



BLST 701 ONL
Advanced Hermeneutics

Course Instructor: Daniel J. D. Stulac
Email: dstulac@briercrest.ca
Phone: 818-970-6779
Office: #133C

Course Dates:

Sep 4 – Dec 15, 2024
Tuesdays, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Online
3 Credit Hours

Course Description

An examination of current issues in hermeneutics, including the problem of meaning, presuppositions behind pre-modern, modern, and postmodern methodologies, and an introduction to major critical methodologies in biblical studies. Students will gain wide exposure to how the Bible has been studied in the last two centuries and gain practice in applying these methods to select texts.

Required Texts

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. 2nd edn. New York; Basic Books, 2011. Available at the Briercrest Bookstore and through online distributors.
- All additional, required readings will be provided for students on Canvas. You are encouraged to download and print these prior to the beginning of the course, and then to store them in a three-ring binder (thus creating a “textbook” of sorts for future reference).
- A standard translation of the Bible, such as the NIV, NRSV, CEB, etc. You may not read from the KJV, NKJV, or modern paraphrases (such as *The Message*).
- For all matters of punctuation, formatting and style, please use Chicago style: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/college/documents/>. You may also wish to consult the standard guide for biblical studies: *The SBL Handbook of Style* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2014).
- Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

A note on hospitable reading:

In this course you will encounter a variety of authors. Some you will like, others not. The point is not for you to agree with them or figure out how to endorse or denounce them. Instead, I would like for you to welcome them into your mind, let them speak to you on their terms as much you can. Engage them in a conversation, and while conversing with them, attend to the new insights learned from the encounter. Sometimes this is difficult to do, especially with people with whom you are inclined to disagree. It is crucial that we learn to hospitably and charitably engage those with whom we disagree. Adopt as your principle: **I will read others in the way that I would like to be read.**

Learning Objectives

Dedicated students can expect the following outcomes:

- ability to articulate the definition of and to distinguish between what is meant by “approach,” “method,” and “hermeneutic lens” in the field of biblical studies
- increased precision in the handling of biblical texts, including awareness of how one’s interpretive choices fit into the long history of biblical interpretation
- fresh perspective on how a variety of interpretive modes may either contribute to or confuse our collective understanding of biblical texts
- confidence in one’s ability to offer both charitable and critical analyses of those varying modes, identifying what is gained and lost

Course Requirements and Weighting

Discussions	7 total, 4% each	28%
Recorded Presentation		18%
Peer Review	2 total, 12% each	24%
Final Exam		30%
	TOTAL	100%

Attendance (ungraded)

Attendance at every class is expected and required. Only in cases of medical or family emergency will students have their absence excused; absences related to all other activities are not excused. If you must miss a class, please contact the instructor in advance. Please see the Briercrest attendance policy Seminary Calendar section below.

Prior to the beginning of each synchronous class session, students should ensure that they are in a quiet location, free from disturbance, and that they have access to a strong internet

connection as well as all the required hardware to ensure their complete participation (including microphone, headphones, and video feed). You may not multitask during these class periods; driving or riding in a car is also strictly prohibited. In short, this course demands your undivided attention for two hours each Tuesday evening. Credit for attendance will not be granted if the student does not or cannot, for any reason, turn on his or her video and audio in a quiet, still, location during the synchronous class session.

Discussions (4% each, 28% total)

Each week, students will engage both assigned reading and asynchronous videos geared toward a particular topic (see the Course Schedule below). On 7 out of 10 possible Mondays, students will use the Discussions chat room on Canvas to identify one especially salient feature of this material and to raise one important point for further conversation during the upcoming synchronous class session. These posts need not be any longer than the required limit in order to earn full credit, nor do they require a thesis-driven argument, but they should nevertheless be carefully written (spelling, punctuation, grammar, and syntax), to-the-point, and substantive. Focus your attention on what is most important about the assigned reading, and bear in mind that this course is designed to develop your capacity for both charitable and critical analysis of various hermeneutic strategies. Due by 12 pm noon on the Monday prior to the upcoming synchronous class session. 200-word minimum. Graded on a check-plus (= A), check (= B), check-minus (= C), no-credit (= F) scale. No late work will be accepted.

Recorded Oral Presentation (18%)

Prior to class time on 1 out of 4 possible Tuesdays (Oct. 1, Oct. 29, Nov. 12, and Nov. 26), students will submit a recorded oral presentation on Canvas, made available to the entire class for review. This video should present a charitable and critical overview of one of the assigned readings from previous weeks of the course. A list detailing which readings may be reviewed for each of the four ROP options will be provided to students at the first class session, and students must commit to one date in particular by Sep. 17 (the second class session). Your goal for this assignment should be to: 1) summarize the author's mode of biblical interpretation, 2) identify, on that basis, how and where the author fits into the greater pageant of biblical interpretation, 3) evaluate what the author does well, and how he or she offers improved insight on the biblical text in view, and 4) discuss where the author's mode of interpretation may warrant revision and why. Strong presentations will not waste time "revving one's engine," or working up to the point through excessive "throat clearing." Remember that all of your peers will have read the material by the time they encounter your review of it. Therefore, cut to the chase, and be sure to attend to all four steps outlined above. You are advised to write out your presentation ahead of time so that you know exactly what you want to say and how, even if during the video you may not choose to read your written statement verbatim (though you are welcome to do so). 10 minutes minimum; 15 minutes maximum. Due by class time on the dates specified above. Graded on a standard letter scale for structure, cogency, clarity, delivery, and depth of insight.

Peer Review Essays (12% each, 24% total)

Prior to class time on 2 out of 4 possible Tuesdays (Oct. 15, Nov. 5, Nov. 19, and Dec. 3), students will submit a written response to one of the Recorded Oral Presentations posted on Canvas by a student one week prior (your choice). This essay should issue a peer review statement on your fellow classmate's work, in the same way that piece of professional scholarship may be read and evaluated by other scholars in the same field prior to its publication. Thus, your essay does not need a thesis, because it is not an argument. Rather, it falls in two main halves: first identify what your fellow classmate has done particularly well in each of the four steps outlined above; second, identify where the student's discussion could have been more precise or better articulated relative to the primary text and other course materials. In order to do this assignment well, you will need to read closely and develop your own perspective on the student's chosen text, since you cannot very well evaluate what your peer has to say about Brevard Childs, for example, without reading Childs for yourself. You may not write a PRE that covers an author/text for which you have also submitted an ROP. In other words, if you submit an ROP on Childs, you may not also review Sally or Johnny's ROP on Childs. 1500-word minimum; 2000-word maximum. Graded on a standard letter scale for structure, cogency, clarity, depth of insight, grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc.

Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will consist of three essay questions, each of which will pertain to one of the weekly subject areas covered throughout the semester (selected at random). A study guide will be provided to students some weeks prior to the final exam. Graded on a standard letter scale for structure, cogency, clarity, etc. Open book. Date TBD.

Course Schedule

WEEK #1 (9/10): What Is a "Hermeneutic"?

- Bible: Matthew 1-2
- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #1
- Read: Brown, *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis*, pp. 11-19 [\[LINK\]](#)
 Clines, *On the Way to the Postmodern*, pp. 23-45 [\[LINK\]](#)
 Graham, "Scripture," pp. 8194-205 [optional] [\[LINK\]](#)
 Stulac and Smith, "David, Uriah, Jesus, and Judas," pp. 223-33 [\[LINK\]](#)
- Record: Please create a 1-minute video introducing yourself to the class and upload on the Canvas Discussions page (see "Introductory Videos").

WEEK #2 (9/17): Premodern Exegesis

- Bible: Genesis 14 & 22
 Hebrews 1-8

- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #2
- Read: Heine, *Reading the Old Testament*, pp. 31-46 [CANVAS]
Lubac, "On an Old Distich," pp. 109-27 [CANVAS]
Origen, "Homily VIII," pp. 136-47 [LINK]
Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-critical Exegesis," pp. 74-82 [LINK]
- Due: Discussion #1

WEEK #3 (9/24): Reformation Era Exegesis

- Bible: Exodus 14
- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #3
- Read: Calvin, *Commentaries*, pp. 237-54 [CANVAS]
Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 17-50 [CANVAS]
The Geneva Bible, cover page [CANVAS]
- Due: Discussion #2

WEEK #4 (10/1): Historicism and the Biblical Theology Movement

- Bible: Exodus 14 (review)
- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #4
- Read: Gilkey, "Cosmology," pp. 194-205 [LINK]
Sandys-Wunsch, *What Have they Done...?*, pp. 281-317 [CANVAS]
Nissinen, "Reflections," pp. 479-504 [optional] [CANVAS]
Wright and Fuller, *The Book of the Acts of God*, pp. 15-26 [CANVAS]
- Due: Discussion #3
- Due: Recorded Oral Presentations (Option #1)

WEEK #5 (10/8): NO CLASS**WEEK #6 (10/15): Text in Tradition**

- Bible: Isaiah 5 & 32
- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #5
- Read: Childs, "The Canonical Shape of the Prophetic..." pp. 46-55 [LINK]
Chapman, "The Canon Debate," pp. 273-94 [LINK]
Stulac, "The Destroyed City," pp. 678-92 [LINK]

Due: Discussion #4

Due: Peer Review Essay (Option #1)

WEEK #7 (10/22): MOD WEEK (no class)

WEEK #8 (10/29): The Old Testament as Literary Art

Bible: Genesis 22 (review) & 37-38

Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #6

Read: Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, pp. 1-24, 143-92
Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar," pp. 3-23 [\[LINK\]](#)
Weitzmann, "Before and After," pp. 191-210 [optional] [\[LINK\]](#)

Due: Discussion #5

Due: Recorded Oral Presentations (Option #2)

WEEK #9 (11/5): Death of the Author, Rise of the Reader

Bible: Isaiah 5 & 32 (review)

Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #7

Read: Fowler, "Who is 'The Reader'," pp. 5-23 [\[LINK\]](#)
Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," pp. 468-88 [\[LINK\]](#)

Due: Discussion #6

Due: Peer Review Essay (Option #2)

WEEK #10 (11/12): Modern Political Hermeneutics (Feminist & Postcolonial)

Bible: Joshua 6
Hosea 1-3

Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #8

Read: Graetz, "God Is to Israel as Husband..." pp. 126-45 [\[CANVAS\]](#)
Tamez, "The Bible and the Five Hundred Years," pp. 12-19 [\[CANVAS\]](#)
Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," pp. 1-8 [\[LINK\]](#)

Due: Discussion #7

Due: Recorded Oral Presentations (Option #3)

WEEK #11 (11/19): Modern Political Hermeneutics (Environmental)

- Bible: Genesis 1–2
- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #9
- Read: Davis, "The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible," pp. 260-65 [\[LINK\]](#)
Habel, "Geophany," pp. 34-48 [\[LINK\]](#)
Habel, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics," pp. 1-8 [\[LINK\]](#)
Nash, "The Bible Vs. Biodiversity," 213-37 [\[LINK\]](#)
Stulac, *History and Hope*, 21-32 [optional] [\[CANVAS\]](#)
- Due: Discussion #8
- Due: Peer Review Essay (Option #3)

WEEK #12 (11/26): Recovering Theological Exegesis

- Bible: Luke 24
- Watch: Asynchronous Instructional Video #10
- Read: Childs, "Toward Recovering Theological Exegesis," pp. 16-26 [\[LINK\]](#)
Hays, "Reading Scripture in Light..." pp. 216-38 [\[CANVAS\]](#)
Moberly, "What Is Theological Interpretation...?," pp. 161-78 [\[LINK\]](#)
- Due: Discussion #9
- Due: Recorded Oral Presentations (Option #4)

WEEK #13 (12/3): What Is a "Good Reading" of Scripture?

- Bible: 2 Kings 18–19
- Read: Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader*, pp. 17-44 [\[CANVAS\]](#)
- Due: Discussion #10
- Due: Peer Review Essay (Option #4)

WEEK #14: Exam Week

Final Exam (TBD)

Seminary Calendar

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of

academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

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Míguez-Bonino, José. "Marxist Critical Tools: Are They Helpful in Breaking the Stranglehold of Idealist Hermeneutics?" Pages 27-31 in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. Edited by R. S. Sugirtharajah. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016.

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