

Union Presbyterian Seminary
Continuing Education
Spring 2018

Course Name: *Biblical Interpretation for Church Educators*

Instructor: Patricia L. Vesely, Ph.D., Adjunct Assistant Professor of Biblical Languages (Union Presbyterian Seminary); Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies (Virginia Commonwealth University)
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Course Description: This course is designed to equip Christian educators for in-depth interpretation and teaching of the Bible. The course will provide a historical overview of interpretive traditions spanning from the biblical era to the present, with key emphases on historical and cultural location and the contribution of interpretation within the Reformed Tradition. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in the exegesis of selected biblical texts using their acquired knowledge.

Objectives:

- To gain a broader understanding of the major trends in biblical interpretation throughout history
- To develop the ability to recognize methods of biblical interpretation used in existing theological and biblical resources
- To learn to carefully read and interpret biblical texts using the methods of various major schools of biblical interpretation
- To carefully hone one's own skills of biblical exegesis that are suitable for one's calling and placement
- To gain a deeper awareness of socio-cultural location and how this influences the reading of biblical texts
- To explore how other media, including art, music, and drama has served as a means for interpreting biblical texts

Methods: The course will achieve the above objectives through assigned readings, online reviews and discussions, class attendance, lectures, class activities, seminar-style discussions, and one assigned exegesis paper

Continuing Education:

This course is designed to meet the requirement of a course in biblical interpretation for Christian educators seeking certification in the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA).

Required Texts: William Yarchin, *History of Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2004)

Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2009)

Required Skill Set and Resources:

Given the hybrid nature of the course, each student must have the ability to use, and must have her or his own personal access to, web-based, computer resources compatible with the assignments in the course and the delivery platform used by UPSem. Instruction in computer use is not a feature of the course. UPSem's technical support office should be consulted prior to enrollment in the course if there are any questions regarding the skill set and resources required.

ADA and UPSem Protocols:

The course will comply with American Disability Act protocols and with UPSem policy related to those protocols. Students who need to consider ADA provisions are strongly encouraged to consult the Student Handbook and to contact the Office of the Dean at least one month prior the beginning of the course. At UPSem, academic accommodations are ordinarily considered on a case-by-case basis on the basis of official documentation of disability by a medical or health professional.

Course Overview:

PHASE ONE (at home)

Week One (April 16–21): *Typology, Allegory, Figurative vs. Literal Readings of Scripture*

Reading Assignment: Yarchin, pp. 1–167; Gorman, 1–59

Online Review: Each student will write a review of two authors/ approaches described in Yarchin, pp. 1–167 and post their review online.

Week Two (April 22–28): *The Enlightenment and the Role of Science and History in Biblical Interpretation*

Reading Assignment: Yarchin, pp. 172–304; Gorman, 63–125

Online Review: Each student will write a review of two authors/ approaches described in Yarchin, pp. 172–304, focusing on the question of “reason” and “history” and biblical interpretation. Students will post their review online.

Week Three (April 29–May 5): Modern and Post-Modern Readings of Scripture

Reading Assignment: Yarchin, pp. 307–429; Gorman, 127–172, 241–275

Online Review: Each student will write a review of two authors/ approaches described in Yarchin, pp. 307–429 and post their review online.

By the end of week three, each student will select a biblical passage from a list of passages provided by the teacher and mutually approved in consultation with the teacher for his or her exegesis paper.

Week Four (May 6–May 12): Exegeting the Biblical Text for Contemporary Faith Communities

Assignment: Based on the readings above, each student will complete and email to the teacher only his or her exegesis of a biblical passage by the end of the fourth week of the course (May 12, 2018)

At Home Weeks One–Three:

Within three days after each deadline for posting a book review noted above, each student in the class must post an assessment of the review of *one* of her or his classmates.

PHASE TWO (on campus)

First Campus Meeting (May 15, 2018, 1:30–4:30 p.m.)

First Lecture: "History and Biblical Interpretation"
Small Group Case Studies
Plenary Discussion of Lecture, Readings, and Case Studies

Second Campus Meeting (May 16, 2018, 8:30–11:30 a.m.)

Second Lecture: "Science and Biblical Interpretation"
Small Group Case Studies
Plenary Discussion of Lecture, Readings, and Case Studies

Third Campus Meeting (May 16, 2018, 2:00–4:30 p.m.)

Third Lecture: "Ethics and Biblical Interpretation"
Small Group Case Studies
Plenary Discussion of Lecture, Readings, and Case Studies

Fourth Campus Meeting (May 17, 2018, 8:30 a.m.–noon)

Fourth Lecture: "Art and Biblical Interpretation"

Individual Oral Presentations of At Home Exegeses Papers

Plenary Discussion of Lecture, Readings, and Student Presentations

Concluding Worship

To be certified as having successfully completed the course, a student must complete in a timely and complete way all assignments, and must attend and participate in all of all four class sessions of the course in a manner consonant with the essential goals of the class.