



# The Bible ... *for Smarties*

## “INTRODUCTION TO HERMENEUTICS”

# SYLLABUS

Summer 2025

Taught by  
David Moseley, Ph.D.

Mondays ~ 6:00-8:00 p.m. PST  
\*\*Taught Online via Zoom\*\*

*Welcome to “Introduction to Hermeneutics”!* This class will introduce you to the scholarly discipline of Biblical Interpretation.

**The Goal of this Short Course is to Nurture Students towards a Nuanced, Contextualized, Critical Interpretation and Understanding of the many Texts that make up the Biblical Literature by Learning and Applying the Skills of the Academic Discipline of Hermeneutic.**

These three classes are a short prerequisite to the four semester-length Biblical Studies classes (Hebrew Bible 1 & 2, and Christian Scriptures 1 & 2) that are part of the core of *The Bible ... for Smarties* (BfS) curriculum over the next two years. During these sessions on Hermeneutics (the “Science of Interpretation”), we will be exploring together the basic principles used by scholars to read and interpret the Scriptures. Texts are never self-explanatory, as we shall discover; and reading Biblical texts, in particular, is an exercise that is fraught with potential pitfalls that requires patience and nuance on the part of the student who seeks to hear the “Word” of God in the words of these ancient manuscripts. Having familiarized ourselves with the basic principles of “Hermeneutics” – **Genre** (*what sort of text is this?*), **Isesis** (*what do we bring to the text?*) and **Exegesis** (*what do we take out of the text?*) – we will be ready to move on to the substantial work of exploring and interpreting the Biblical texts for ourselves, and will

hopefully be properly equipped to tackle the central **Course Objectives** of the BfS Scripture classes, namely:

- Distinguishing between various Interpretative Methods used to Study, Examine, Analyze, Research, and Comprehend Biblical Texts
- Understanding the Historical Context within which the Religious Texts of Ancient Israel and Early Christianity were Created and Read / Heard
- Appreciate the various Literary Genres found in the Texts of the Bible, and Understand their Functions for Interpretation
- Be aware of the Socio-Economic and Cultural Issues Relevant to the Formation of the Texts, and their Ethical Implications
- Comprehend the Significance, Relevance, and ongoing Influence of the Biblical Texts on Contemporary Life and Debates, both inside and outside of the Church

This introductory Pre-Requisite course will be taught in three two-hour classes:

### **Week 1: The Challenges of Interpretation**

(August 18<sup>th</sup>)

We will begin by thinking about and examining the challenges of interpreting any and every facet of human experience – whether it be music and lyrics, art, advertising, political rhetoric, as well as written texts. Through a series of multimedia exercises that are intended to be provocative and engaging, we will be exposed to many of our explicit and implicit preferences and prejudices that impact and shape acts of interpretation, and the instability and fluidity of the idea of an objective "meaning" of a text. A detailed reading and discussion of Genesis 22 and John 1 will serve to introduce and open up these concepts in the sphere of Biblical Interpretation.

### **Week 2: The Principles of Hermeneutics – Part 1**

(August 25<sup>th</sup>)

Students will be introduced to the main Principles of Hermeneutics through an historical and conceptual exploration of the emergence and evolution of this academic discipline, a subject that originated in the sphere of Biblical Studies during the Enlightenment, but eventually spread to all intellectual disciplines throughout the Academy. By examining the ideas and insights of the great progenitors and innovators of Hermeneutics, students will be introduced to the basic building blocks of the discipline: the ideas of Genre, Isegesis and Exegesis. Examples of all these principles and concepts will be provided from the world of movies, art and literature, as well as Biblical texts.

### **Week 3: The Principles of Hermeneutics – Part 2**

(September 8<sup>th</sup>)

We will continue our exploration and examination of the ideas and insights of the great progenitors and innovators of Hermeneutics, during which students will be introduced to the basic building blocks of the discipline: the ideas of Genre, Isegesis and Exegesis. Examples of all these principles and concepts will be provided from the world of movies, art and literature, as well as Biblical texts. Finally, we will conclude by attempting to develop some distinctively Episcopalian hermeneutical principles, and will use as an illustration a detailed deconstruction of The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25).

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be **NO** class on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> September (Labor Day).

### **Seminar Instructor**

**David Moseley, Ph.D.** holds undergraduate and graduate Degrees in Law, Theology and Philosophy from Oxford University, and a Doctorate in Theology from Cambridge University. He is Director of Global Education and Teaches Religious Studies & Philosophy at The Bishop's Episcopal School, La Jolla, CA. Dr. Moseley taught Theology and Biblical Studies at the University of San Diego for 16 years; he was formerly Theologian-in-Residence at St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral in San Diego; and was a founding member of the Faculty of the San Diego Episcopal School for Ministry, teaching all four of their Biblical Studies classes (Hebrew Scriptures 1 & 2, New Testament 1 & 2) for five full cycles over the last decade. Dr. Moseley has Led Trips to the "Holy Land" (Israel, Palestine & Jordan), and regularly Teaches Adult Religious Education Classes in Episcopal Parishes throughout the County. He formed *The Bible ... for Smarties* (BfS) program in 2023 as a way of continuing online opportunities for deeper engagement with Biblical texts growing out of his experiences teaching at the diocesan School for Ministry.

### **Materials and Class Format**

Our main text for this class is the Bible, and we will be using the following translation and edition:

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible - New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with the Apocrypha* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) edited by Michael Coogan (Oxford, 2018)

The other required text for Introduction to Hermeneutics will be:

*A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics* by David Jasper (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004)

[The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) is currently \$48 new in hardback on Amazon (\$32 in paperback, but I strongly advise you get the hardback for durability), and contains a wealth of useful introductory essays, maps, and annotations – and is required for all "The Bible ... for Smarties" Classes. (If you have a 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. From a previous class, that will be just fine.) The Jasper book is \$16 new on Amazon.]

Handouts and Outlines will be provided, as well as access to other Online Resources. Ultimately, what you get out of the class will depend on what you decide to put into it. You are strongly encouraged to complete assigned Readings before each class. This Course will be made up of both illustrated presentations and will sometimes use a "Flipped Classroom" methodology – rather than the instructor lecturing students in order to transmit content, students are expected to have absorbed primary content (Bible readings) through weekly reading, enabling secondary reflection and analysis to take place through guided classroom discussion in a Seminar-Style Setting.

## Registering for the Class

The cost of the class is \$75 (for 3 x 2-hr online classes -- a total of 6 hours of class time). [Scholarships are available upon inquiry.]

If you'd like to take the Christian Scriptures 1 class, you can either Venmo me the money (@David-Moseley-17), or pay using Zelle, or mail a check made out to "David Moseley" with "Hermeneutics Class" in the Memo Line, depending on your preference:

Dr. David Moseley  
P.O. Box 27031  
San Diego  
CA 92198

\*\*Zoom Recordings of other "The Bible ... *for Smarties!*" classes are available for purchase, with access to all supporting materials (assignments and reading lists, outlines, slide shows, and other resources). Classes that are available on recordings include:

1. A Short Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics (Three 2-Hr Classes)
2. Hebrew Scriptures 1 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – Torah & Historical Books
3. Hebrew Scriptures 2 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – Prophets & The Writings
4. Christian Scriptures 1 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – The Christian Gospels
5. Christian Scriptures 2 (Twelve 2-Hr Classes) – Pauline Literature & All the Rest
6. The Parables of Jesus (Six 2-Hr Classes)

Please email me if you have any interest in purchasing access to these recordings.

And please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Dr. David Moseley  
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*Best Wishes for the Class!*