

COURSE SYLLABUS

HR501: Biblical Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation

Course Lecturer: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., PhD

About This Course



This course was originally created through the Institute of Theological Studies in association with the Evangelical Seminary Deans' Council. There are nearly 100 evangelical seminaries of various denominations represented within the council and many continue to use the ITS courses to supplement their curriculum. The lecturers were selected primarily by the Deans' Council as highly recognized scholars in their particular fields of study.

Course Description

Welcome to *Biblical Hermeneutics: Understanding Biblical Interpretation*, an online graduate-level course designed to expand your understanding of biblical hermeneutics.

The term *hermeneutics* can be intimidating. It sounds academic and is foreign to most of our vocabularies. However, the act of interpretation is as common as communication itself. Whenever someone speaks, a listener interprets what the speaker means. But what is interpretation when we apply it to reading the Bible? How can we legitimately and effectively interpret the Bible? This course will instruct in various parameters for biblical interpretation and will show how specific methods are applied to Bible study.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to do the following:

- Understand the characteristics of a good interpreter of Scripture.
- Defend his/her position on whether a passage of Scripture can have only one or multiple meanings.
- Describe the basic assumptions of the liberal schools of higher criticism of the Bible.
- Articulate particular biblical theologies that provide argument for the unity for all of Scripture.
- Identify and interpret literary devices used in biblical narratives.
- Formulate teaching or preaching outlines of biblical narrative passages.
- Appreciate the depth of understanding of Scripture that can be reached by a more complete understanding of poetry, proverbs, and allegory.

- Recognize key interpretive clues as you approach the study of prophetic passages of Scripture.
- Defend the relevance of the Old Testament for today's world.
- Understand the importance of context in correctly interpreting Scripture.
- Cite numerous principles to be applied in seeking theological truths from Scripture.
- Develop an attitude of both confidence and caution in interpreting Scripture doctrinally
- Explain the right relationship between authorial intent and the role of the reader in determining the meaning of a text.
- Show how cultural aspects of the Bible can be used to teach overarching truths.
- Discuss the concept of principled application of Scripture to contemporary issues.
- Commit to a regular practice of devotional Bible reading, prayer, and meditation.

Accessibility

If you have particular accessibility needs, please contact the CUGN Registrar at the beginning of the course. This will allow us to work directly with you to make efforts to accommodate your situation and ensure as full as possible accessibility to the course.

Course Lecturer



Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., PhD

Education:

- Brandeis University, MA and PhD
- Wheaton College, BA and BD

Teaching Career:

- President Emeritus and Distinguished Professor of Old Testament and Ethics, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Distinguished Colman M. Mockler Professor of Old Testament Studies, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- Professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1966-1993)
- Professor of Bible and Archaeology, Wheaton College (1958-1966)
- Leader of more than 20 graduate and undergraduate study tours abroad, while lecturing and preaching at thousands of schools and churches around the globe

Other Career Highlights:

- Advisory Editor, *Christianity Today*
- During his presidency at Gordon-Conwell (1997-2006), theological enrollment increased from 900 to 2,200 students
- Added five PhD programs during his tenure as Academic Dean and Senior Vice President for Education at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (1980-1993)
- Chairman for the Evangelical Seminary Dean's Council (1982-1993)
- President of the Evangelical Theological Society (1977)
- Regularly consulted for his expertise by several Christian publications and organizations

Publications:

- Author of more than 40 books, including *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, *Recovering the Unity of the Bible*, *Biblical Ethics: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching*, and his magnum opus, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*

Course Texts

Required:

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. and Moises Silva. *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.

Why Trust the Bible? Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing, 2008.

Textbooks can be ordered through our online store at CUGN.org, through your local bookstore, or through your preferred eReader when available.

Academic Honesty

At CUGN, we believe all we do is “as unto the Lord” and we thus hold to a high academic standard of honesty; we do not tolerate plagiarism and cheating. Students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty face consequences ranging from interaction with the Academic Dean to expulsion from CUGN.

Quizzes and Exams: Any student found guilty of cheating on a quiz or exam will automatically receive a score of zero for that quiz or exam. A second offense will result in automatic course failure and possible disciplinary action and/or expulsion from CUGN. Please view the [CUGN Academic Catalog](#) for a full definition and examples of cheating.

Plagiarism: If a student’s work is found to be plagiarized, consequences will vary depending on the nature of the plagiarism.

If an offense is deemed unintentional, the student will have an opportunity to resubmit the work. A second offense will result in an automatic score of zero for that assignment, which may also result in failure of that course.

More serious plagiarism offenses could result in automatic course failure, disciplinary action, or expulsion from CUGN. Please view the [CUGN Academic Catalog](#) for a full definition and examples of plagiarism. If you have questions about plagiarism, or would like to request resources for learning how to avoid plagiarism, please contact our Registrar’s Office at registrar@cugn.org or toll free at (888) 487-5376 ext. 3.

Course Methods

Throughout this course, a number of methods will be used to engage the students in learning and

processing information, and applying the learning to their lives. These methods include the following:

Media/Materials

The course will include media presentations of lectures to be listened to and/or read throughout the lessons of the course.

- **Audio-based teaching**

The primary course content will be delivered via audio lectures, including the full transcript of each lecture. A guided outline to assist you in note taking is also made available in PDF format.

Multisensory learning

Because the primary teaching information is provided in audio and PDF text documents, students can choose the medium (or combination of media) that most closely aligns with their individual learning styles.

- **Readings**

Reading from the textbooks will be assigned to students each lesson.

Interaction

Whether sitting in a traditional classroom or studying from a distance, students benefit from interaction and collaboration with other students. In order to meet this need in distance theological education, CUGN offers structures and resources to encourage effective community interaction in this course.

Course Discussion

This forum fosters peer-to-peer interaction in a global, threaded discussion. Students are required to respond to relevant questions posted by the instructors; students are also encouraged to read and respond to the posts of fellow students.

Reflection

Through blogging and the use of interactive exercises, CUGN provides many opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned, what they believe, and where they are challenged. The goal of these reflections is personal spiritual growth and transformation.

Blog

Many of the assignments ask students to record their thoughts in a course blog. Blog entries can be viewed only by the student and by the site administrator, and are not graded.

Course Requirements

In order to receive credit, the student must complete the course requirements within a 90-day period. Those requirements include:

- Listening to and/or reading the audio lecture for each lesson
- Reading the assigned text and/or Bible passages for each lesson
- Participating in and meeting all requirements of the Response Time Forum (see details below)

- Viewing the video presentations provided in Lessons 1 and 2
- Becoming familiar with vocabulary words
- Keeping a Personal Reflection Journal in response to reflection questions (see Personal Reflection and Evaluation at the end of this syllabus.)
- Taking each lesson quiz and a final examination, scoring a 70% or higher average

Additional information about these requirements is provided below.

Audio Lectures

Each of the lessons in this course contains an audio lecture of approximately 40 minutes in length. These instructional lectures are required and can be listened to as many times as needed. The content is also available in a text file (PDF) for students who can benefit from these alternative media.

Reading

Bible reading references and the textbooks used in this course should be read completely at least once. Each assignment should be read in the context of the lesson that covers that particular passage or topic.

Response Time

This forum houses discussion questions related to each lesson's lectures. In order to obtain credit for the course, you must visit the Response Time forum for each lesson of the course, and your attendance will be validated by your posts. You are required to post a response to at least one discussion question for each lesson. You are also required to then take time to read other students' postings and respond to at least two. Each response should consist of two to three well-conceived paragraphs.

Video Presentations

CUGN utilizes the radio and television teams of Our Daily Bread Ministries to enhance your educational experience. This course uses the following two videos from the *Day of Discovery* television program:

- *Where Did the Bible Come From?*
- *Has the Bible Been Corrupted?*

Links will be provided to these videos in Lessons 1 and 2 of the course.

Vocabulary

Throughout the course you will find terms necessary to the understanding of the subject matter presented. You should become familiar with any unfamiliar words and their meanings as a requirement of this coursework.

Reflection

You will be required to keep a Personal Reflection Journal during this course. Your journal is available in the course for recording thoughts and reflections as you go through the course. Personal Reflection Journal entries can be viewed only by you and the site administrator. At the end of the course, you will be asked to validate that you have completed this requirement. The purpose of the journal is

to help you reflect on what you are learning, what you believe, and where you may be challenged in your thinking and your life by what is studied in this course. The goal of these reflections is personal spiritual growth. Personal Reflection questions are posted in the Class Time section for each lesson.

Quizzes and Final Exam

The quizzes and exam will cover the material from the recorded lectures, the assigned reading, and other presentations. The textbooks should be read in accordance with the schedule of lectures as outlined in this syllabus (i.e., assigned chapters and pages should be read along with listening to each lecture).

Other Course Requirements

Course requirements noted in this syllabus will be validated before credit is awarded to any student.

Course Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:

Quizzes	48% of Course Grade
Final Exam	52% of Course Grade
Total	100%

Additional Reading

You may choose to read supplementary materials for many of the lessons. The following bibliography was provided by the professor at the time the course was created and may be used in part or in whole for your further study:

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981.

Bullinger, E. W. *Figures of Speech in the Bible Explained and Illustrated*. 1898; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968.

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Hirsch, E. D. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Teaching and Preaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.

Scalise, Charles J. *From Scripture to Theology: A Canonical Journey into Hermeneutics*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.

Terry, Milton S. *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*. 1885; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974.

Virkler, Henry A. *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Second ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Lesson Topics and Assignments

Lesson 1:

- Listen to Lecture One.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 1 and 2; begin reading *Why Trust the Bible?* (You may read this text at your own pace but you must read the entire book by the end of the course.)
- Participate in the Lesson 1 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 1 quiz.

Lesson 2:

- Listen to Lecture Two.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 7 and 16; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 2 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 2 quiz.

Lesson 3:

- Listen to Lecture Three.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 3 and 4; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 3 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 3 quiz.

Lesson 4:

- Listen to Lecture Four.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 5 and 8; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 4 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 4 quiz.

Lesson 5:

- Listen to Lecture Five.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 9; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 5 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 5 quiz.

Lesson 6:

- Listen to Lecture Six.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 12; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 6 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 6 quiz.

Lesson 7:

- Listen to Lecture Seven.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 6, 10 and 11; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 7 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 7 quiz.

Lesson 8:

- Listen to Lecture Eight.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 15; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 8 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 8 quiz.

Lesson 9:

- Listen to Lecture Nine.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 17; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 9 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 9 quiz.

Lesson 10:

- Listen to Lecture Ten.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 14; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 10 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 10 quiz.

Lesson 11:

- Listen to Lecture Eleven.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapter 18; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 11 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 11 quiz.

Lesson 12:

- Listen to Lecture Twelve.
- Record your response to the Personal Reflection question in your Personal Reflection Journal.
- Read Kaiser, Chapters 13 and 19; continue reading *Why Trust the Bible?*
- Participate in the Lesson 12 Response Time forum.
- Take the Lesson 12 quiz.

Course Wrap-Up:

- Take the Final Exam.
- Validate Course Requirements.

Course Contributors

CUGN utilizes the radio and television teams of Our Daily Bread Ministries to enhance the students' educational experience. This course uses two videos from the *Day of Discovery* television program. The expert contributors to these programs are listed as follows:

- Darrell Bock, Ph.D. (University of Aberdeen), Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary
- Mart De Haan, Litt.D. (Cornerstone University), Senior Advisor of Ministry Content at Our Daily Bread Ministries
- Jimmy De Young, Ph.D. (Louisiana Baptist University), Journalist and Conference Speaker
- Paul Maier, Ph.D. (University of Basel), Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University
- Richard Abanes, Ph.D. (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Professor of Archeology and Biblical Studies for Azusa Pacific University
- Charles Ryrie, Ph.D. (University of Edinburgh, Scotland), Former Dean of Doctoral Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary
- Daniel Wallace, Ph.D. (Dallas Theological Seminary), Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary

Notes Regarding This Syllabus

This syllabus is designed to provide learners with an overview of the course. Specific assignments are contained in each lesson.