 | - Week 6 – Final Exegetical Paper Due |

Instructor

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