



On-Campus Course Syllabus

THS 410 L1

Theological Hermeneutics

Spring 2024

Class Information

Day and Time: Tuesdays, 7:30–10:00pm

Room Number: e209

Contact Information

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Office hours	Please use my Calendly account to schedule an appointment. You can find my account here: https://calendly.com/criswellvpaa

Course Description and Prerequisites

This course explores approaches to biblical interpretation used within the history of the Church, focusing on the variety of ways that Christians have understood the nature and relationship of texts, authors, readers, and divine agency. (Prerequisite: BIB 105)

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, the student should have the ability to . . .

1. articulate a working knowledge of ways in which Christian interpreters have understood the nature and relationship of biblical texts, authors, readers, and divine agency.
2. engage in sympathetic but critical dialogue on the issue of biblical interpretation with diverse Christian communities, traditions, and denominations striving for unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
3. critically appropriate insights from a variety of interpretative approaches for incorporation into their own interpretive practices.

Required Textbooks

J. Todd Billings. *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway in the Theological Interpretation of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

John J. O'Keefe and R. R. Reno. *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*. John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2005.

*Other texts to be used for Papers 4–7 will be distributed in class and posted in Canvas.

Recommended Reading

Adler, Mortimer. *How To Read a Book*. Revised ed. New York: Touchstone, 1972.

Course Requirements and Assignments

“Criswell College uses ‘Carnegie’ units to measure semester credit hours. A Carnegie unit of credit is awarded to students for the satisfactory completion of at least one 50-minute session of classroom or direct faculty instruction and at least 100 minutes of out-of-class work per week” (*Criswell College 2023–2024 Academic Catalog*, 77). Typically, then, a three-credit course constitutes 2.5 hours of in-class instruction and 5 hours of out-of-class work each week. Because this is a senior-level course and all coursework will be due by the fourteenth week, students in the course should plan on 6 hours of out-of-class work each week.

1. Reading (20%):

The required reading is the basis for class discussion; therefore, reading must be completed prior to the class session in which it will be discussed as indicated on the schedule below. The text must be brought to class for reference during the class discussion. The professor reserves the right to administer quizzes to ascertain whether students are reading with sufficient attention to these matters.

Reading from the required texts will be reported at the beginning of each class session. Any student who has not read at least 80% of the assigned reading from these texts will not be permitted to participate in the class discussion on that day. [Students who are going to be absent should e-mail the percent of reading completed to the professor prior to the beginning of class. There is no credit for reading that is not completed and reported by the beginning of the class in which it is due.

2. Written Assignments (40%):

- All papers will be graded on substantial clarity, logical coherency, basic formal attributes (e.g., grammar, syntax, capitalization, spelling, punctuation, typed, double-spaced, in 12-point font),
- The student’s name, date, paper #, course #, and word count should be placed in the upper right corner of the front page. Papers do not need a cover sheet.
- Any sources that are cited in the body of the paper should be properly identified within the body itself. Any sources that are consulted but not cited in the body of the paper may be attached in a separate bibliography.
- Papers 2–7 should be printed and brought to class since they will be used in class discussion. If a student is going to be absent, the paper should be emailed to the professor by the beginning of class.
- No late papers will be accepted.
- The lowest paper grade will be dropped.

Paper 1: “What do you currently believe about the Bible, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, human nature, sin, salvation, the Church, and eschatology?”

- No specification for the length. Imagine that you are answering this question in response to a job application for a teaching position in a church or school.
- You are free to consult any sources with which you are already familiar in formulating this response; however, this should be your statement of belief. Cite other sources sparingly.
- Draw from and refer to specific individuals, biblical and non-biblical texts, and historical events that provide warrant for your beliefs.
- Use technical (i.e., biblical and theological) language where appropriate, but give a short definitional explanation for technical language.
- Do not simply leave a section blank if you do not have or are unable to articulate your beliefs on any of the particular topics. Simply indicate that in your paper.
- Paper 1 due January 23, 7:30 p.m. (May be emailed to professor or brought to class.)

Paper 1 (rev.): Revise Paper 1 by incorporating insight over the semester, especially on matters covered in this course's texts and discussions.

- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 1 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought on topics covered in the course.
- Paper 1 (rev.) due April 23, 7:30 p.m. (May be emailed to professor or brought to class.)

***Paper 2*: What interpretive method do you use to move from reading a biblical passage to teaching/preaching that biblical passage in a Church setting?**

- 750–1250 words
- Paper 2 is brought to class on January 23. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 2 (rev.):* Revise Paper 2 by incorporating insight on matters covered in the course's text and discussions.**

- 750–1500 words.
- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 2 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought and critical appropriation of elements of interpretative insights covered in the course.
- Paper 2 (rev.) is brought to class on April 23. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 3*: What methodological elements undergird your interpretive method for moving from reading a biblical passage to teaching/preaching that biblical passage in a Church setting?**

- 750–1500 words
- Paper 3 is brought to class on January 30. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 3 (rev.):* Revise Paper 3 by incorporating insight on matters covered in the course's text and discussions.**

- 750–1500 words.
- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 3 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought and critical appropriation of elements of interpretative insights covered in the course.
- Paper 3 (rev.) is brought to class on April 23. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

*** Paper 4*: Using the interpretive method described in Paper 2, create a script that you will use to teach or preach Genesis 3 in a Church setting.**

- 750–1250 words
- Paper 4 is brought to class on February 6. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 4 (rev.)*: Revise Paper 4 in light of the texts provided in class dealing with Genesis 3.**

- 750–1500 words
- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 4 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought and critical appropriation of elements of interpretative insights covered in the course.
- Paper 4 (rev.) is brought to class on March 26. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

*** Paper 5*: Using the interpretive method described in Paper 2, create a script that you will use to teach or preach Exodus 14 in a Church setting.**

- 750–1250 words
- Paper 5 is brought to class on February 13. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 5 (rev.)*: Revise Paper 5 in light of the text provided in class dealing with Exodus 14.**

- 750–1500 words.
- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 5 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought and critical appropriation of elements of interpretative insights covered in the course.
- Paper 5 (rev.) is brought to class on April 2. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

*** Paper 6*: Using the interpretive method described in Paper 2, create a script that you will use to teach or preach Matthew 26:26–29.**

- 750–1250 words
- Paper 6 is brought to class on February 20. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 6 (rev.)*: Revise Paper 6 in light of the texts provided in class dealing with Matthew 26:26–29.**

- 750–1500 words.
- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 6 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought and critical appropriation of elements of interpretative insights covered in the course.
- Paper 6 (rev.) is brought to class on April 9. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

*** Paper 7*: Using the interpretive method described in Paper 2, create a script that you will use to teach or preach Philippians 2:5–11.**

- 750–1250 words
- Paper 7 is brought to class on February 27. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

***Paper 7 (rev.)*: Revise Paper 7 in light of the text provided in class dealing with Philippians 2:5–11.**

- 750–1500 words.
- Clearly identify the changes that have been made. ~~Strikethrough deletions.~~ ***Italicize and embolden all revisions and additions.***
- Paper 7 (rev.) will be graded according to the matters listed above as well as the degree to which it demonstrates a development in thought and critical appropriation of elements of interpretative insights covered in the course.
- Paper 7 (rev.) is brought to class on April 16. If a student is going to be absent, she or he should email the paper to the professor.

3. Class Discussion (40%):

Texts

- Class sessions will be heavily dependent on the students' engagement with the required reading. Each student will come to each class with:
 - The text containing the required reading for that week.
 - A working knowledge of all vocabulary and terms encountered in the text.
 - Whatever notes that will assist him or her in locating key places within the text during the class discussion.
 - Five questions to catalyze discussion about the thesis/theses of the text, the flow of argument, and insight that the text offers with regard to approaches to biblical interpretation used within the history of the Church, focusing on the variety of ways that Christians have understood the nature and relationship of texts, authors, readers, and divine agency. The questions will be typed on one page and contain as a heading the student's name, date, and the bibliographic data (author, title, pages) of the text covered by the questions. One copy of the questions should be made available to the professor at the beginning of class.
- The discussion grade will be based on being prepared to begin the class on time and the degree of familiarity with the text as evidenced in the questions and class discussion.
- Students who are going to be absent should e-mail their questions to the professor prior to the beginning of class. There is no credit for class discussion if no questions are submitted by the beginning of the class in which they are due. A student can receive up to 50% for the days on which questions are submitted but the student is not present.

Papers

- Class sessions 2–7 and 11–14 will be heavily dependent on the students' engagement with each other regarding written assignments. Each student will read aloud her or his paper and the class will assist in critiquing and refining the paper.
- Each student will come to each class with enough copies of his or her paper for the professor and each member of the class.
- The discussion grade will be based on being prepared to begin the class on time with copies of their paper and the degree of engagement in the class discussion. There is no credit for class discussions in which the student is not present. If a student does not have a paper to read, the student can receive up to 50% for attending and interacting with other students' papers.
- Students are responsible for making enough copies to distribute to all class members. If a student would like to have the professor make the copies, it should be submitted no later than noon on the day they are due.
- The lowest three discussion grades will be dropped.

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they (1) anticipate being able to attend every on-campus class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, or (2) participating in academically related activities as identified in online-course schedules including synchronous class sessions conducted remotely by video, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any missed information. Professors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual professors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades. Professors apprise students of such information in course syllabi.

Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships must meet specified requirements of various departments at the college and should consult relevant sections of the *Academic Catalog*. To ensure such funds will not be forfeited, students are responsible for contacting the proper departments to ascertain any specific course participation requirements and consequences of not meeting such requirements. Students receiving grants, loans, or scholarships should consult the Financial Aid office.

While Criswell College is a non-attendance taking institution, it nevertheless must demonstrate that students begin their courses in order to comply with Federal Aid regulations. Accordingly, students must participate in academically related activities during census periods. Failure to meet this requirement will result in students being administratively dropped from courses.

Academically related activity is defined as any course-related activity that may be used as evidence of attendance. Examples include:

- physical presence in a classroom during a class session with the instructor present,
- participation in a synchronous remote video class session with the instructor present,
- submission of an academic assignment, quiz, or exam,
- participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
- participation in a study group or discussion board that is assigned by the instructor,
- documentation showing that the student and a faculty member corresponded about the academic subject of the course.

NOTE: Logging into a Canvas course alone and logging into a Synchronous Online class session without active participation or with the camera off are not considered attendance.

NOTE: A census period begins on the first day of a semester/term and runs through the end of the last day to drop courses. During the census period, attendance data is collected in order to demonstrate compliance with Federal Aid regulations. There is no census period for winter terms since there is no last day to drop courses.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty

includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu. Login credentials are emailed to students near the beginning of the semester.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly (<https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>) or by visiting the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203. For questions, call 214.818.1373 or email at tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

WK	DATE	READING	PAPERS (Papers marked with * are to be brought to class.)
1	1-16 (T)	Introduction to course and Billings text	
2	1-23 (T)	Billings: prereading and Introduction	Paper 1 *Paper 2*
3	1-30 (T)	Billings: Chapter 1	*Paper 3*
4	2-6 (T)	Billings: Chapter 2	*Paper 4*
5	2-13 (T)	Billings: Chapter 3	*Paper 5*
6	2-20 (T)	Billings: Chapters 4 and 6	*Paper 6
7	2-27 (T)	Billings: Chapter 8	*Paper 7*
8	3-5 (T)	O'Keefe and Reno: prereading, Chapters 1 and 6	
3-11 through 3-15 Spring Break			
9	3-19 (T)	O'Keefe and Reno: Chapters 2 and 3	
3-21 Last Day to Withdraw			
10	3-26 (T)	O'Keefe and Reno: Chapter 4 Readings on Genesis 3	*Paper 4 (rev.)*
11	4-2 (T)	O'Keefe and Reno: Chapter 5 Readings on Exodus 14	*Paper 5 (rev.)*
12	4-9 (T)	Readings on Matthew 26:26–29	*Paper 6 (rev.)*
13	4-16 (T)	Readings on Philippians 2:5–11	*Paper 7 (rev.)*
14	4-23 (T)		Paper 1 (rev.) *Paper 2 (rev.)* *Paper 3 (rev.)*