

## Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

### Introduction to Sacred Scripture — BS-1560

Fall 2023

Prof. Matthew J. Thomas

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Tuesday / Friday, 9:40—11:00am

Office hours: By appointment

#### 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 (10%), midterm and final exam (25% each), and a mini-exegesis paper (20%). This class is for MDiv and MA 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* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020. \$22.49. ISBN: 978-1540960313. (**NB:** While the most recent 3<sup>rd</sup> edition is listed here, the less expensive 2<sup>nd</sup> edition works just as well.)

#### 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.

#### 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 very good 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

### **Technology use**

Use of computers in class is permitted for note-taking purposes, but is not allowed otherwise and not encouraged in general. Students without the distraction of computer screens tend to be those who earn the highest grades (both participation / overall), and your professor very much likes giving good grades.

### **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. 29/30. 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. All Scripture readings are taken from NABRE, unless otherwise noted.

#### Week 1 (September 5, 8)

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, William of St. Thierry on Lectio Divina, 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 12, 15)

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 19, 22)

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; "The Catholic Canon of Scripture" (MJ Thomas, 2020; 0:21)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Sam / 2 Sam / 1 & 2 Kings, The Canon

HW: **Watch** 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra / Nehemiah; **read** 1 Chron 29, 2 Chron 6, Ezra 3, Neh 9; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Proof of the Gospel* Book 1 (1:14)

Week 4 (September 26, 29)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 & 2 Chron, Ezra, Neh, Eusebius on the Old and New Testaments, *Proof of the Gospel* Book 1

HW: **Watch** Esther; **read** Tobit 12, Judith 8, Esther 4 & C; Gorman 1 (*The Task*)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Tobit, Judith, Esther, Gorman 1

HW: **Watch** Job; **read** 1 Macc 1, 2 Macc 7, Job 19; Gorman 2 (*The Text*)

Week 5 (October 3, 6)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Macc, 2 Macc, Job, Gorman 2

HW: **Watch** Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes; **read** Ps 22, Prov 3, Eccl 1; Gorman 3 & 4 (*Survey; Contextual Analysis*)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Ps / Prov / Eccl, Gorman 3 & 4

HW: **Watch** Song of Songs; **read** Song 2, Wisdom 2 [and 5], Ben Sira 15; Gorman 5 (*Formal Analysis*)

Week 6 (October 10, 13)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Song / Wis / Sira, Gorman 5

HW: **Watch** Isaiah 1-39, 40-66; **read** Isa 53; Gorman 6 (*Detailed Analysis*)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Isa, Gorman 6

HW: **Watch** Jeremiah, Lamentations; **read** Jer 31, Lam 4, Bar 3; Gorman 7 (*Synthesis*)

Week 7 (October 17, 20)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Jer / Lam / Bar, Gorman 7

HW: **Watch** Ezekiel 1-33, 34-48, Daniel; **read** Ez 34, Dan 7; Gorman 8 (*Reflection – Theological Interpretation*)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Ez / Dan, Gorman 8, review of materials for midterm

HW: Study for midterm, to take over reading week

Week 8 (October 24, 27) **Reading week, no class**

Week 9 (October 31, November 3)

Class: Review midterm, Resources for study of Scripture online (aka everything Gorman doesn't tell you)

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

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Hos / Jl / Am / Ob, Bockmuehl introduction

HW: **Watch** Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk; **read** Jon 4, Mic 5 [and 4], Nah 3, Hab 2; Bockmuehl 1 (*The Troubled Fortunes of New Testament Scholarship*)

Week 10 (November 7, 10)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Jon / Mic / Nah / Hab, Bockmuehl 1

HW: **Watch** Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; **read** Zeph 3, Hag 2, Zech 9, Mal 3; Bockmuehl 2 (*The Wisdom of the Implied Exegete*)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Zeph / Hag / Zech / Mal, Bockmuehl 2

HW: **Watch** Matthew 1-13, Matthew 14-28, Mark; **read** Matt 5, Mark 1; Bockmuehl 3 (*Humpty Dumpty and the Range of Implied Readings*)

Week 11 (November 14, 17)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Matt, Mark, Bockmuehl 3

HW: **Watch** Luke 1-9, 10-24, John 1-12, 13-21; **read** Luke 1, John 1; Bockmuehl 4 (*The Icon of Peter and Paul between History and Reception*)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Luke, John, Bockmuehl 4

HW: **Watch** Acts 1-12, 12-28, Romans 1-4, 5-16; **read** Acts 2, Rom 3; Bockmuehl 5 (*What's under the Microscope?*)

Week 12 (November 21, 24)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Acts, Rom, Bockmuehl 5

HW: **Watch** 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians; **read** 1 Cor 15, 2 Cor 12, Gal 2, Eph 6; Bockmuehl 6 (*Living Memory and Apostolic History*)

Class: **Thanksgiving, no class**

Week 13 (November 28, December 1)

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Bockmuehl 6

HW: **Watch** Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians; **read** Phil 2, Col 1, 1 Thes 5, 2 Thes 2; Bockmuehl 7 (*Seeing the Son of David*) + epilogue

Class: Quiz, lecture / discussion on Phil, Col, 1 Thes, 2 Thes, Bockmuehl 7 + epilogue

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 5, 8)

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 12, 15)

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