## Seattle University

School of Theology and Ministry Spring 2009: W 1:30pm - 4:20 pm Hunt # 100

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# STMA-593-01: CONTEMPORARY NEW TESTAMENT HERMENEUTICS (NOTE: Syllabus subject to change)

#### **DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

During the past 30 years, biblical hermeneutics has changed radically. After almost two centuries of reading the Bible through the lens of mainly one critical paradigm (historical), the field has expanded to include new perspectives that reflect the complexities of our postmodern world. The technological advances, the failure of the mega-narratives, the political and social changes triggered by the collapse of the empires, together with the irruption of the voices from the Two-Thirds World in Western academia, are some of the forces that have shaken and challenged the imperialistic dominance of the Western models of interpretation.

In this course we will examine, discuss and apply some of the main approaches associated with the current critical paradigms in New Testament Hermeneutics: Historical-critical method, literary criticism, social-scientific criticism, and cultural studies.

The objectives of the course are: to equip students with the necessary tools to understand the main hermeneutical theories and their methodological approaches, fully aware of the cultural and historical context of both, the theoretical constructs and the readers; to enable students to become critical and informed readers of cultural "texts" such as the New Testament; to practice a variety of interpretive models to help students appreciate the richness of meaning in the biblical text when diversity and inclusion are considered; to explore the implications of the hermeneutical spiral for ministry.

#### **REQUIREMENTS**

- 1. Committed attendance, careful reading of assigned materials and active participation: Your active presence is vital for the group's learning experience. Please be punctual and try not to miss any classes. Your absence, unfortunately, not only affects you but the whole group. Complete the assigned readings and come to class prepared to present your views, to engage in class discussion, to practice the application of the hermeneutical models during class, to explain one of them to the class (using special assigned material), as well as to present a hermeneutical review of an assigned article on the last day of our class. If you need to miss a class, please notify the instructor ahead of time. (40%)
- **2. Six two-page hermeneutical profiles**: Six critical interpretations of one biblical text (or of six different passages) applying at least six of the 16 interpretive methods studied in class. Follow the format and guidelines provided at the end of this syllabus. Due dates posted on course calendar. (60%)
- **3.** A hermeneutical self-inventory: A one page personal-inventory on how you read the biblical text, following five questions from the list suggested by N. Gottwald (those which you consider to be most important for you). Also, include in your self-inventory your response to the question: What is the Bible for me and what is my opinion on its authority? See last page of syllabus. Due on April 8, 2009. (0%)

### **Bibliography:** (books on reserve)

- Aichele, George, et al. *The postmodern Bible: the Bible and Culture Collective*. New Haven Yale University Press, 1995. (Recommended)
- Anderson, Janice Capel and Stephen D. Moore, editors. *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008. (Required)
- Bird, Phyllis A., editor. Reading the Bible as Women: Perspectives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. *Semeia* 78 (1997)
- Felder, Cain Hope, editor. *Stony the road we trod: African American Biblical Interpretation.*Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Goss, Robert E. and Mona West, editors. *Take Back the Word. A queer reading of the Bible.* Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2000.
- Green, Joel B. *Hearing the New Testament. Strategies for Interpretation*. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995.
- Green, Joel B. and Michael Pasquarello III, editors. *Narrative Reading, Narrative Preaching. Reuniting New Testament Interpretation and Proclamation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Jasper, David. *A Short Introduction to Hermeneutics*. Louiville London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004. (Required)
- Jeanrond, Werner. Theological Hermeneutics. London: SCM Press, 1994. (Recommended)
- Johnston, Graham. Preaching to a Postmodern World. A Guide to Reaching Twenty-first Century Listeners. Michigan: Baker Books, 2001.
- McKenzie, Steven L. and Stephen R. Haynes, editors. *To each its own meaning: an introduction to biblical criticisms and their applications*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.
- Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, editors. *The Women's Bible commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.
- O'Day, Gail R. The Word Disclosed. Preaching the Gospel of John. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2002.
- Russell, Letty M., editor. *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985.
- Schneiders, Sandra Marie. Written that you May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. New York: Crossroad Pub., 2003.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_\_, editor. Searching the Scriptures. Volume One: A Feminist Introduction. New York: Crossroad, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001.

Segovia, Fernando F. and Mary Ann Tolbert, editors. *Reading from this place. Volume 1.*Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. Reading from this place. Volume 2. Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

Soulen, Richard N. and R. Kendall Soulen. Handbook of Biblical Criticism. Third Edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. (Required)

Sugirtharajah, R. S., editor. Voices from the Margin. Interpreting the Bible in the Third World. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006. (Required)

#### **COURSE CALENDAR**

S.	Date	Topic	Assignments
1	April 1	Introduction: language, hermeneutics and preaching; social location / self-inventory; postmodern presuppositions; hermeneutical circle; main interpretive paradigms; theory and key concepts	-Reading ourselves and our context -Western Philosophy
2	April 8	History of hermeneutics; Historical-Critical Method: source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism canonical criticism (self-inventory is due)	-Jasper's book
3	April 15	Literary Criticism: narrative criticism, reader-response criticism (HP-RC - due)	-Anderson: chapter 2 & 3
4	April 22	LC: deconstructive criticism, rhetorical criticism (HP-NC/R-RC - due)	-Anderson: chapter 4
5	April 29	LC: structuralism Social-Scientific Criticism (HP-DC/RhC - due)	-Anderson: chapter 6 Postmodern Bible: chapter 2
6	May 6	Cultural Studies Psychoanalytic Criticism (HP-S/SSC - due)	Anderson: chapter 7 Postmodern Bible: chapter 5
7	May 13	CS: ideological criticism, socio-economic criticism (HP-CS/PsC - due)	Postmodern Bible: chapter 7 McKenzie: chapter 14
8	May 20	CS: feminist criticism, queer criticism (HP-IC/SEC - due)	Anderson: chapter 5; Goss: 196-205
9	May 27	CS: postcolonial and border theory (HP-FC/QC - due)	Voices: chapter 5; Semeia 78 (1997): 69-81
10	June 3	Conclusion Voices from the margins: presentations (HP-PT/BT – due)	Voices: chapters 1-4, 6-10, 21-23, 25, 32-34