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BS 503 Introduction to Inductive Bible Study

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BS 503: Introduction to Inductive Bible Study

2 Credit Hours, Fall 2008

ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

School of Biblical Interpretation and Proclamation

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Welcome

Welcome to BS 503: Introduction to Inductive Bible Study! Teaching and living God's word is my passion. I hope that my passion is contagious – that you catch it and become skilled interpreters of scripture with the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. I am happily married to Anne who trains ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers at Indiana Wesleyan University. We have two children: Pascal (3 years) and Soren (5 years). I have my Ph.D. in NT from Emory University focusing on the gospel of Luke. Online learning is flexible but filled with new types of challenges, so will be learning about the Bible and online learning together. I invite you to head forward with me as we explore God's word together.

I. Course Description

This course offers a concise introduction to inductive Bible study for students enrolled in Master of Arts programs other than those specializing in Bible. The purpose is to introduce students to a systematic and comprehensive approach to Bible study. The course will treat the entire Bible study process from initial observation and interpretation of texts in their literary, historical, and canonical contexts to the contemporary appropriation of these texts. In accord with the principle that students can best understand hermeneutical issues and develop exegetical skills as they engage in rigorous study of specific texts, the course will deal with three specific books (Luke, Micah, and Ephesians) that represent both testaments and a range of literary forms and theological perspectives. Attention will be given to the significance of the interpretation and appropriation of the biblical text within the Wesleyan tradition for the ministerial vocations represented in the various Masters of Arts programs (missions, counseling, etc.)

II. Prerequisites & Course Relationships

There are no prerequisites for BS 503. It is designed to be an introductory course in inductive Bible study for students in M.A. degrees (other than Biblical Studies). If you have already taken Introduction to Biblical Studies: Old Testament (BS 504) or Introduction to Biblical Studies: New Testament (BS 505), then feel free to bring your learning from those courses to bear on the discussions and assignments in this class.

III. Course Objectives

The student will acquire a basic understanding of biblical hermeneutics and will demonstrate the ability to survey, observe, interpret, and engage in contemporary appropriation of the biblical text and to discuss in specific and concrete ways the significance of this interpretation and application of the biblical text for his/her ministerial vocation. Specifically, the student will be able

1. To articulate and employ a method of inductive interpretation and application of the bible;
2. To identify the structure of a biblical book as a whole and sections of a book by describing its contents, outlining its units, and describing its major structural relationships;
3. To study inductively specific passages by making detailed observations and asking probing questions useful for interpretation;
4. To answer those questions (that is, to interpret) by employing various kinds of exegetical determinants, e.g. literary context, word usage, historical background, and the history of interpretation;
5. To evaluate the contextuality and applicability of a biblical passage in light of the larger witness of the biblical canon, the history of interpretation, and the dynamics of contemporary life;
6. To employ insights and conclusions from the interpretation of biblical passages for specific and creative contemporary appropriation that can be integrated into the following domains: personal discipleship, the life of the community of faith, and study and practice relating to one's vocation;
7. To begin to grapple with discuss some hermeneutical issues and demonstrate the ability to make use of these hermeneutical insights in the observation, interpretation, evaluation, and appropriation of the biblical text.

IV. Guidelines & Expectations for Online Learning

A. Online Support: For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program contact Dale Hale at ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu or phone 859-858-2393. For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons at Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu or phone 859-858-2233 toll-free 866-454-2733

B. Technology and Communication: You can access your class online at <http://exl.asburyseminary.edu>. Use the following links on the web interface for their stated communication purposes (most are also found under "Forums" in the Activities section):

Course Related: contains items related specifically to the course.

1. **Course News and Announcements:** contains news items for the course like due dates and recent announcements.
2. **Syllabus:** the updated version of the syllabus can be found here.
3. **To Professor:** click here for private communication between student and faculty. (Identical to the "Dialogue" link in the Activities section)
4. **Course Questions:** repository of questions and discussions related to the course (please limit postings to 50-75 words).

Community Related: contains items related to community building and social connection.

1. **Prayer Forum:** We understand that real life happens while you are taking this class. Please use this forum to support, pray, and care for each other.

2. **Open Forum:** Use this forum to discuss anything from sports, to doctrine, to jokes to personal information that you want to share.

Assignments: Please submit your responses to the appropriate folder. When submitting online assignments, please name the file in the following way: Last Name (or last names for group assignments), Module # (fill in the Module #), and a brief description of the assignment (e.g. Luke survey). That will help me to keep an orderly record of assignments.

Note: Please submit assignments with the following file name format: Last Name, Module #, and a brief description of the assignment.

C. Format and Communication: All of the Modules have "forums" which are set up to start and facilitate class discussion. I will start each forum with an initial post. You must "reply" to my post within the forum. Please do NOT start a new discussion topic as that will create a separate conversation. You may reply to later posts, but keep it all in one discussion topic.

Note: For online discussions, ALWAYS reply to my post. Do not start your own discussion topics.

D. Ethics and Communication: I expect myself and you to aim to live by the faith, ethos, and mission statements of Asbury Theological Seminary. These can be found at www.asburyseminary.edu. This online course is part of our pursuit of personal and social holiness and training for ministry. A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other, a dialogue that should reflect our discipleship and calling. All discussions are to be in the vein of respect, encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately. In light of this, the course has the following expectations.

What you can expect of me:

1. A well prepared course interface and clear learning modules
2. Prompt and honest replies to questions and postings (usually within 36 hours).
3. Interaction, participation, and direction in online discussions.
4. Prompt feedback and assessment on assignments (within 1 week).
5. Occasional bloopers as I continue to learn this mode of teaching and interact with the class.

What I expect of you:

1. Approximately 7-9 hours of time devoted to the class each week.
2. Participation in online discussion forums.
3. On time completion of assignments.
4. Your honest questions when you do not understand the material or the instructions.
5. Your patience as we work together in this medium.

E. Example Study Projects: Most Modules will contain at least one example IBS project. Usually, these will be my own studies. Please be aware that I have been doing IBS for over 10 years, and I have my Ph.D. in New Testament. I do not expect you to meet this same level, but I do want you to see excellent, thorough, detailed, and insightful work. They are not meant to intimidate you. Instead,

Please read and learn from the IBS examples provided on Moodle. They might be your best "textbook" for this course.

they will provide you with a "clean" (unmarked) project that you can read through and use as a model for your own work. I welcome any comments or questions about these examples in the discussion forums, and I believe that they are some of your best resources as you learn the IBS method.

V. Accessing Information Commons (Library) Materials:

A. General Questions: The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml>.

B. Materials Requests: To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml>. ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests. ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

C. Research Questions: ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

D. Online Databases: To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

E. Copyright Guidelines: The copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

VI. Course Texts

A. Required: We will use the NRSV Bible in order to facilitate our study of the Bible together. Your interpretation projects should be based on this translation. You will be reading all of Thompson's book (abbreviated as *BSTW*), and most of Traina's book (abbreviated as *MBS*). The bibliography by Bauer will provide you with a resource to find quality study resources for your interpretive work, and we will read selected articles from *DTIB* (it is also an excellent reference book to own).

1. English Bible: Please use the NRSV for your primary translation to simplify our discussions, but also feel free to read and refer to other translations as well.

2. **Guide:** Thompson, David L. Bible Study that Works. Revised Edition. Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1994. 0-916035-61-1 (Abbreviated *BSTW*)
3. **Guide:** Schenck, Kenneth. A Brief Guide to Biblical Interpretation. Revised Edition. Marion, IN: Triangle Press, 2008.
Note: the revised edition may not be printed by the time class begins. If that is the case, I will supply you with an electronic copy.
4. **Bibliography:** Bauer, David R. An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003. 1-56563-723-2
5. **Dictionary:** Vanhoozer, Kevin, ed. Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. 0-8010-2694-6 (Abbreviated *DTIB*)

B. Recommended: You will need access to a good, recent (published within the past 30 years) commentary on Micah, Galatians, and Luke by the middle of the course. You may NOT use internet commentaries on your interpretation and evaluation assignments. If you do, I will penalize your final score. You have several options for obtaining commentaries: 1. you can purchase them; 2. you can find some good commentaries through the *iPreach* database on the Asbury Info Commons; 3. you can get them on loan through the ATS library; 4. you may find them through a library near your home. I recommend the following if you would like to purchase a commentary.

On Micah:

- a. Limberg, James. Hosea-Micah. Interpretation. Atlanta, John Knox, 1988.
- b. Smith, Gary V. Hosea, Amos, Micah: The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

On Galatians:

- a. Dunn, James D. G. Galatians. Black's New Testament Commentaries. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993.
- b. Matera, Frank J. and Daniel Harrington. Galatians. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992.

On Luke:

- a. Green, Joel B. The Gospel of Luke. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- b. Johnson, Luke Timothy. Luke. Sacra Pagina 3. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1991.

VII. Assignments for Achieving Course Objectives

A. Module Discussion Forums (210 points total): The format of an online class requires active learning and discussion on your part. This is the online equivalent to attendance and participation in a traditional classroom. All modules have required discussion sections, but you are also welcome to post questions and comments beyond these in the "Course Questions" forum. Most of the discussion forums have two questions: one treating the specific task of we are working on in that module and another more general question about your biblical interpretation. You should post a full answer (about 2-3 short paragraphs) to each of these questions by the end of the 6th day of each module. The exception to this is the discussions in the first module, which is only one week long. You must post by the end of day 4 for the first module. Your initial post should also reflect some interaction with the assigned readings for that module. By the end of the workshop you should respond to at least two postings by other students and to at least one

posting by the professor. The following is a brief rubric describing how discussion posts will be graded. All posts must appear before the end of the module.

30-27 points: Initial post appears by day 5 of the module. The post has an appropriate length, addresses the questions with some thought, and interacts with the readings. The two responses and one response to the professor refer specifically to other posts and further the discussion.

26-23 points: Initial post may appear after day 5 of the module. Posts may be too brief or are slightly lacking in thought or focus regarding the questions and reading. At least one response may be missing.

22-19 points: Initial post appears after day 5 of the module. Post is too brief and either does not address the questions or readings or does so only superficially. One or more responses are missing.

B. Group Study Projects: There will be five group study projects. I will assign you to a group of 3-4 students at the very beginning of the course. These projects are only worth 10 points a piece. Thus, they are only worth 10% of your final grade. However, if your group completely omits any of these assignments, *I will subtract 10 points from your final grade*. Thus, while these are only worth 10% of your final grade, not doing them will affect your final score substantially. These assignments have three interrelated purposes:

1. To give you a chance to practice your IBS skills without worrying about being exactly right.
2. To lighten your workload by working together.
2. To give you the opportunity to cooperate with and learn from other classmates.

Think ahead and start early on group projects since they will require extra cooperation and communication.

More specifically, you will have a group project on survey and a group project on interpretation. More specific guidelines for each group project will be provided on Moodle.

C. Individual Study Projects (total of 240 points): The careful and close reading of scripture using the inductive method is the foundation of this course. There are 5 graded assignments devoted to specific steps of the inductive bible study method that will enable you to practice and demonstrate what you are learning. The comments on returned assignments will aim to indicate where you have done well and where you can improve in future work. The first assignment is only worth 40 points in order to lighten the effect of your first graded project on your final grade slightly. The last 4 projects will be worth 50 points each.

Note: the individual study projects are worth almost half of your final grade.

Assignment	Points
Discussion Forums (7 @ 30 pts each)	210
Group Projects (5 @ 10 pts each)	50
First Graded Assignment	40
Last 4 Graded Assignments (@ 50pts each)	200
Total:	500

VIII. Grading Policies

A. Grade Calculations: There are 500 points available for the class. Each graded assignment will be given a numerical score and a corresponding letter grade. The ATS Catalog's description

of grades and their values will apply (see pp. 30-31). The final numerical average will be assigned a final letter grades according to this range of values:

A: 500-465	C: 384-370
A-: 464-450	C-: 369-350
B+: 449-435	D+: 349-335
B: 434-420	D: 334-320
B-: 419-400	D-: 319-300
C+: 399-385	F: 299-0

B. Exceptional work will exhibit these characteristics: Precision, accuracy, specificity, depth, insight, clarity, creativity, thoroughness, and balance. Simply “good and accurate” work does not merit an “A”. Also, exceptional work should use tools to study the original languages, focus on matters central to the text, and demonstrate conclusions with valid evidence (good inductive reasoning). The following list provides general descriptions of grades:

- A** – Excellent, outstanding, insightful work that goes one step beyond requirements
- B** – Good, solid work that fulfills most or all requirements
- C** – Adequate work that meets only the basic requirements
- D** – Inadequate work that does not fulfill most requirement
- F** – Failing work that does not grasp basic course elements

C. Lessons Entirely Omitted: If a *graded* project is omitted entirely, then it will be calculated as a “0” in the numerical averaging of the final grade. If a group project is entirely omitted then your final grade will be reduced by 10 points.

D. Late Projects and Responses: Graded projects may be turned in up to three (3) days after the due date. The grade of late graded assignments will be reduced by one full letter grade (B+ to C+). Credit/group assignments may NOT be turned in late (late assignments will be considered failing). Of course, if there is an appropriate reason (serious illness, family emergency), assignments may be turned in late with the instructor’s permission.

E. Independence and Plagiarism: Individual assignments must reflect the independent work of each student. Collaboration is encouraged but exercise special care to preserve the independence of each student. Group projects naturally included group cooperation, but each student is expected to contribute equally. Plagiarism is defined as employing the words and/or ideas of a specific source or person without appropriately citing that source in final work. Students should avoid plagiarism at all costs and check with the instructor if they are uncertain about citing a source.

IX. Course Schedule

Be sure to check the academic calendar in the most recent catalog to find the dates for the first day of class, drop/add, last day to withdraw, and the end of the semester. You should keep track of these dates. Specific due dates for assignments will be provided on Moodle.

Recall that I will expect you to devote approximately 7-9 hours per week to our class. The modules vary in length to allow extra time for group work or more challenging material. Your time each week will typically be allotted in the following way: readings and example (1-2

hours), online lectures/presentation (1-2 hours), online discussions and posts (1-2 hours), assignments (4-6 hours). Of course, this will vary, but this provides you a general guide to help you plan your time.

Module 1: Intro to the Course and to Inductive Bible Study (9/2-8)

Reading:

1. The Syllabus
2. *BSTW*, 11-31
3. *Brief Guide*, 2-8
4. *DTIB*, 510-12 “Method,” 633-37 “Protestant Biblical Interpretation,”

Online Presentations:

1. PowerPoint and supplement on *The Foundations and Characteristics of Inductive Bible Study*
2. Lecture on *An Overview of the Steps of Inductive Bible Study*

Online Discussions: (remember to post by the end of day 4)

1. Opening Forum: Introduce yourself. Be sure to tell us what experience interpreting the Bible you bring to this class, and how prepared (or unprepared) you feel for this class. This forum will be graded.
2. Discussion Forum: Post: Post 3 questions or comments about any of the following topics: the course, the syllabus, and the method of inductive Bible study
3. (Remember: feel free to post any other musings or questions about the IBS method in the Course Questions forum throughout the semester.)

Assignments:

None

Module 2: Structural Relationships & Starting with Segment Survey (9/9-25)

Reading:

1. *MBS*, 49-68
2. *Brief Guide*, 38-50
3. *DTIB*, 27-31 “Acts,” “Galatians,” “Luke,” 512-15 “Micah”

Online Presentations:

1. Lecture on *How to Survey a Segment*
2. PowerPoint on *Major Structural Relationships*

IBS Examples

1. Example segment survey of Galatians 3:1-29

Online Discussions: (remember to post by the end of day 6)

- a. What role has/does/will the interpretation of the Bible play in your ministry?
- b. Do you understand the structural relationships? Which make the least sense to you?

Assignments:

1. Group segment survey on Micah 6:1-7:20
2. Individual segment survey of Luke 4:14-44

Module 3: How to do a Detailed Observation and Ask Good Questions (9/26-10/13)

Reading:

1. *MBS*, 31-49, 72-80
2. *DTIB* 130-33 “Context,” 203-206 “Exegesis,” 782-84 “Text/Textuality”

Online Presentations:

1. Lecture on *You Can't Interpret What You Don't See*
2. Lecture on *How to Ask the Best Questions Ever*

IBS Examples

1. Example detailed observation of 14:31-33

Online Discussion:

- a. What is working well (or not so well) as you observe?
- b. How is it observing different types of biblical material? Are some easier or harder than others for you.

Assignments:

1. Group detailed observation of Micah 7:18-20
2. Individual detailed observation of Galatians 3:23-29

Module 4: How to Survey a book (10/14-30)

Reading:

1. *MBS*, 68-71, 93-134
2. *Brief Guide*, 9-37
3. *DTIB*, 678-80 "Revelation," 724-34 "Scripture, Authority of"

Online Presentation:

1. *How to Survey a Book*

IBS Examples

1. Example book survey of Luke

Online Discussions:

- a. How is this study of the Bible affecting your view of the inspiration and authority of scripture?
- b. Where do you feel you are succeeding and failing to observe books as whole in the process of book survey?

Assignments:

1. Group book survey of Galatians
2. Individual book survey of Micah

Module 5: Answering Questions with Exegetical Determinants & How to Interpret (10/31-11/24)

Reading:

1. *MBS*, 135-166, 181-89
2. *Brief Guide*, 50-67
3. *DTIB*, 462-464 "Logic," 787-93 "Theological Hermeneutics, Contemporary"

Online Presentations:

1. Lecture on *Bringing It Together for Interpretation*
2. PowerPoint and on *How to Use the Most Important Determinants*

IBS Examples

4. Example Interpretation of Luke 14:33

Online Discussion:

- a. How do you think IBS will change your habits of interpreting scripture?
- b. Do you see IBS as both theological and spiritual? If so, why? If not, why not?

Assignments:

1. Group interpretation of Micah 7:18-20
2. Individual interpretation of Galatians 3:23-29

Module 6: How to Evaluate and Apply (12/1-12)

Reading:

1. *MBS*, 201-220
2. *Brief Guide*, 68-85
3. *DTIB*, 321-23 “Imagination,” 617-21 “Preaching”

Online Presentation:

1. Lecture on *Making the Rubber Meet the Road: Evaluating & Applying the Message of the Biblical Text*

IBS Examples

1. Example Evaluation & Application of Luke 14:33

Online Discussion:

- a. Give an example of one of the best applications you have heard. What made it good?
- b. What steps in evaluation and application are you finding most challenging? Are you able to maintain the specifics of your interpretation through all this?

Assignments:

1. Group evaluation and application of Micah 7:18-20
2. Individual evaluation and application of EITHER Luke 4:42-44 or Galatians 3:23-29

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