

BIBHB 651 Biblical Law and the Ethics of Biblical Interpretation Spring Semester 2023

Room

Tuesdays 1:00 to 4:00 pm

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Course Prerequisites: BIBHB 500 and BIBNT 500

Course Goals

- Gaining introductory knowledge of the content, historical context, and critical scholarship pertaining to the Decalogue and each of the three major law collections in the Pentateuch
- Understanding current issues in the ethics of biblical interpretation and varying concepts of biblical authority
- Developing the ability to express those understandings to broader audiences

Required Texts (to be purchased)

Accessed on October 10, 2022

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Fifth edition (2018), ISBN-13: 978-0190276072, \$25.55 with 36% discount at amazon.com

OR

The HarperCollins Study Bible (2006), ISBN-13: 978-0060786847, \$40.49 at amazon.com

Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-19-5305500. \$29.49 (Kindle version) at amazon.com.

William P. Brown, ed., *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007). ISBN: 978-0-664230579. \$9.99 (Kindle version) at amazon.com.

Walter J. Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments for Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). ISBN: 978-0-664-22931-3. \$13.50 (Kindle version) at amazon.com.

William S. Morrow, *An Introduction to Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2017). ISBN: 978-0-802868657, \$21.20 at amazon.com.

Angela N. Parker, *If God Still Breathes: Why Can't I?: Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2021). ISBN: 978-0-8028-7926-4. \$16.99 at amazon.com.

Additional readings for the course, if any, will be posted on Moodle.

Course Requirements:

- Reading all of the assigned reading before for each class
- Active and engaged participation during all class sessions
- Leading class discussions on two of the assigned readings (from required books or resources posted on Moodle
- One reflection paper on your own concepts of biblical authority, including those of your denomination or pastoral leadership, and the ethics of biblical interpretation that will be handed in twice during the semester. The first version (1 to 2 pages), will be presented in the first weeks of the class and the second one (about 5 pages) will be submitted towards the end of the course. Your papers must incorporate material covered in our readings and class discussions. Only the final version of your paper has to be submitted to the professor.
- A brief exegetical paper (2-3 pages) on a specific text that addresses usual exegetical features, specifies questions raised about the text, given the type of analysis covered in this class, and proposes alternate readings of the text. Your conclusions will be presented in class.
- A brief analytical paper that addresses a particular biblical law or problematic text or an issue of biblical authority or biblical interpretation touched on during the course. Your topic must be approved by the professor. (5-6 pages double-spaced)

Because this class is a seminar, we are co-learners and students are expected to discuss their work with their peers. A specific number of students will discuss their work in each class. First, students will present their initial thoughts about biblical laws, biblical authority, and the ethics of biblical interpretation.

Next, students will present a summary of their brief exegetical work on specific biblical texts.

Finally, students will share with the class their insights on the questions of biblical laws, biblical authority and the ethics of biblical interpretation that have been covered in the course. Each of these presentations must take no more than 20 minutes.

Course Grading:

Consistent and active participation in class discussions (including summarizing and leading class discussion on two of the assigned readings and presentations of your own work)	20%
Reflection paper on own concepts of biblical authority and the ethics of biblical interpretation (to be presented in class twice and submitted in writing once)	30%
Brief exegetical assignment (presented in class as assigned <i>and</i> written version is due during the semester)	20%
Final Analytical paper (Due: Friday, May 19, 2023)	30%

Additional assignments for PhD students: Write a book review of Douglas A. Knight, *Law, Power and Justice in Ancient Israel* (Westminster John Knox, 2011) and prepare a presentation on the book for the class. Also, your final analytical paper should be 22 to 25 pages (double-spaced) in length.

Course expectations:

- completion of reading assignments before each class
- active and informed participation in class sessions
- punctual and regular attendance at all class sessions

Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. It is expected that you will give your full attention to the lectures and discussions in the class. To facilitate your engagement with the class, cellphones and earpieces must be turned off and put away, and your laptops should be used only for taking notes.

Our class discussions will supplement and integrate the readings rather than repeat that material. For this reason, missing a class damages the learning process. Consequently, two absences from a full class session will result in a substantial lowering of your grade and more absences than that will make it unlikely that the course can be successfully completed. Partial absences due to tardiness or early departures, among other things, will count towards missing a full class session. If you have to miss a class for any reason, please inform me in advance by telephone or email.

All course requirements must be completed to receive a final grade in the course. Furthermore, all assignments must be submitted on the date specified. Requests for

extensions are strongly discouraged. Any extension granted for an assignment will result in the lowering of your grade.

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the [Academic Handbook](#) for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- Academic integrity and [plagiarism](#): (See 19-20 Handbook, 12, 78-83) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- Writing and citations: The *Turabian Manual for Writers* and the *Chicago Manual of Style* footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online [here](#). In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (19-20 Handbook, 84)
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed.... All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues.

(See 19-20 Handbook, 9)

- Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (19-20 Handbook, 19)
- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the *Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities* policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar.

- Extensions: For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (19-20 Handbook, 20).

Class Schedule

Session 1

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 1 and 2 (Introduction)

Brown, *Engaging Biblical Authority*, Introduction and Chapters 1 through 4 (pages ix to 35).

Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107/1 (March 1998): 3-17.

Session 2

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 3 and 4

Brown, *Engaging Biblical Authority*, Chapters 5-8 (pages 36-72).

Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments for Today*, Chapters 1-4

Session 3

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 5 and 6 (The Decalogue)

Brown, *Engaging Biblical Authority*, Chapters 9-12 (pages 73-105)

Harrelson, *The Ten Commandments for Today*, Chapters 5-7

Session 4

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapter 7 (Book of the Covenant)

Brown, *Engaging Biblical Authority*, Chapters 13-16 (pages 106-140).

Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies*, Chapters 1-3 (pages 3-77)

Session 5

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 8 and 9 (Book of the Covenant)

Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies*, Chapters 4-5 (pages 79-133).

Session 6

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 10 and 11 (Priestly and Holiness Law)

Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies*, Chapters 6-7
(pages 135-170).

Session 7

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 12 and 13 (Priestly and Holiness Law)

Parker, *If God Still Breathes*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Session 8

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 14 and 15 (Priestly and Holiness Law)

Parker, *If God Still Breathes*, Chapter 2

Session 9

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 16 and 17 (Priestly and Holiness Law)

Parker, *If God Still Breathes*, Chapter 3

Session 10

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 18 and 19 (Deuteronomy)

Parker, *If God Still Breathes*, Chapter 4 and Conclusion

Session 11

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapters 20 and 21

Session 12

Morrow, *Introduction to Biblical Law*, Chapter 22 and Summary Observations

Brief analytical papers are due on Friday, May 19, 2023.

Bibliography

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