



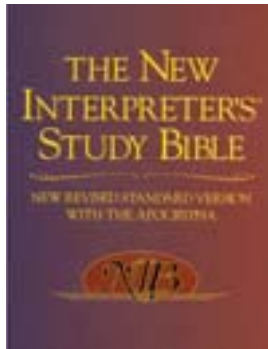
Course of Study

Experiential and Collaborative Learning

COS_111: The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible COURSE SYLLABUS

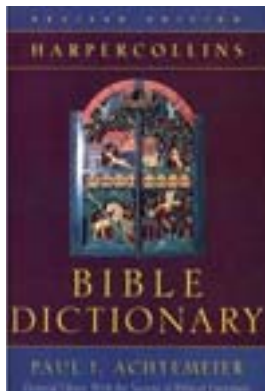
Required Texts

Books can be ordered through Cokesbury online at cokesbury.com, by telephone at 800-672-1789 or through Amazon online at amazon.com. Other major booksellers, like Barnes and Noble (bn.com) and Borders (bordersstores.com), may also carry these books in stores and online.



The New Interpreter's Study Bible. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Walter J. Harrelson, General Editor. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-0-68727-832-9.

The Bible Makes Sense. Revised Edition. Walter Brueggemann. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2003. The earlier revised edition of *The Bible Makes Sense* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001) is also acceptable for this course. ISBN: 978-0-86716-558-6.



The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary. Revised Edition. Paul J. Achtemeier, General Editor. N.Y.: HarperCollins, Harper San Francisco, for The Society of Biblical Literature, 1996. ISBN: 978-0-06060-037-2.



COS_111: The Pastor as Interpreter of the Bible

COURSE SYLLABUS

Introduction

This online course is an introduction to the role of the United Methodist pastor in biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the formation and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity is illustrated from a survey of representative biblical materials (focus on Genesis, Hosea, Amos, Mark, and Philippians).

Objectives:

- Exploration of the role of the pastor as interpreter of the Bible in the life of the congregation.
- An understanding of the formation of the canon and its function within the community of faith, past and present.
- A critical introduction to historical, literary, and theological approaches to scripture while keeping in mind the experimental dimension of biblical interpretation.
- Development of an exegetical methodology consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.
- Development of the ability to understand what was meant historically and to interpret what it means today.
- A survey of representative materials from both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament as identified in the course description.

Module 1: Getting Started

- ***The Bible Makes Sense*** (Brueggemann) in its entirety.
- ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***
"Authority of Scripture" by Phyllis Trible, pp. 2248–2254.
"Inspiration of Scripture" by Robert Gnuse, pp. 2255–2260.

Assignment 1.1: Walter Brueggeman begins his little book, ***The Bible Makes Sense***, with the following sentence:

It is strange that the Bible is our most treasured book, and yet it seems so difficult that we don't find it very helpful. Perhaps we have expected the wrong things of it; we have asked of it what it cannot do.

Brueggeman concludes the first paragraph of his book with the observation that, "the first question about reading the Bible is what we can indeed expect of it."



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To begin this course, based on your current understanding of the Bible, write a one-page reflection paper answering the question, "What do you expect of the Bible?" **Total Value: 1 point**

Assignment 1.2: Based on your reading of Chapter 1 of Walter Brueggemann's book, *The Bible Makes Sense*, write a six-page paper:

1. Explaining Brueggemann's concept of the Covenantal Historical model for looking at the Bible; for understanding the world; and for thinking about, perceiving and living life.
2. Explaining the three other models for understanding the world and life that Brueggemann contrasts with the Covenantal Historical model. Be sure to:
 - a. Summarize the three other models for understanding the world.
 - b. Cite examples of how and where the three other models are visible in the world.
 - c. Summarize how Brueggemann's Covenantal Historical model contrasts with the other three models for understanding the world.

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 1.3: Based on your reading of Chapters 4–5 of Walter Brueggemann's book, *The Bible Makes Sense*, write a six-page paper discussing the picture of God that Brueggemann presents in these chapters. Be sure to:

1. Reflect in your paper on point #2 in "For Reflection and Discussion" at the end of Chapter 4: "Describe what you think to be the main characteristics of God. How do you know about these? Are these positive or negative? Do they make any difference to you? Do they contradict what you know of the Gospel in the Bible? Do they reflect your mature faith, or might they be childlike or childish notions that may need to grow up."
2. Discuss in your paper what Brueggemann means when he says that, "There is more to come" and "It will be more of the same."

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 1.4: Based on your reading of Chapter 10 of Walter Brueggemann's book, *The Bible Makes Sense*, write a six-page paper reflecting on and discussing the six "presuppositions implicit in the perspective"¹ that Brueggemann maintains in *The Bible Makes Sense*. For each of Brueggemann's six "presuppositions,"

1. Summarize Brueggemann's presupposition.
2. Indicate whether you agree or disagree with Brueggemann's presupposition; that is, indicate whether you share his presupposition.
3. Explain why you agree or disagree with Brueggemann's presupposition. If you do not share Brueggemann's presupposition, indicate what presupposition you hold.



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¹Page 119 of the St. Anthony Messenger Press edition; page 93 of the Westminster John Knox Press edition.

Total Value: 6 points

Assignment 1.5: A Sunday school class in your church has asked you to join them next Sunday to explain the terms “the authority of the Bible” and “the inspiration of the Bible.” The members of the class have heard people talk about the authority of the Bible and the inspiration of the Bible, and they themselves have used the terms, but no one has ever discussed with them what the terms “the authority of the Bible” and “the inspiration of the Bible” really mean.

During the week, in preparation for your discussion with the Sunday school class, you read the following two articles in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*:

- “Authority of the Bible,” by Phyllis Trible, pp. 2248–2254.
- “Inspiration of Scripture,” by Robert Gnuse, pp. 2255–2260.

Based on your reading of these two articles, write out what you would tell the members of the Sunday school class about “the authority of the Bible” and “the inspiration of Scripture” (three pages). **Total Value: 3 points**

Module 2: The Bible

- ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***
 - The introduction to the NRSV: “To the Reader” by Bruce M. Metzger, pp. xvii–xx.
 - “The Canons of Scripture,” pp. xxvii–xxxi.
 - “Reliability of Scripture” by Walter J. Harrelson, pp. 2243–2247.
 - “Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation” by John R. Donahue, S.J., pp. 2261–2267.
 - “Varieties of Readings and Interpretations of the Biblical Text” by Edgar V. McKnight, pp. 2268–2273.
 - “Chronologies,” pp. 2295–2298.
- ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary***
 - “The Bible,” pp. 121–123.
 - “canon,” pp. 167–168.
 - “Old Testament,” pp. 774–777.
 - “New Testament,” pp. 751–753.
 - “Texts, Versions, Manuscripts, Editions,” pp. 1113–1130.
 - “English Bible, the,” pp. 288–293.
 - “chronology, Old Testament,” pp. 181–183.
 - “chronology, New Testament,” pp. 180–181.



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Assignment 2.1: You are going to be leading a Bible Study group at your church in a year-long survey of the Bible. As the starting point for the survey, you want to provide your group with an overview of how the Bible as we know it came to be. You want to present a summary of how the Old and New Testaments came into existence, what ancient manuscripts and versions of the Bible are known, and how the English Bible evolved into the treasured document that we have today.

You begin your preparation for your presentation to your Bible Study group by reading the following articles in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*:

- The introduction to the NRSV: "To the Reader," by Bruce M. Metzger, pp. xvii–xx.
- "The Canons of Scripture," pp. xxvii–xxxi.
- "Reliability of Scripture," by Walter J. Harrelson, pp. 2243–2247.

As your primary research for your presentation to your Bible Study group you read the following articles in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*:

- "The Bible," pp. 121-123.
- "canon," pp. 167-168.
- "Old Testament," pp. 774-777.
- "New Testament," pp. 751-753.
- "Texts, Versions, Manuscripts, Editions," pp. 1113-1130.
- "English Bible," pp. 288-293.

Based on your reading of these articles, write out your presentation to your Bible Study group. In your own words, discuss in a ten-page paper:

1. How the Old and New Testaments were formed.
2. How the canon was established.
3. The authority of the Old Testament.
4. The authority of the New Testament.
5. The ancient manuscripts and early versions of the Old and New Testaments that are still in existence, being sure to include discussions of the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Targums, the Septuagint, uncials, miniscules, and the Vulgate.
6. How translators who work with ancient manuscripts and early versions establish a "trustworthy text" of the Bible for translation and study.
7. How we got our English Bible, focusing first on early English versions up to and including the King James Version, then focusing on English versions of the Bible that were prepared after the King James Version.

Total Value: 10 points



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Assignment 2.2: Read the following articles in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*:

1. "Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation," by John R. Donahue, S.J., pages 2261-2267.
2. "Varieties of Readings and Interpretations of the Biblical Text," by Edgar V. McKnight, pages 2268-2273.

Then read the article "biblical criticism" in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (pages 141-146). Also review "The Search for a More Trustworthy Text," the concluding section of the article "Texts, Versions, Manuscripts, Editions" in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* (pages 1128-1129).

Write an eight-page paper explaining the most important methods of biblical interpretation. Be sure to include in your paper the goals and techniques of textual criticism, historical criticism, literary criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, canonical criticism, the new literary criticism, and liberationist criticism.

Total Value: 8 points

Assignment 2.3: Using "Chronologies" in *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (pp. 2295-2298) and "chronology, Old Testament (pp. 181-183) and "chronology, New Testament (pp. 180-181) in *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* as your guides, create your own timeline. (Do not photocopy or download from the Internet someone else's timeline!) Keep your timeline at hand so that you can add dates as you work on upcoming assignments. (1 page)

Mark off your timeline by listing the centuries from 1300 B.C. to A.D. 200. Then, recognizing that most dates will be approximate, begin your timeline by placing the following events on your timeline:

1. The Exodus.
2. The time of the Judges.
3. When David and Solomon lived.
4. The division of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms.
5. The fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to Assyria.
6. The Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the first deportation.
7. The destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon and the second deportation.
8. The first year of the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia.
9. The Apostle Paul in Corinth.
10. The destruction of Jerusalem by Rome.

Total Value: 1 point

Module 3: The Book of Genesis

- *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*
The introduction to the Book of Genesis, pp. 1-4



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The book of Genesis.

"Excursus: Two Flood Narratives," p. 17

- ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary***
"Genesis," pp. 367–368.
"sources of the Pentateuch," pp. 1055-1059.

Assignment 3.1: One morning while you are in the church office, you receive an email from a member of your congregation who was reading a study of the book of Genesis and came across references to sources referred to as "J" and "P". "What are 'J' and 'P'?" the member of your congregation wants to know.

After reading "Genesis" (pp. 367-368) and "sources of the Pentateuch" (pp. 1055-1059) in ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*** and the introduction to the book of Genesis (pp. 1-4) and "Excursus: Two Flood Narratives" (p. 17) in ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***, you send the member of your congregation an email reply.

Write out in a two-page paper what you would tell the member of your congregation in your email reply. Explain "the documentary hypothesis," discussing the four sources that are theorized to have existed prior to the writing or editing of the books of the Pentateuch as we have them now. Be sure to include in your paper:

1. A discussion of how the four sources can be identified.
2. A summary of some of the characteristics of the four sources.
3. A summary of how the four sources are thought to have been brought together to form the Pentateuch as we have it now. Use the flood story in Genesis as an example in your paper of how two of the sources of the Pentateuch can be identified in one biblical passage. Conclude your paper by indicating whether "the documentary hypothesis" makes sense to you. Explain why or why not.

Total Value: 2 points

Assignment 3.2: Read the book of Genesis in the ***New Revised Standard Version*** (allowing the annotations at the bottom of the pages of ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible*** to guide your reading of the book), "Genesis" in ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*** (pp. 367-368), and the introduction to the book of Genesis in ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible*** (pp. 1-4). Take notes on what you are reading. Then write a ten-page paper in which you:

1. Create your own outline of the book of Genesis. (Do not just copy the outline out of ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*** or ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***.) Create your outline by giving each chapter or section of Genesis a title of four to six words. You might want to proceed as if you are going to preach through the book of Genesis in the coming year and are writing sermon titles for each chapter or section of the book.



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2. List and discuss some specific passages in Genesis where humans show faith in and faithfulness towards God.
3. List and discuss some specific passages in Genesis where God shows faithfulness to humans.
4. Discuss the message or messages that you see in the book of Genesis for the Church in the twenty-first century.

Total Value: 10 points

Module 4: The Book of the Prophet Amos

- **The New Interpreter's Study Bible**
The book of Amos.
The introduction to Amos, pp. 1279–1280.
Exodus 22:25–27.
Leviticus 18:8, 15.
- **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary**
"Amos, the Book of," pp. 31–32.

Assignment 4.1: Add a note to your timeline from Assignment 2.2 indicating the approximate date of the prophet Amos' ministry.

Assignment 4.2: Read the book of the prophet Amos in the **New Revised Standard Version** (allowing the annotations at the bottom of the pages of **The New Interpreter's Study Bible** to guide your reading of the book), "Amos, the Book of," in **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary** (pp. 31-32), and the introduction to Amos in **The New Interpreter's Study Bible** (pp. 1279-1280). Take notes on what you are reading. Then, write a ten-page paper in which you:

1. Create your own outline of the book of the prophet Amos. (Do not just copy the outline out of **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary** or **The New Interpreter's Study Bible**.) Create your outline by giving each chapter or section of the book of the prophet Amos a title of four to six words. You might want to proceed as if you are going to preach through the book of Amos and are writing sermon titles for each chapter or section of the book.
2. Briefly discuss the historical setting in which the prophet Amos worked.
3. Discuss Amos' opening oracle against the nations in 1:2-2:16. Be sure to include in your discussion:
 - a. A listing of the nations addressed in the oracle and a summary of their location in relation to Israel.
 - b. A notation of any thematic or structural similarities or differences that you have observed between the prophet's oracles directed against the various nations.
 - c. A discussion of the specific indictments that Amos brought against Israel in 2:6-16. Thinking about the accusations against Israel in 2:6-8, read Exodus 22:25-27 and Leviticus 18:8, 15. How do the



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passages in Exodus and Leviticus relate to the verses in Amos and how does the oracle in Amos relate to the passages in Exodus and Leviticus?

4. Discuss the vision reports in Amos 7:1-9. Be sure to include in your paper a discussion of the symbols that appear in the three visions. Compare verses 1-3 and verses 4-6. How are they similar? What is different about the vision in verses 7-9?
5. Discuss the message or messages that you see in the book of the prophet Amos for the Church in the twenty-first century.

Total Value: 10 points

Module 5: The Book of the Prophet Hosea

- ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***
The book of Hosea.
The introduction to the Book of the Prophet Hosea, pp. 1253–1254.
- ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary***
"Hosea, the Book of," pp. 438–439.

Assignment 5.1: Add a note to your timeline from Assignment 2.2 indicating the approximate date of the prophet Hosea's ministry.

Assignment 5.2: Read the book of the prophet Hosea in the ***New Revised Standard Version*** (allowing the annotations at the bottom of the pages of ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible*** to guide your reading of the book), "Hosea, the Book of," in ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*** (pp. 438-439), and the introduction to the book of the prophet Hosea in ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible*** (pp. 1253-1254). Take notes on what you are reading. Then, write a ten-page paper in which you:

1. Create your own outline of the book of the prophet Hosea. (Do not just copy the outline out of ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*** or ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***.) Create your outline by giving each chapter or section of the book of the prophet Hosea a title of four to six words. You might want to proceed as if you are going to preach through the book of Hosea and are writing sermon titles for each chapter or section of the book.
2. Briefly discuss the historical setting in which the prophet Hosea worked.
3. Discuss the symbolism that is at work in Chapters 1-3. That is, explain who Hosea and Gomer represent, what their marriage represents, and what Gomer's marital infidelity represents. Explain the meaning of the naming and renaming of the three children born to Gomer.
4. Discuss the symbolism that is at work in 11:1-9. Explain how this passage makes you feel about God and about humans.



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5. Discuss the message or messages that you see in the book of the prophet Hosea for the Church in the twenty-first century.
Total Value: 10 points

Module 6: The Gospel according to Mark

- **The New Interpreter's Study Bible**
The Gospel according to Mark.
Introduction to the Gospel According to Mark, pp. 1801–1803.
- **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary**
"gospel, Gospels," pp. 385–386.
"Mark," pp. 652–653.
"Mark, the Gospel according to," pp. 653–656.

Assignment 6.1: Add a note to your timeline from Assignment 2.2 indicating the approximate date of the writing of the Gospel According to Mark.

Assignment 6.2: Read the Gospel According to Mark in the **New Revised Standard Version** (allowing the annotations at the bottom of the pages of **The New Interpreter's Study Bible** to guide your reading of the book), "gospel, Gospels," (pp. 386-386), "Mark" (pp. 652-653), "Mark, the Gospel according to," (pp. 653-656) in **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary** and the introduction to the Gospel According to Mark in **The New Interpreter's Study Bible** (pp. 1801-1803). Take notes on what you are reading. Then, write a fifteen-page paper in which you:

1. Discuss what the word "gospel" means and the process by which the four canonical Gospels came into being.
2. Create your own outline of the Gospel of Mark. (Do not just copy the outline out of **The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary** or **The New Interpreter's Study Bible**.) Create your outline by giving each chapter or section of the Gospel of Mark a title of four to six words. You might want to proceed as if you are going to preach through the Gospel of Mark and are writing sermon titles for each chapter or section of the book.
3. Discuss when, under what circumstances, and by whom the Gospel of Mark was probably written.
4. Discuss how the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus and his ministry.
5. Discuss the message or messages that you see in the Gospel of Mark for the Church in the twenty-first century.
Total Value: 15 points



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Module 7: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians

- ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible***
The Letter of Paul to the Philippians.
Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Philippians, pp. 2099–2100.
- ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary***
"Philippi," pp. 844–845.
"Philippians, the Letter of Paul to the," pp. 845–846.

Assignment 7.1: Add a note to your timeline from Assignment 2.2 indicating the approximate date of the writing of the Letter of Paul to the Philippians.

Assignment 7.2: Read the Letter of Paul to the Philippians in the ***New Revised Standard Version*** (allowing the annotations at the bottom of the pages of ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible*** to guide your reading of the book), "Philippi," (pp. 844-845) and "Philippians, the Letter of Paul to the," (pp. 845-846) in ***The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*** and the introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Philippians in ***The New Interpreter's Study Bible*** (pp. 2099-2100). Take notes on what you are reading. In particular, note by chapter and verse each time that Paul uses the words "joy," "rejoice," "rejoicing," and other related words. Then, write a twelve-page paper in which you:

1. Create your own outline of the Letter of Paul to the Philippians. (Do not just copy the outline out of *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* or *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*.) Create your outline by giving each chapter or section of Paul's Letter to the Philippians a title of four to six words. You might want to proceed as if you are going to preach through Paul's Letter to the Philippians and are writing sermon titles for each chapter or section of the book.
2. Briefly discuss what is known of the city of Philippi.
3. Discuss when and under what circumstances the Apostle Paul wrote his Letter to the Philippians.
4. Discuss how Paul uses the theme of "joy" and "rejoicing" in his Letter to the Philippians. Be sure that, as a part of your discussion, you cite by chapter and verse each place that the theme surfaces in the letter.
5. Discuss the theological significance of the famous "Christ Hymn" in 2:6-11.
6. Discuss the message or messages that you see in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians for the Church in the twenty-first century.

Total Value: 12 points