

# LIDLAW COLLEGE

*Te Wananga Amorangi*

## 111.615 Biblical Interpretation Course Assessment and Delivery Outline

Campus: BTC/CDL  
Tutor: Jean Palmer

Semester 1, 2015  
NQF Level: 6, 15 credits

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

- a. Introduction to exegesis, hermeneutics and the nature of scripture
- b. Working with texts: the text and its literary context
- c. Working with texts: close observation and formal analysis
- d. Using the tools: historical context, original languages, and word studies
- e. The exegetical essay
- f. Genre and interpretation
- g. Historical developments:
  - Canon, text, and manuscripts
  - Lessons from history
  - Historical criticism
  - Literary criticism (incl. narrative criticism)
  - Social-scientific and advocacy approaches
- h. Hermeneutics and meaning:
  - location of meaning: author, text, reader
  - the myth of biblical objectivity
  - hermeneutics of antipathy, suspicion, appreciation or trust
  - theological interpretation
  - when Christians disagree
  - considerations for good biblical interpretation

### ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES

There are four (4) assessment tasks for this course. These involve the following:

#### i. **Class Discussion and Write-up**

*Learning Outcomes:* 1, 3, 4

*Due Dates:* Class discussions in weeks 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, write-ups due midnight Sunday at the end of those weeks.

*Percentage Weighting:* 10%

*Length:* As below:

Within six of the modules in this course you are asked to interact with what you have learned both through class discussion on a question supplied and by posting a write-up of no more than 200 words to the on the online discussion forum on Moodle. In the class discussion you will be expected to respond to the contributions of others in the class as well as presenting your own thinking.

## ii. **Exegetical Task**

<i>Learning Outcomes:</i>	1, 2, 3, 4
<i>Due Date:</i>	Parts A, B and C are submitted together by Midnight Sunday, at the end of semester week 5
<i>Percentage Weighting:</i>	30%
<i>Length:</i>	<b>Part A:</b> 300 words (word count does not include your chart or mindmap) <b>Part B:</b> 500 words (word count does not include your diagram of the text and your work on it) <b>Part C:</b> 1200 words <b>TOTAL:</b> 2000 words

The student will complete an exegetical task incorporating the following components:

- A. Part A - Engaging the text and its literary context (5 hours)
- B. Part B - Close observation and formal analysis (5 hours)
- C. Part C Using the tools (15 hours).

### **Detailed instructions for the Exegetical Task**

The exegetical task is divided into three parts which correspond to the topics covered in modules 2, 3, and 4. You are strongly encouraged to complete each part of the exegetical task immediately after finishing the relevant module. Note carefully the time allocated to each section, as detailed above.

#### **Part A – Engaging the text and its literary context: Luke 4:1-9:51**

(Refer to Module 2 and the relevant section under “Contextual Analysis” in Gorman’s, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*).

##### 1. Chart the book

Luke is a fairly large book, so we won’t chart the whole book here, but rather the larger section in which Luke 7:36-50 is found. Read Luke 4:1-9:51 to get a feel for the wider literary context of Luke 7:36-50. Luke 4:1 begins after Jesus’ baptism and forty days in the wilderness, and records Jesus’ ministry in and around Galilee until the time when he heads towards Jerusalem in Luke 9:51.

Follow the instructions in Module 2 for charting a book, and apply them to Luke 4:1-9:51.

Note: at this stage, do not consult any exegetical tools such as Bible dictionaries or commentaries. I want you to engage the text by yourself.

##### 2. Prayerful readiness

Before you read through Luke 7:36-50 again pause for a moment and pray. Ask God to help you become more aware of what’s going on in the text, and more receptive to his illumination. We are not engaging with an ordinary book. This is God’s Word – a communication with our Lord. Now begin reading Luke 7:36-50. Imagine that you are there in the story. Feel the tension, the surprise, the excitement, and the complexity of the situation.

##### 3. Mindmap your initial thoughts

Read through Luke 7:36-50 again and mindmap your ‘Initial Thoughts’ as demonstrated by Mark Strom in the Multimedia clip in Module 2, called *Module 2 - Mindmap of Isa 5*.

- What do you think is the main point of Luke 7.36-50? (1-2 sentences only)

##### 4. The Literary Context

(No more than half a page)

- Where is the text of Luke 7:36-50 located?
- Why is it there? In other words, how does this passage contribute to its wider context, and how does the wider context help us to better interpret this passage?
- What thematic links and/or theological connections are there between the passage and its immediate and wider context?
- What is the rhetorical effect of passage?

##### 5. Inward responsiveness

Consider the following questions and jot down your responses. (Limit each response to no more than two sentences):

- How would you feel in this situation?
- What might God be saying to you through this?

### **Part B – Close observation of the text**

For Part B you will work again with Luke 7:36-50. This time you will need to follow closely the steps outlined in Module 3, and the chapter on “Formal Analysis” in Gorman’s *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*. Try to be concise and record only those things which are especially important for understanding the passage.

1. Diagram the text
  - As instructed in Module 3.1, draw up a diagram/analytical layout of Luke 7:36-50
2. Close observation of the text (No more than a page in addition to your diagram/analytical layout of the text)
  - On your diagram/analytical layout of the passage closely observe the text by carefully working through the instructions in your Learning Guide, “Activity – What to look for in a text”, in Module 3.2. You can use up to half a page in addition to this to describe what you have discovered and its significance for understanding the text.
  - When you have completed this, write one what, one where, one who, one how and one why question of the text, and consider how you might answer each.
3. Observe the form, structure, and movement of the text (No more than half a page)
  - What do you notice about the text’s form/genre?
  - What do you notice about its structure?
  - What do you notice about the movement of this passage?
  - What difference does this make to how we read this passage?

### **Part C – Using the tools**

Some articles from key reference works and commentaries have been provided for you in the virtual library on your CD-Rom, Disc 3. Due to copyright restrictions we are not able to provide you with an exhaustive list of articles. You may need to go beyond the virtual library; remember to use the resources available to you through the Deane Memorial Library at Laidlaw College.

For Part C of this assignment you will again be working with Luke 7:36-50. This time you will need to follow closely the steps outlined in Module 4. (N.B. Since Part C requires you to research using concordances, dictionaries, and commentaries, etc., you must reference any work you cite or scholarly points you discuss in footnotes).

1. Textual Variants (No more than one paragraph)
  - Using a good commentary, see if there are any textual variants that are important to note for interpreting this passage. If there are, discuss these.
2. Word Study (No more than one and a half pages)
  - For this task follow the instructions outline in 4.5 of Module 4, “Word Studies and Using the Tools”.
  - Select three of the key words you noted when doing the Exegetical Task – Part B. Work through one word at a time and record your findings as follows:
    - Note the Greek or Hebrew word it translates. (Biblical language students must write the word using Greek or Hebrew characters. Students working from the English text must show they can transliterate the Greek or Hebrew word using Latin characters. All students may use both if they wish).
    - Note the grammatical construction of the word. For example, is the word a noun, or verb, or adjective, etc? If it is a noun, is it singular or plural? If it is a verb is it active or passive? Also what tense is it, past, present or future? Most importantly, is any of this significant for how we understand the passage being studied?
    - Note its semantic field (or range of meanings) and the way it is used in this text text (e.g. is it being used literally or metaphorically? Is it connotative or denotative? etc). Note its meaning and importance for understanding Luke 7.36-50.
  - The first tool you should consult for your word study is the Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance. Try to discover as much as you can about the word from this, before consulting Bible dictionaries. Then lastly consult a few good commentaries on the passage to check your work, and correct or add to it if necessary.
3. The historical context (No more than a page)
  - Using the tools available try to find out as much as you can about any aspects of the historical context that will help you interpret Luke 7:36-50. The instructions for this section are provided at point 4.1 of Module 4. Work through the important questions to ask, and use the tools to see what answers you

can find to these historical questions. Remember to focus on those things which help you to understand the passage.

- One place to start could be to find out what it meant to be a Pharisee. Since Luke stresses that Simon was a Pharisee, he must have considered it was important to mention. Therefore, how might understanding this better help us interpret the text?
- Before completing this section, consult at least three additional commentaries on this passage to see if they provide any more information in relation to historical context.

When you have completed all your work on Luke 7:36-50, you may like to look at a very interesting discussion on the passage in Kenneth Bailey's book, *Through Peasant Eyes*, 1-21. Bailey applies a literary-cultural approach to the text and has come up with some very interesting insights and suggestions as to its meaning. Note carefully how he closely observes the text, discusses key words and their meanings, notes its structure and its significance, and brings to the text insights from studies in its historical-cultural context.

### iii. **Exegetical Essay**

<i>Learning Outcomes:</i>	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
<i>Due Dates:</i>	Midnight Sunday, at the end of semester week 10
<i>Percentage Weighting:</i>	45%
<i>Length:</i>	2500 words

The exegetical essay is the combination of all the relevant data amassed through exegetical analysis, into a coherent and readable discussion that draws out the author's intended meaning and logically unfolds the central integrating theme(s) of the passage.

For your exegetical essay you may continue to work with Luke 7:36-50, or you may choose to start afresh one of the following texts:

- Jeremiah 31:31-34
- Mark 6:1-6
- Philippians 2:1-11

### **Detailed instructions for the Exegetical Essay**

An exegetical essay is the combination of all the relevant data amassed through exegetical analysis, into a coherent and readable discussion that draws out the author's intended meaning and logically unfolds the central integrating theme(s) of the passage. Since the word count is limited you will want to cover only the information that you consider essential to understanding the text. Having said this, do cover *all* the information that you consider essential. Gordon Fee has a helpful comment regarding this, which applies to all aspects of the essay as well as the grammatical matters he refers to:

*Discuss only those grammatical matters that make a difference in one's understanding of the text. Some items simply do not carry the same weight as others and may be safely relegated to a footnote. But when the grammatical questions are crucial to the meaning of the whole text... or where they make a significant difference in perspective... or when they add to one's understanding of the flow of the argument as a whole... then such discussion should be found in the body of the paper.*

There is no single essay format appropriate to every genre and passage of Scripture, so you will need to be flexible in how you draw together and write up the results of your analysis. Note that the following outline and suggestions are not "boxes to tick", but indicate the general areas to cover and the kinds of things you should be alert to in each general area. Remember also that you are writing an essay. An essay is supposed to express a point of view or argue or explain something. It is more than just an assemblage of information relating to the passage in question. The person marking your essay wants to see that you understand what the passage is about and what it contributes to its immediate context, and to the biblical book it comes from as a whole.

For an exegetical essay of approximately 2000 words, I recommend that you adhere to the following broad outline. If at any point you are unsure of what to do, refer back to your learning guide Modules 2-5, and/or the relevant chapters of Gorman's book, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*.

#### An Introduction

The introduction should be brief. It should identify the passage in question, comment briefly on its contents and its general significance, alert readers to its main theme(s), and arouse the reader's interest. It may also refer to any classical or longstanding interpretive debates linked with the passage. (Approx. 100 words)

### The Historical Context

Discuss the historical context of the passage and the significance of this for interpretation. Consider the following: authorship; dating; the historical setting of the author(s) and readers; the occasion that precipitated the writing and/or what seems to be the author's purpose in writing; the sources drawn upon by the author and his redaction of these sources (but don't get bogged down here); and address all important historical questions raised by the text. Take note of explicit and implicit references to historical events and people, cultural and religious practices, values and beliefs, and social, political and economic structures whose explanation is important for understanding the passage. Where applicable, consider its relation to parallel passages if these raise additional historical questions. Be sensitive to the fact that historical information is always open to revision. Given the word count, be as succinct as possible and focus on those elements which are important for understanding the particular passage under investigation. (Approx. 150 words)

### The Literary Context

Consider how the passage relates to what precedes and what follows it: where it fits in the book as a whole, then the larger section of which the passage is a part, and finally the sections immediately before and after the passage; why it might be there; and what effect it has. Draw attention to any themes and theological ideas that link this passage with its wider literary context. Consider what light the wider context sheds on the meaning and importance of this passage, and what contribution this passage makes to its wider context. (Approx. 150 words)

### Form, Structure and Movement

Discuss here issues of literary genre, form, structure, and movement, and their significance for understanding the passage. Comments on the exegetical significance of literary and rhetorical devices used in the text, or on redactional modifications of traditional material can be dealt with more effectively in the detailed analysis below, although you may wish to make a general comment about any important literary devices used in this passage. (Approx. 150 words)

### Detailed Analysis of the Text

This is where you turn to step-by-step discussion of the actual wording and grammar of the text. Based on how you see the overall structure, progress through the passage working with a few verses or a paragraph at a time, beginning with the first verse and ending with the last. Sometimes verse divisions appear in the middle of a sentence or a unit of thought. Where this occurs, discuss two or three verses together. At other times, one verse may encapsulate an important idea, so you can discuss this by itself. Also, although you must cover every verse of the passage, not all verses will require the same depth of treatment. You will need to be selective.

Focus on those features which are important for understanding the passage as a whole, such as: key words and phrases, grammar and syntax, literary and rhetorical devices, points of historical or cultural significance, important themes and theological ideas, and the details of sub-genre, structure and movement. If the passage has a textual variant which potentially alters the meaning of the text, then discuss this. Note also any ambiguity in the text. If the passage contains issues of interpretation where commentators and scholars are divided, it will normally be sufficient to note this without trying to resolve the issue. Having said this, do form an opinion as to which arguments you think are the strongest. Finally, strive to clarify the logical flow of the passage, which can be easily lost in verse by verse dissection. (Approx. 1000 words)

### Synthesis

This is where you draw the main elements together into a unified whole, highlight what you think are its main point(s), key themes and/or theological concerns, and draw a conclusion about the text's meaning, its purpose or function, its significance, and its contribution to the wider biblical context. This section should show the marker that you understand what the passage as a whole contributes to your theological understanding. (Approx. 200 words)

### Reflection/Application

Your essay should then conclude with some comments on the text's contemporary significance and how it might be applied to today. Identify a particular audience, and reflect on how the message of the passage may be relevant for them today. (Approx. 250 words)

## **iv. Hermeneutical Reflection**

<i>Learning Outcomes:</i>	6
<i>Due Dates:</i>	Midnight Sunday, at the end of study week 1
<i>Percentage Weighting:</i>	15%
<i>Length:</i>	1000 words

Choose one of the topics listed below and consider the kinds of hermeneutical issues raised with respect to that topic. Do not craft your answer into a well-argued essay. Simply give your

own reflection in a succession of paragraphs, each addressing a particular hermeneutical issue and suggesting why it must be considered and how it affects the way a person might read or understand the text. You will need to read at least 3-4 books or articles on the topic to do well. Therefore please include a bibliography. However, avoid quotes and footnotes.

Select one of the following topics for discussion:

- a) the formation of the canon and criteria for canonicity
- b) a dispensational hermeneutic
- c) a liberation or feminist hermeneutic
- d) a discussion of author-centred, text-centred and/or reader centred hermeneutics
- e) a discussion of one of the following genres and interpretive issues related to that genre: prophecy, apocalyptic, wisdom, psalms, or epistles
- f) a discussion of issues raised by a hermeneutic of antipathy. How would you respond to a person holding this kind of hermeneutic in relation to the Bible?
- g) a missional hermeneutic
- h) a discussion of the hermeneutical issues raised by one of the following topics of debate: women in church leadership or teaching ministry; Sabbath keeping; homosexuality; prosperity doctrine; or the place of charismatic gifts in the church today.

A student may undertake to investigate an alternative topic of interest to them, if permission is granted by the tutor.

### **Detailed Instructions for the Hermeneutical Reflection**

Since the options for the hermeneutics reflection vary, there is not one way to approach this question. However, here are a few guidelines to get you thinking.

- The most important thing to keep in mind is that this is a *hermeneutics* reflection. It is not asking you to argue for a particular biblical or theological position. It is asking you to examine or investigate the hermeneutical questions raised by your topic of study. Therefore it must discuss *hermeneutical* issues i.e. issues relating to what people think about the nature of Scripture, and how they read and interpret it.
- For most of this course you have been thinking about how **you** understand the Bible as a whole, and how to read and apply a particular passage of scripture, and you've been learning how to do this well. In this assignment I want you to think about how **others** understand the Bible as a whole, and how they read and apply particular passages of scripture.
- Therefore, if you choose the topic on women in church leadership for example, I am not asking you to argue for or against women in church leadership. I am asking you to examine the way those engaged in this debate interpret and apply scripture. Carefully examine their arguments in order to critique what they believe about the nature of scripture and how they use the text to support their arguments. Try to decide whether or not you think their approaches are appropriate ways of interpreting Scripture and explain why you think this. Ask questions like, 'What are these people doing with Scripture?' 'How are they using it?' 'Are these methods of interpretation appropriate?' And 'If not, why not?', or 'If so, why so?'
- If you choose a topic like canonicity, then you must discuss some of the hermeneutical issues involved in formulating a canon. This could include ideas like criteria for canonicity. You could briefly trace the historical process of canonicity for the Old Testament and the New Testament separately. You could also address questions like, 'Why are there different canons today (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant)?' and 'How might having a different canon influence hermeneutics?' and 'Why were some of the Gnostic books not included in the New Testament canon?', and 'Why did the church reject Marcion's limited canon?' etc.
- For some of the questions you are being asked to describe the hermeneutics of a particular theological position. Again, don't spend a lot of time discussing which position you think is right. This is not what you are being asked to do. Instead, focus on how these people are using the biblical text. Analyse their interpretive methods. Note the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches, and the influences upon them (e.g. experience, tradition, etc). Decide whether you think these approaches are appropriate or not. And give reasons for your assessment.
- If you choose to answer a genre question, discuss the interpretive issues that emerge from reading that genre. How would you describe the particular genre in terms of its form, content, and function? What do people need to keep in mind when interpreting that particular genre? What might be some common errors people make when working with this kind of genre? How is any of this important for reading the Scriptures?
- If you choose the question on author-centred, text-centred, and/or reader-centred hermeneutics, you are dealing with the question of where meaning lies, whether it is with the author, the text, or the reader. To do

well here you will need to address the various issues raised by one or all of these positions, and the strengths and weaknesses that emerge if one is favoured over another. Also show how your discussion is relevant to biblical interpretation.

My short term goal is that as you work on this reflection you will become more skilled in seeing how different people understand and work with the Scriptures, and that you will also become more aware of your own assumptions about the text and the methods you use to interpret Scripture. Long term, I hope that you will become someone who can help others understand how they are working with the text, and be equipped to help others learn how to read Scripture well and to live as faithful followers of Jesus.

## **CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT**

### **i. Class Discussion and Write-up**

Before beginning your first online discussion, please see the grading grid (rubric) on the “online discussion assignment coversheet” for further details on how these criteria will be applied.

- Engagement with material
- Constructive engagement with others
- Structure and presentation
- Timeliness

### **ii. Exegetical Task**

- a. Engaging the text and its literary context
  - Chart: arrangement of content and structure of the wider context
  - Mindmap: thoughtful engagement with the text and awareness of key features
  - Identification of key themes and theological ideas linking the text with its literary context
  - Explanation for the location of the text and its rhetorical effect
  - Articulation of inward responses
- b. Close observation and formal analysis
  - Logic of diagram/analytical layout of the text
  - Identification of key words, phrases, and literary devices
  - Analysis of genre/form
  - Analysis of structure
  - Analysis of movement
  - Awareness of the significance of these factors for understanding the text
- c. Use of exegetical tools
  - Identification of textual variants
  - Study of key words and their meaning in context
  - Investigation of historical questions raised by the text
  - Articulation of the significance of these factors for understanding the text
  - Scholarly contributions, issues and questions noted

### **iii. Exegetical Essay**

- Contextual Analysis: historical context
- Contextual Analysis: literary context
- Formal Analysis: form, structure and movement
- Use of tools
- Critical Analysis (i.e. detailed verse by verse analysis)
- Critical Judgment
- Synthesis
- Reflection/Application

- Presentation

**iv. Hermeneutical Reflection**

- Breadth of coverage
- Depth of treatment
- Critical discernment
- Independent judgment
- Presentation

**LEARNING HOURS**

111.615 is a 15 credit course consisting of 150 learning hours. The assignment tasks and learning hours are as follows.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Class time and preparation		60 hours
Class Discussion and Write-up	10%	10 hours
Exegetical Task	30%	25 hours
Exegetical Essay	45%	40 hours
Hermeneutical Reflection	15%	15 hours
	100%	150 hours

Although this guideline regarding learning hours is not intended to be applied rigidly, it should help ensure a balanced workload. It is expected that you complete one module per week. Online discussion is an integral part of this course, and is both assessed and compulsory. The online discussion undergirds the learning process and helps to structure the course for the students.

**TEXTBOOK:**

The **textbooks** for this course are:

Klein, W., Blomberg, C., and R. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation: Revised and Expanded*. Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2004.

Gorman, Michael J., *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Revised and Expanded Edition. Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson, 2009.

These texts are **compulsory** for distance learning students

All students will be provided with access to the Biblical Interpretation course area in Moodle. The resources available there are maintained by Jacqui Lloyd. They include a course guide that draws on one or more course textbooks.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Other Highly Recommended Texts

Duvall, Scott J. & J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-on Approach to Reading, Interpreting and Applying the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2001.



- Fee, Gordon D. & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
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- Wright, N.T., *Scripture and the Authority of God*. London, SPCK, 2005. Also known as *The Last Word: Beyond Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture*.
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### General Bibliography

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- Zimmermann, Jens. *Recovering Theological Hermeneutics: An Incarnational-Trinitarian Theory of Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.

Also check out **The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series**, edited by C. Bartholomew et.al. and published by Paternoster and Zondervan. There are now six volumes available.

### **Reference Works**

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#### Other Multi-volume Dictionaries highly recommended

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#### Commentaries

The following are in order from easiest to hardest:

*Bible Speaks Today* commentary series

*Tyndale Old and New Testament* commentary series

*The NIV Application Commentary*

*The Expositors Bible Commentary* series

*New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICNT)* series

*New International Commentary on the Old Testament (NICOT)* series

*Word Biblical Commentary* series

*Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* series

*New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)* series