

Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Introduction to Sacred Scripture — BS-1560

Fall 2020

Prof. Matthew J. Thomas

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Tuesday / Friday, 9:40—11:00am

Office hours: By appointment

NB: This is a remote Course via Moodle and Zoom, due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Course description

This course provides students with an introductory overview of Scripture, biblical exegesis, and biblical hermeneutics. The course briefly introduces students to each book of the Old and New Testaments, equips them with the tools for exegesis of individual passages of Scripture, and instructs them in guidelines for biblical interpretation within the Catholic tradition. Each portion of the course is undertaken with a view towards providing students with a foundation to understand and appreciate the riches of Scripture, and equipping them with tools and resources for studying the Bible over the rest of their lives. The course employs a lecture / discussion format, and evaluates student progress with quizzes (20%), reading notes (15%), midterm and final exam (25% each), and a mini-exegesis paper (20%). This class is for MDiv and MA/MTS students.

Required Textbooks

Markus Bockmuehl. *Seeing the Word*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006. \$27.00. ISBN: 978-0801027611.

Michael Gorman. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Revised and expanded edition). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010. \$15.89. ISBN: 978-0801046407.

Websites

<https://bibleproject.com/explore>

Optional Textbooks

The required magisterial texts are available online. If a student prefers a hard copy, a convenient collection of most of these documents is included in *The Scripture Documents: An Anthology of Official Catholic Teachings*. Edited and translated by Dean P. Béchard; forward by Joseph A. Fitzmyer. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002.

Required Technology

All students should have access to technology sufficient to complete the course successfully. This includes a computer, laptop, or tablet, with webcam & microphone, with an updated operating system (Windows, Mac, Linux) and an updated internet browser (Chrome, Firefox); high speed internet bandwidth (preferably 10 mbps or greater but at least 3 mbps); ability to use Moodle and Zoom. If students experience any difficulties with Moodle, Zoom, or other technology, they can contact GTU Moodle support at moodle@gtu.edu. Students will receive a response within 24 hours.

Student Learning Goals

In this course, students will:

- Gain introductory knowledge of the books, narrative, and major themes of Scripture, while developing a proficiency in the use of scriptural and theological language and concepts.
- Develop the habit of reading and praying over the Scriptures.
- Become proficient in the basic elements of biblical exegesis.
- Learn the Church's understanding of the nature of Scripture and how it is to be interpreted within the context of its tradition.
- Become familiar with modern methodologies for interpreting Scripture, with an appreciation of both their constructive value and limitations.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who completes this course will be able to:

- Identify key themes and passages in each of the books of the Bible.
- Reproduce a broad overview of the full narrative of Scripture.
- Write a short exegesis paper, using all the tools required in later Scripture courses.
- Relate the Church's teachings on the nature of Scripture and its place within the life of the Church.
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses of modern methodologies for disclosing the meaning of Scripture.
- Articulate the Church's guidelines for how Scripture is to be interpreted within the context of its tradition.

Methodology

This course presents material at introductory, intermediate and advanced levels. The overview of Scripture, owing to the amount of material covered, is introductory: in lieu of a textbook, this course employs the Bible Project's *Read Scripture* outline videos, and focuses our reading on one chapter of each book to give students a foothold on the book's main themes. While popular-level, the Bible Project outlines are excellent resources for giving students an introduction to each book's structure, key ideas, and relation to the broader scriptural narrative (and are substantially easier to enjoy and share than most written resources). The exegesis portion of the course is intermediate: the Gorman textbook is a very good resource for introducing unfamiliar methodologies and resources, and provides valuable guidelines for writing an exegesis paper. The hermeneutics section is advanced, and engages both the theoretical principles behind Catholic biblical interpretation and the contemporary state of biblical hermeneutics more broadly in the 21st century. Along with Catholic magisterial documents, the course employs Markus Bockmuehl's excellent *Seeing the Word*, which, while NT-focused, provides an overview of various challenges within biblical interpretation in modern times, and valuable proposals for how they can be overcome.

Course Requirements

1. Quizzes: Students will be given short quizzes on the assigned Scripture readings and Bible Project overviews at the beginning of most class periods. These quizzes are given to ensure that students complete the readings and are attentive to their content, as well as to make sure students receive credit for staying up on their assignments.

2. Reading responses: Students will turn in reading notes at the beginning of class for the articles / encyclicals, Bockmuehl and Gorman readings, which need not exceed one page (though these can be as long as students wish). These notes will not be graded for style, but are solely intended to ensure that

the readings have been completed and to help students retain their content. A bullet-point format works well, but students may write the assignment however serves them best; however, the response must make clear that the text has been read. Assignments will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis, except that late assignments will receive a 50% deduction.

3. Midterm and Final: This course will include a midterm and final exam, which will focus on the biblical material covered in the first and second halves of the course, respectively. These exams are given with a view towards helping students retain key themes of the biblical books over the long term.

4. Mini-exegesis paper: Each student also will write a mini-exegesis paper of about five pages on a text agreed upon with the professor. The format of the paper is to be in conformity with Gorman's *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* p. 29. The purpose of this paper is to give students an opportunity to practice and solidify the exegetical skills for their future use. Papers are to be carefully proofread, and failure to follow the format will result in being required to rewrite the paper with a penalty of one letter grade.

Grading Procedures and Rubric

Quizzes: 20%

Reading notes: 10%

Midterm exam: 25%

Final exam: 25%

Mini-exegesis paper: 20%

- A Excellent work; student demonstrates excellent understanding of the material.
- B Very good work; student demonstrates strong understanding of the material.
- C Fair work; student demonstrates adequate understanding of the material, though with room for improvement.
- D Poor work; student demonstrates some barely adequate understanding of the material, with substantial room for improvement.
- F Student demonstrates inadequate understanding of the material.

Grade scale

A 100 – 93	B- 82 – 80	D+ 69 – 67
A- 92 – 90	C+ 79 – 77	D 66 – 63
B+ 89 – 87	C 76 – 73	D- 62 – 60
B 86 – 83	C- 72 – 70	F 59 and below

Course Schedule

NB: Each article / encyclical has a time estimate (via wordcounter.net) of how long each will take to read. While these estimates may be on the low end (as they do not incorporate time for reflection), they will at least give students an idea of the time needed to complete each reading.

Week 1 (September 8, 11)

Class: Introduction, syllabus, our own stories with the Bible

HW: My experience with the Bible paper (1-2 pages, pass/fail); **watch** Gen 1-11; **read** Gen 3

Class: Discussion on Bible papers, discussion on Gen 1-11, introduction to contemporary Catholic biblical scholarship

HW: **Watch** Gen 12-50, Ex 1-18, 19-40; **read** Gen 12, Ex 19; *Aperuit Illis* (Pope Francis, 2019; 0:16) & CCC 101-141 (0:12); both on one reading response

Week 2 (September 15, 18)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Gen / Ex, Scripture according to the Catechism

HW: **Watch** Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; **read** Lev 19, Num 24, Deut 30; *Spiritus Paraclitus* (Pope Benedict XV, 1920; 0:47)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Lev / Num / Deut, *Spiritus Paraclitus*

HW: **Watch** Joshua, Judges, Ruth; **read** Josh 2, Jud 13, Ruth 2; "Fern Seed and Elephants" (CS Lewis, 1959; 0:23)

Week 3 (September 22, 25)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Josh / Jud / Ruth, "Fern Seed and Elephants"

HW: **Watch** 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings; **read** 1 Sam 17, 2 Sam 7, 1 Kings 19, 2 Kings 5; Bockmuehl introduction

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Sam / 2 Sam / 1 & 2 Kings, Bockmuehl introduction

HW: **Watch** 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra / Nehemiah; **read** 1 Chron 29, 2 Chron 6, Ezra 3, Neh 9; Bockmuehl 1

Week 4 (September 29, October 2)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 & 2 Chron, Ezra, Neh, Bockmuehl 1 (*The Troubled Fortunes of New Testament Scholarship*)

HW: **Watch** Esther; **read** Tobit 12, Judith 8, Esther 4 & C; Bockmuehl 2

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Tobit, Judith, Esther, Bockmuehl 2 (*The Wisdom of the Implied Exegete*)

HW: **Watch** Job; **read** 1 Macc 1, 2 Macc 7, Job 19; Bockmuehl 3

Week 5 (October 6, 9)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Macc, 2 Macc, Job, Bockmuehl 3 (*Humpty Dumpty and the Range of Implied Readings*)

HW: **Watch** Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes; **read** Ps 22, Prov 3, Eccl 1; Bockmuehl 4

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Ps / Prov / Eccl, Bockmuehl 4 (*The Icon of Peter and Paul between History and Reception*)

HW: **Watch** Song of Songs; **read** Song 2, Wisdom 2 [and 5], Ben Sira 15; Bockmuehl 5

Week 6 (October 13, 16)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Song / Wis / Sira, Bockmuehl 5 (*What's under the Microscope?*)

HW: **Watch** Isaiah 1-39, 40-66; **read** Isa 53; Bockmuehl 6

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Isa, Bockmuehl 6 (*Living Memory and Apostolic History*)

HW: **Watch** Jeremiah, Lamentations; **read** Jer 31, Lam 4, Bar 3; Bockmuehl 7 + epilogue

Week 7 (October 20, 23)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Jer / Lam / Bar, Bockmuehl 7 (*Seeing the Son of David*) + epilogue

HW: **Watch** Ezekiel 1-33, 34-48, Daniel; **read** Ez 34, Dan 7

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Ez / Dan, review of materials for midterm

HW: Study for midterm, to take over reading week; Read Gorman 1

Week 8 (October 27, 30) **Reading week, no class**

Week 9 (November 3, 6)

Class: Review midterm, Introduction to Biblical Exegesis [NB: Please have Gorman 1 (*The Task*) read before class!]

HW: **Watch** Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah; **read** Hos 2, Jl 3, Am 3, Ob, Gorman 2

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Hos / Jl / Am / Ob, Gorman 2 (*The Text*)

HW: **Watch** Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk; **read** Jon 4, Mic 5 [and 4], Nah 3, Hab 2, Gorman 3

Week 10 (November 10, 13)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Jon / Mic / Nah / Hab, Gorman 3 (*Survey*)

HW: **Watch** Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; **read** Zeph 3, Hag 2, Zech 9, Mal 3, Gorman 4

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Zeph / Hag / Zech / Mal, Gorman 4 (*Contextual Analysis*)

HW: **Watch** Matthew 1-13, Matthew 14-28, Mark; **read** Matt 5, Mark 1, Gorman 5

Week 11 (November 17, 20)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Matt, Mark, Gorman 5 (*Formal Analysis*)

HW: **Watch** Luke 1-9, 10-24, John 1-12, 13-21; **read** Luke 1, John 1, Gorman 6

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Luke, John, Gorman 6 (*Detailed Analysis of the Text*)

HW: **Watch** Acts 1-12, 12-28, Romans 1-4, 5-16; **read** Acts 2, Rom 3

Week 12 (November 24, 27)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Acts, Rom, Resources for study of Scripture online (aka everything Gorman doesn't tell you)

HW: **Watch** 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians; **read** 1 Cor 15, 2 Cor 12, Gal 2, Eph 6; "The Catholic Canon of Scripture" (MJ Thomas, 2020; 0:21)

Class: **Thanksgiving, no class**

Week 13 (December 1, 4)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, The Canon
HW: **Watch** Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians; **read** Phil 2, Col 1, 1 Thes 5, 2 Thes 2; “The Quadriga or Something Like It” (PJ Leithart, 2007)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Phil, Col, 1 Thes, 2 Thes, The Quadriga
HW: **Watch** 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon; **read** 1 Tim 3, 2 Tim 2, Tit 3, Phlm; *Dei Verbum* (1965; 0:19)

Week 14 (December 8, 11)

Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Tit, Phlm, *Dei Verbum*
HW: **Watch** Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter; **read** Heb 10, Jas 2, 1 Pet 2, 2 Pet 3, *Verbum Domini* § 1—28 (2010; 0:38)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Heb, Jas, 1 Pet, 2 Pet, *Verbum Domini* § 1—28
HW: **Watch** 1-3 John, Jude, Revelation 1-11, 12-22; **read** 1 John 4, Jude, Rev 12 [and 21]; *Verbum Domini* § 29 — 56 (0:39)

Week 15 (December 15, 18)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1-3 John, Jude, Rev, *Verbum Domini* § 29 — 56
HW: Study for final

Class: Lecture, How to read the Bible
HW: Study for final