

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

GLOBAL



HERMENEUTICS

Dr. Robert J. Cara & Dr. Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

Course Overview

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Course Description:

00ON5100 Hermeneutics, 3 hours Lecturing Professor: Dr. Robert J. Cara Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record: Dr. Richard P. Belcher, Jr.

Emphasis will be placed upon OT-NT issues, particularly redemptive-historical considerations and covenant theology. Background hermeneutical issues will be covered, including the role of the interpreter and creeds/confessions. In addition, the course will include a brief overview of the history of interpretation of the Bible from the early church to modern day. Finally, the class will explore the relationship between original meaning and modern meaning.

This course is team taught with the first half of the course being taught by Dr. Cara and the second half of the course being taught by Dr. Belcher. The final lecture will be a joint effort between the two as they cover Covenant Theology and Meredith Kline.

Course Objectives:

- · Become familiar with personal and historical factors that influence one's hermeneutic
- · Present the history of hermeneutics in the church and draw both positive and negative consequences
- · Understand "meaning" and "application" of a Scriptural text
- · Justify using the same hermeneutic that the Bible itself uses

Required Textbooks:

Beale, Greg K. Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

Greidanus, Sidney. *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Pratt, Richard L. He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives. Phillipsburg: P&R, 1990.

Silva, Moises, ed. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Swain, Scott R. Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and its Interpretation. New York: T&T Clark, 2011.

[These books may also be available in ebook format through various retailers]

Online Student Handbook:

The Online Student Handbook (can be downloaded here) has been designed to assist you in successfully navigating the Distance Education experience, whether you are taking a single course or pursuing a certificate or degree program. In it you will find valuable information, step-by-step instructions, study helps, and essential forms to guide you through every aspect of your distance education opportunity from registration to graduation. Please use this resource as your first-stop reference manual.

Summary of Requirements:

- 1. Listen to all recorded Lectures
- 2. Complete all Readings
- 3. Participate in Forum Discussions (with other students and the professor)
- 4. Take the Final Exam
- 5. Submit Two Reading Papers
- 6. Submit Reading Report
- 7. Submit Mentor Report/Course Application Paper

Meet the Professors

Lecturing Professor:



Dr. Robert J. Cara is the Hugh and Sallie Reaves Professor of New Testament at RTS-Charlotte and Provost and Chief Academic Officer for the RTS institution. He has been a professor at RTS since 1993. Dr. Cara was an engineer for seven years before the Lord re-directed him toward seminary. As a former college basketball player for Penn State-Capitol, he has developed a reputation as an energetic and challenging classroom teacher, and he is a personable scholar who is very student oriented.

In addition to the traditional New Testament topics, Dr. Cara's academic interests include relating the New Testament to Reformed Theology, creeds, hermeneutics, Second Temple Judaism documents,

and narrative criticism. In addition to numerous book reviews and articles, he has written a commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Currently, Dr. Cara is working on a commentary for the book of Hebrews in the Mentor Commentary series. Dr. Cara has several courses available on the RTS Mobile app, which can be accessed for free.

As an ordained minister in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Dr. Cara has been very involved at both the presbytery and synod levels. He is a former vice-moderator of the denomination and for several years was the chairman of the denominational Inter-Church Relations Committee. He preaches regularly in the Charlotte area.

Lecturing Professor and Professor of Record:



Dr. Richard P. Belcher is the Professor of Old Testament and Academic Dean of RTS Charlotte. He is an ordained minister in the PCA and pastored an urban nondenominational church in Rochester, NY for ten years before pursuing the Ph. D. This pastoral experience in an unusual and challenging setting gives him great insight into the practical, modern issues that will be faced by future pastors studying with him at RTS. He graduated from Covenant College and received his M. Div from Covenant Seminary. He also received an S.T.M. from Concordia Theological Seminary, and his Ph. D. is from Westminster Theological Seminary. He has served as stated supply for numerous churches in the area since coming to RTS Charlotte in 1995.

Grades

Forum Discussion (15%):

The student is required to interact in two (2) forums:

- 1. Student-Professor Posts (15 total posts)
 - A. Personal Introduction Forum: The student is required to post a brief personal introduction to the professor/class. Suggested details include your vocation, where you live, your church background, why you chose RTS, and what you hope to gain through the course (1 required post).
 - B. 5 Topical Discussion Q&A Forums: The student is required to answer each topical discussion question with one (1) response. The professor will acknowledge the student's answer and will follow up with a subsequent question to which the student must also answer with one (1) response. Each topical discussion question, therefore, requires two (2) total posts/responses from the student (Total of 5 forums x 2 posts =10 total posts).
 - C. Student-Professor Forum: The student is required to post four (4) times in this forum. Posts in this forum should focus on course-related content such as research paper topics, lectures and reading assignments, or other academic issues related to the course.
- 2. Student-Student Forum (5 total posts)
 - · A post may be either a new topic or a response to an already existing topic.

Examination (Final 30%):

There will be 1 examination for this course. No helps, including Bibles, are allowed. The student should use the Lesson Questions to guide them in their preparation and study for the exam. You will have 3 hours to complete the exam. The exam will consist of objective (true/false or multiple choice), short answer (2-4 sentences), and long answer (2 - 3 paragraphs) questions.

The exam for this course is to be taken online in the Learning Management System (LMS). After clicking on the exam link you, will be given detailed instructions about the exam. Please read these instructions carefully before entering the exam. Please note that you are required to have a proctor for all exams. Please see the proctor policy in the Global Student Handbook.

Reading Papers (40%):

The student will submit two (2) seven to ten (7-10) page papers, with no or few footnotes, covering Pratt's *He Gave Us Stories* and Silva, M., ed. *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*. See section titled "Reading Papers Instructions" in this syllabus.

Reading Report (10%):

Read the assigned reading from Beale, Greidanus, and Swain. To receive full credit, the student must read all of the required readings listed at the beginning of each lesson.

Mentor Report **OR** Course Application Paper (5%):

If you are enrolled in an **RTS Global** degree or certificate program submit a mentor report. Every portion of the form (goals, summaries, assessments, and signatures) should be filled out completely by both the student and the mentor to receive full credit. You can download the Mentor Report form in your Canvas classroom. See specific instructions for this assignment in Canvas.

If you are receiving your degree through another **RTS campus** (Orlando, Jackson, Charlotte, et. al.), or special student (e.g. from another seminary), submit a 250-word summary of how you perceive what you have learned in this course will fit into the objectives you have for your ministry, your educational goals, or other objectives you wish to achieve in life. Course Application Papers (CAP) that fall well-short of 250 words will receive a grade deduction. See specific instructions for this assignment in Canvas.

Assignments:

Best practice for your time management is for you to submit all assignments at the end of the week in which they fall, using the upload links provided in the LMS. All work must be submitted by midnight of the course end date, per your course start letter. You are responsible for turning in all assignments on time; no late submissions are permitted. Any student who needs an extension must get approval from the Registrar prior to that time.

Contact Information:

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Lessons

Lesson One

Hermeneutics, Revelation, and Reason

Lesson Two

Hermeneutics Influence - Existential and Historical

Lesson Three

Personal Influence and Meaning

Lesson Four

Hermeneutical Methodologies

Lesson Five

Modern Meaning and Hermeneutical Proverbs

Lesson Six

History of Interpretation and Allegorical Exegesis

Lesson Seven

Antiochene and Medieval Exegesis

Lesson Eight

Reformation and Enlightenment Exegesis

Lesson Nine

Jewish Exegesis

Lesson Ten

New Testament Exegesis and Preaching Christ

Lesson Eleven

Covenant Theology

Reading Papers Instructions

Paper #1 (20%): Pratt's He Gave Us Stories, pages 1-128, 306-402.

- · Submit a 7-10 page paper, with no or few footnotes, that includes:
 - o A statement that student read 100% of Pratt reading requirement.
 - o A self-conscious evaluation of one or more aspects of the student's interaction within his covenant community (both heritage and present) that has (or will have) influenced the student's biblical interpretation (BT/R-H/ST). This influence can be either positive, negative, or both.
 - o The paper should show knowledge of your covenantal community, and categories in Pratt's book and Cara's lectures.
 - o Although no research is required, this paper should have a sophisticated understanding of macro-hermeneutics and indicate that the student can "theologize" about himself relative to his theological community.
 - o Paper due at the end of the course.

Paper #2 (20%): Silva, M., ed. Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation.

- · Read any one of the books in this volume, except *God*, *Language and Scripture* and *Has the Church Misread the Bible*.
- · Submit a 7-10 page paper, with few or no footnotes, that includes:
 - o A statement that student read 100% of book within the volume.
 - o A summary of the book (1/3 of paper).
 - o Critique one small or large section in the book (2/3 of paper). The critique should show knowledge of Cara/Belcher lectures and the ability of the student to theologize about hermeneutics.
 - o Paper due at the end of the course.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Hermeneutics Professor: Cara and Belcher

MDiv*	Student Learning Outcomes	Rubric	Mini-Justification
In order to measure the success of the MDiv 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 MDiv outcomes. *As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.		StrongModerateMinimalNone	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Moderate	 Submits one self-reflective paper and one critical book review. Significant overview of the history of hermeneutics, both in the church and in philosophy.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	 Scripture's interpretation of Scripture is included. Scripture's understanding of "meaning" is included. Some original language included in OT-in-NT texts.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	 Overview of Reformed view of General and Special Revelation. Reformed hermeneutics. History of Reformed denominations. Swain book and Cara articles include historical Reformed views.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Minimal	 Psalm singing in class. Self-reflective paper.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	 Is Bible the ultimate authority for hermeneutics? Student's background affects hermeneutics. Van Til discussions.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	The ethos of RTS is explicitly presented and evaluated as to effect on hermeneutics.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	Preaching is related to hermeneutics. Creeds are related to shepherding.