

*Erskine Theological Seminary*

**BI 805: SEMINAR IN BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

Fall 2008

Due West Campus, Thursdays, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Professor: Max Rogland

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**OFFICE HOURS FOR FALL 2008:**

*I will typically be available in my office in Columbia between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, though it is always advisable to call or email for an appointment first. Other times/locations may be available.*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND METHODS:**

In a seminar format, students analyze various important approaches to and methods of interpretation developed by both the Church and the academy. The course involves substantial work in the original languages, reading of primary sources, selected readings in secondary sources, and independent research. Students present the findings of their research in both oral presentations and written documents. *Required for Th.M. students majoring in Old or New Testament. Elective for other Th.M. students. D.Min. students may take this course as a norms elective. Offered alternate years. Three hours.*

**SEMINAR TOPIC AND METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:**

The topic for this seminar is “the New Testament’s use of Old Testament texts”. The focus of the seminar will be on the inductive, exegetical examination of Old Testament texts in their original context and as they were later employed by the New Testament writers and speakers. Consideration will be given to the hermeneutical methods common within Second Temple Judaism and the Greco-Roman world to see how these may have affected the New Testament’s interpretation of Biblical texts.

The purposes and objectives of this class will be achieved through lectures, class discussions, oral presentations and written work. While there will be a lecture component to this class, this class will be taught in a graduate seminar dynamic which seeks to be genuinely collaborative in nature. We will seek for all members of the class, professor and graduate students alike, to be actively engaged in comprehending, evaluating and mastering the materials together.

**REQUIRED BOOKS:**

**NOTE: Textbooks are available from the Erskine Theological Seminary Virtual Bookstore at [www.ecampus.com/erskine](http://www.ecampus.com/erskine).**

G. K. Beale (ed.), *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?* (Baker Academic, 1994)

G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (eds.), *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Baker Academic, 2007) [CURRENTLY BACKORDERED BY ECAMPUS AND WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL AUGUST 15]

Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (Yale University Press, 1993)

Stanley Porter (ed.), *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 2006)

Students will also need to bring a Hebrew Bible, Greek New Testament and an English translation of the Bible with them to class (I typically cite the English Standard Version). Articles will regularly be distributed for reading and discussion.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1. **Attendance** – Preparation, attendance, and participation in class sessions are required. Students must arrive on time for class, and following breaks. You are expected to remain at each session until it concludes. A student who misses more than 9 hours of class time for the semester will normally be asked to withdraw from the course or receive a failing grade. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in extreme cases.

2. **Review presentation** – Each student will prepare a critical review of readings (typically one or two articles) assigned by the professor. A written version (c. 5-10 pages in length) must be submitted to the professor, and the student will present an oral version of the review and facilitate a classroom discussion of the selected work(s). See below for guidelines on style and formatting for written work.

3. **Research paper** – A major paper of c. 18-20 pages is required for this course and is due one week after the last class session (Dec 11). The focus of the paper will be an exegetical study of an Old Testament text in its original context, along with its usage by a New Testament writer or speaker. The specific passage will be chosen by the student in consultation with the professor, and must be approved by the third class session (Sept 18). A proposed bibliography of the paper must be submitted by Oct 9.

4. **Oral presentation of research** – Students will make an oral presentation of their research, summarized in a paper of c. 8-10 pages maximum. This presentation will be followed by a response by another student (see guidelines below) and by a classroom discussion. Two copies of the paper must be submitted at least one week in advance of the presentation, preferably two weeks in advance for the benefit of the student who will make a response to the paper. Full documentation and a bibliography must accompany the oral presentation.

5. **Response paper** – Each student will be required to make a response to another's student's oral presentation. The response will be 4-5 pages. Full documentation and a bibliography must accompany the response.

### **GRADING SCALE/CRITERIA FOR THIS GRADUATE SEMINAR:**

In this seminar, grades for papers and presentations will be assigned along the following lines:

A = the paper is essentially publishable, creative and in-depth with almost flawless editing; the presentation held us spellbound.

A- = the paper is of very high quality, needing only some fairly minor changes for publication; the presentation was impressive, with only a few minor disputable points

B+ = you have done the work expected of you; solid work; be proud;

B = acceptable work; solid, but some deficiencies to keep it from B+ status;

B- = acceptable work, but significant improvement needed;  
 C+ = unacceptable, essentially amounts to a failing grade.

It is assumed at the outset that your paper/presentation is on the B+ level. To get a higher grade you will need to show me something that warrants that increase. A lower grade means something is missing.

“The play’s the thing”, according to Hamlet; in this seminar, however, “The research paper’s the thing”. The main weight of your course grade rests upon your research paper; if your paper is in the “A/A-” range then normally you can expect your overall course grade to be in that range as well. An exception to this general rule would be if your attendance, oral presentations and/or participation and classroom demeanor are clearly sub-par; these will adversely affect the course grade even if the research paper is excellent. On the other hand, outstanding oral presentations and participation will not raise one’s overall grade into the “A” range if the research paper is in the “B” range.

### **STYLE AND FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS FOR WRITTEN WORK:**

All papers must be typed/processed (twelve point type, double spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the “Style and Form Standards for All Masters Level Programs” (Erskine Seminary). This document is available on the seminary’s web page at <http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/fairbairn/>. In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper’s cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements. If you have not already done so, you should consult the seminary’s approved paper on “Writing Theological Papers” by Dr. Fairbairn. This can be located on the seminary’s web page at <http://acad.erskine.edu/facultyweb/fairbairn/>.

Note the following additional criteria for evaluating oral and written work:

- Clear statement of the thesis of the paper
- Logical organization and development of the paper
- Conclusions clearly stated and supported
- Strength of Biblical support for the thesis and its development
- Judicious and balanced use of primary and secondary sources
- Depth of insight in the paper
- Originality of content
- Creativity in addressing the thesis and development of the argument
- Correct use of the English language and follows guidelines for written work

### **OTHER CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS AND SEMINARY POLICIES:**

**Late and/or Incomplete Work:** As the course progresses, class sessions will increasingly involve student presentations and responses. At the start of the course we will be assigning dates for such presentations, and thus much of the course schedule will be dependent upon students completing their work on time. In light of this, late work will not be accepted in this seminar. For the Seminary policy on “Incompletes”, see the Seminary catalog.

**Plagiarism:** Any student who commits plagiarism is in violation of Seminary policy and is liable for dismissal. See the academic section of the Catalog for complete information.

**Language about God and Humanity:** The Bible and the Church’s historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all stu-

dents to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

**Conduct in Theological Discussions:** Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information. It is especially vital, in a seminar format such as this, that an atmosphere of mutual respect be cultivated and maintained at all times. It is expected that you will have disagreements and criticisms with the material, your fellow students, or the instructor, but irresponsible or uncharitable remarks will not be tolerated in any form. The following principles, adapted from Dr. Eves, are the ground rules or “rules of engagement” for classroom discussions and interaction:

- Be humble, courteous, and respectful.
- Work hard to correctly understand the day’s readings and one another; it is no shame to admit that something was unclear to you and to seek clarification from others.
- Try to articulate your thoughts as clearly as possible.
- Avoid personal attacks.
- Keep clearly in mind that our mutual goal is Truth, not personal gain or ego.
- Do not monopolize the conversation when you are not a primary presenter.
- Stay on topic.
- Welcome criticism and questions.
- Expect disagreement at times, and deal with it constructively when it arises.
- Be quick to apologize if you offend someone.
- Be equally quick to forgive if you are offended by someone.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

A full schedule of readings and assignments will be provided at the first class session. For now, note the following important dates:

- September 11: Hays’ *Echoes of Scripture* should be read in its entirety by this date
- September 18: passage selected and approved by the instructor
- October 9: proposed bibliography submitted to the instructor
- December 11: research paper due on or before this date