**Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition**

**Craig A. Carter**

**Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando**

**Summer 2022**

**Dates and Times:**

July 18-22, 2022. Monday 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM; Tuesday thru Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM; Friday 9:00AM – 1:00 PM.

**Course Description**

 Since modern historical study of the Bible has created problems for preaching that did not exist before modernity, we need to recover models of premodern interpretation. The purpose of this course is to examine how church fathers from the first five centuries interpreted the Psalms and Isaiah and to reflect on what we can learn from them. We will read background material on the history of interpretation and discuss the writings of figures like Irenaeus, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine.

**Assignments and Evaluation**

1. **Preparatory Reading**: (25%) Before the class meets in July students are expected to read approximately 1500 pages of background material on the history of biblical interpretation as listed below. You will submit a Reading Report on the first day of classes listing the actual pages read from the assignment.
2. **Class Discussion**: (25%) The second part of the course will consist of five days of classes in Orlando in July 2022. The first day will be devoted to introductory issues and the other four days will consist of class discussion of examples of patristic exegesis. These examples will be mostly on Isaiah and the Psalter but will include some other examples as well. Most of the material will be sermons, but there will also be some other writings such as letters as well.

All students are expected to read all the primary sources and come prepared to discuss them. But each student will be assigned the task of introducing a reading on one or more occasions during the week, depending on the number of students enrolled.

1. **Application**: (50%) The third part of the course will be an assignment called “Learning to Preach Like a Church Father” in which the student will choose one of the church fathers and write a research paper of 12-15 pages on that person and his hermeneutics. Then the student must choose a passage of Scripture from the Psalms or Isaiah and write a sermon using interpretive methods learned from the church father plus a commentary on the sermon explaining the connections to the hermeneutics of the church father on your paper was written. This assignment will be due by Oct. 31, 2022.

So, the complete assignment will consist of (1) a 12-15 page research paper on the hermeneutics of a church father, (2) a sermon on a passage chosen by you implementing hermeneutical insights learned from that church father, and (3) commentary on the sermon in which you explain why you chose that passage, what insights from your church father you see as relevant to that passage, and how those insights helped you interpret and preach the sermon.

**Course Readings**:

 The readings in the History of Interpretation section should be read in advance. Some will be discussed in class, but all will be presupposed as background.

1. **History of Interpretation**

Athanasius, “The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms” in

*On the Incarnation*, (Popular Patristics Series, St. Vladimir’s Press, 97-119). [22]

Boersma, Hans. *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of A Sacramental Tapestry* (Eerdmans,

2011) [190]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *Scripture as Real Presence: Sacramental Exegesis in the Early Church* (Baker

Academic, 2017) [279]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *What Theologians Wish Biblical Scholars Knew* (IVP, 2021) [139]

Cameron, Michael. “General Introduction” in Augustine’s *Expositions of the Psalms, Vol. 1*

 (New City Press, 2000) [54]

Carter, Craig A. *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of*

*Premodern Exegesis* (Baker Academic, 2018) [251]

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition: Recovering Trinitarian Classical*

*Theism* (Baker Academic, 2021) [306]

Childs, Brevard S. *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2004)

[322]

Steinmetz, David C. “The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis” in *Taking the Long View:*

*Christian Theology in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, 2011) [12] [1575]

1. **Primary Sources:**

Once registration is closed for the course and I know how many students will be

participating, I will send everyone a list of primary source readings to be read and assign students to introduce each one. (See class discussion section above.)

**Outline**:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Day** | **Topic and Background Reading** | **Seminar Reading** |
| Monday | Lecture: The Failure of Modern Historical Criticism and the Recovery of Premodern Exegesis  | Hans Boersma, *What Theologians Wish Biblical Scholars Knew*Steinmetz, “The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis” |
| Tuesday | Interpreting the Psalms “The Letter of St. Athanasius to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms” in *On the Incarnation*, 97-119  | TBA (drawing from Origen and Athanasius among others) |
| Wednesday  | Interpreting the Psalms(Michael Cameron, “General Introduction” to Augustine’s Expositions of the Psalms)  | TBA (drawing from Augustine’s *Expositions of the Psalms*)  |
| Thursday  | Interpreting Isaiah (Brevard Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, ch. 2-6) | TBA (drawing from Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea)  |
| Friday  | Interpreting Isaiah (Brevard Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, ch. 7-12) | TBA (drawing from Jerome, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, Thomas Aquinas and Nicholas of Lyra) |

**Course Objectives Related to SLOs Chart**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **DMin\* Student Learning Outcomes***In order to measure the success of the DMin curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the DMin outcomes.* *NOTE: DMin Emphases are:*1. *Reformed Expository Preaching (REP), and*
2. *Reformed Theology and Ministry (RTM)*
 | **Rubric*** Strong
* Moderate
* Minimal
* None
 | **Mini-Justification** |
| **Biblical/****Theological Foundations:**  | Significant knowledge of biblical and theological foundations for pastoral ministry. (This includes interaction with Biblical texts, as well as awareness of Reformed Theology.)*For meets: REP= Significant**For meets: RTM= Significant* | Strong  | Readings, lectures, class discussion, research paper and sermon  |
| **Historical/****Contemporary Practices:**  | Significant knowledge of historical and contemporary practices of pastoral ministry. *For meets: REP= Minimal**For meets: RTM= Significant* | Strong | Readings in history of biblical interpretation and primary sources in patristic biblical interpretation  |
| **Integration:**  | Ability to reflect upon and integrate theology and practice, as well as implementation in a contemporary pastoral setting. | Strong  | The final assignment requires the use of hermeneutical insights from a church father in the exegesis of a passage and the writing of a sermon on that passage |
| **Sanctification:**  | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids in the student’s sanctification. | Strong  | The readings and class discussions include a focus on the necessity of spiritual growth for understanding of the biblical text |
| **Hermeneutical/****Homiletical Analysis** | Demonstrates ability to interpret a text and apply homiletical principles to the text.*For meets: REP= Significant**For meets: RTM= Minimal* | Strong  | The whole focus of the course in on learning how to preach better from the fathers of the church |