

BI 628D Genesis (English Exegesis)

(3 credits)

Prerequisite: BI 411/511D

Letter grade (pass/fail optional for those taking this course as an elective)

Online & Residential (Mondays 2:20–4:00pm in Blades 101)

Faculty Information:

Professor: Matthew R. Schlimm, Ph.D.

Office: Van Vliet 316

Office Hours: Available most afternoons Tuesday–Thursday. Email to confirm.

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Course Description

In this course, students will engage in an in-depth study of the book of Genesis, focusing on its themes, structure, literary artistry, and theological content. Students will learn and employ methods of exegesis.

Required Textbooks

Gorman, Michael J. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers*. Third edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020. ISBN: 978-1540960313.

Schlimm, Matthew. *Genesis*. The Bible in God's World Commentary. Draft on chapters 1–9+. Available for free download on Moodle.

Our library has multiple print and electronic commentaries that students will need to consult. Students do not need to purchase them. Here is an annotated bibliography of key commentaries on Genesis:

Brueggemann, Walter. *Genesis*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982.

Brueggemann is considered the one of the greatest biblical scholars of the last generation. This source is especially strong regarding its theology. Available online through our library.

Fretheim, Terence E. "The Book of Genesis: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections." Pages 1:319–674 in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994.

Fretheim is another outstanding biblical scholar. He excels at explaining difficult questions and systematizing disparate data. Available online through our library.

Goldingay, John. *Genesis for Everyone*. 2 volumes. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

This short work has insights for connecting the text with the contemporary world, but it does little in terms of heavy lifting on technical levels. Available online through our library.

Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. 2 volumes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–95.

Although Hamilton is a more conservative scholar, this commentary has gained widespread respect. It is especially useful when wrestling with difficult questions about the text. It also makes a point of relating the biblical text to the New Testament whenever possible. Available in print through our library.

O'Connor, Kathleen M. *Genesis*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. 2 volumes. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018, 2020.

This excellent commentary is one of the few written by a woman. It has many insights, and it introduces many other voices through textboxes. Available in print through our library.

Okoye, James Chukwuma. *Genesis*. A Narrative Theological Commentary. 2 volumes. Eugene: Cascade, 2018, 2020.

This exciting commentary is thoroughly insightful. The author is a Black Catholic priest. It is also fairly new. Our library currently has the first volume available online and should get the second volume soon. Available online through our library.

Speiser, E. A. *Genesis*. The Anchor Bible 1. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964.

This commentary is both dated and too short to offer a great deal of help. However, the commentary series is seen as one of the best ever made. Speiser's text critical notes are useful, but not as much as Wenham's. Available in print through our library.

von Rad, Gerhard. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Translated by John H. Marks. Revised edition. The Old Testament Library. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972.

Von Rad was one of the foremost biblical scholars during the middle of the twentieth century. This commentary therefore will have some useful information, but it will be rather dated. Available in print through our library.

Wenham, Gordon J. *Genesis*. Word Biblical Commentary. 2 volumes. Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1987–94.

This is one of the best available commentaries. Its text critical work is especially strong. It offers solid explanations to many of the questions asked by readers of Genesis. It comments in a way open to connections with the contemporary world. The scholar is a somewhat conservative at times. To find the translation and notes on textual criticism, refer back to the beginning of the major section of text. For example, commentary on 9:18-29 is found on pages 197-208, but the translation and textual critical notes are found at the beginning of the section on 6:9-9:29 on pages 149-155. Available in print through our library.

Westermann, Claus. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Continental Commentaries. 3 volumes. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984–86.

This is the most technical commentary available. On the one hand, its technicality means it's often seen as an important reference work that is cited frequently by scholars. On the other hand, its technicality means it's easy to get lost in the vast amount of material Westermann provides. When he begins a section, for example, it will consist of several pages of dense bibliography before providing commentary. So, students may want to use this source, but only if they feel they have sufficient time to wrestle with it. Available in print through our library.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. Draw on a text's literary, historical, and canonical context to shed light on confusing texts.
2. Develop pastoral wisdom for dealing with diverse views on the biblical text on the part of laity.
3. Preach sermons on Genesis that connect the biblical text to the contemporary world.
4. Lead Bible studies of Genesis that connect the biblical text to the contemporary world.

In keeping with the stated purpose of the M.Div. degree ("to serve the one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and prepare women and men for faithful, compassionate, and effective pastoral ministry"), this course contributes toward achieving the following M.Div. curricular objectives:

- Interpret the Christian Scriptures through faithful exegesis and in light of the Christian tradition.
- Preach the Word of God with faithfulness and clarity.

It also contributes to the following M.A.M.C. curricular objective:

- Articulate and reflect critically and constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world.

Course Requirements:

Students will be expected to demonstrate their learnings through five types of assignments:

1. *Pastoral Response Emails* (1 per week; 20% of final grade): Each week, students will be asked to write an email to a hypothetical parishioner who either asks a probing question or expresses something with which they disagree. Students will be graded based on the extent to which they [1] respond with respect and humility, and [2] support their claims with biblical evidence. Length should not exceed 300 words.
2. *Now We're Stumped Assignments* (1 per week; 20% of final grade): Each week, students will wrestle with a confusing text in Genesis. They will be expected to make use of secondary commentaries, as well as literary, historical, and canonical context (as necessary). The work turned in should never exceed 300 words.
3. *Bible Study* (1–2 per semester; 20% of final grade): Each week, one student will lead the class in a Bible study of a particular passage. It should not last more than 45 minutes. During that time, the leader should introduce the topic/text (hook), have the scripture read aloud (book), engage the text through questions (look), and wrestle with the “so what” questions raised by the text (took).
4. *Sermonettes* (1–2 per semester; 20% of final grade): Each week, one student will preach a short sermon based on a passage from the assigned texts. Sermons should be exegetically sound, containing creative and imaginative connections with the modern world. They should not exceed 10 minutes.
5. *Participation* (20% of final grade): Students are required to watch all lectures before class. They are also required to participate in classes, which includes [1] sharing a summary of their pastoral response emails, [2] sharing a summary of their now we're stumped assignments, [3] offering edifying feedback to sermons, and [4] participating in Bible studies.

Grading Scale

| | |
|-----------|----|
| 93 – 100% | A |
| 90 – 92% | A- |
| 87 – 89% | B+ |
| 83 – 86% | B |
| 80 – 82% | B- |
| 77 – 79% | C+ |
| 73 – 76% | C |
| 70 – 72% | C- |
| 67 – 69% | D+ |
| 63 – 66% | D |
| 0 – 62% | F |

Course Requirements: Summary

| Component | Portion of Final Grade | Due Date |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Pastoral Response Emails | 20% (2% each) | Weekly |
| Now We're Stumped Assignments | 20% (2% each) | Weekly |

| | | |
|---------------|-----|------------------|
| Participation | 20% | Weekly |
| Sermonettes | 20% | On sign-up date. |
| Bible Studies | 20% | On sign-up date. |

Administrative Information:

Attendance and Make-up Policies:

Students are required to watch all lectures. Residential students are expected to attend all classes. If students would like to request an excuse from doing something at the designated time, they should make their request via email to mschlimm@dbq.edu. Excused absences will be given for medical and professional reasons (such as meeting with an ordination board), as well as circumstances such as severe weather and family emergencies. Excused absences of this nature will not negatively affect grades, but the student bears full responsibility for submitting a request via email to be excused. If appropriate arrangements are not made ahead of time, then the relevant grade will be reduced by 5 percentage points for each twenty-four hour period it is late.

Plagiarism:

As stated in the UDTS Student Handbook, "The Seminary defines plagiarism as the copying or use of another person's work in any form without acknowledgment. Students shall not represent the work of another as their own or in any way misrepresent their own work, or the work of another. The use of any outside source, whether of idea or of paraphrase, shall be properly acknowledged. Any quotation, even of phrase, shall be marked by quotation marks. Misrepresentation shall be avoided. The first offense of plagiarism definitively established will be penalized by an 'F' on the assignment. Second offense, definitively established, will be penalized with an 'F' for the course. Third offense, definitively established, results in the student being subject to dismissal from the Seminary."

Inclusive Language Policy:

As stated in the UDTS Catalog, "The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary affirms the equality of women and men in ministry and in the theological seminary, and affirms that language used in reference to humanity and to the people of God shall be gender inclusive. Papers and assignments done in the theological seminary shall conform to this guideline. Papers having gender biased language are unacceptable and shall be returned to the student for correction and, if applicable, a late penalty will apply. The seminary encourages all members of the community to be patient and encouraging with one another, as we all work toward the goal of language that reflects the unity and diversity of God's people." Furthermore, while students are not required to avoid the use of masculine pronouns when referring to God, they are encouraged to avoid excessive masculine language when describing God in commentary (translations should match the Hebrew text). As Scripture teaches (Luke 15), God is both the shepherd who searches for his lost sheep and the woman who searches for her lost coin.

Academic Success Center:

As stated online (www.dbq.edu/asc), "The Academic Success Center at the University of Dubuque is located on the second floor in the Charles C. Myers Library. The goal of the Academic Success Center is

to empower students and to connect them with the resources necessary to achieve both academic and personal goals. Services provided by the Academic Success Center include:

Individual Tutoring

Writing Center

Disability Accommodations

Testing Services

Academic Probation Support Services

Opportunity Program Tutoring Services”

For more information, see www.dbq.edu/asc

Subject to Change:

This syllabus, course calendar and other attending documents are subject to change during the semester.

Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Statement:

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. Confidentiality of all requests will be maintained. All requested accommodations must be approved through the Academic Success Center, 2nd floor Myers Library (589-3262 or ASC@dbq.edu).

Netiquette

Netiquette: A Summary

All posts should reflect Christian character:

- Do solid work, "as unto the Lord."
- Do your own work; "Thou shalt not steal."
- Be kind; "Speak the truth in love."

Posts that do not do the assigned tasks will not receive credit. Inflammatory or insulting posts will be deleted, and can result in discipline, per institutional policy.

Netiquette: The Details

- **Do solid work, "as unto the Lord."**
 - Carefully **proofread**, ensuring everything is clear and easy to understand.
 - **Follow the instructions** given for the discussion. Give particular attention to show long posts should be.

- **Directly relate** your post to the forum. If you would like to chat about issues unrelated to the questions posted, please use the "Coffee House" link found near the top of our website.
- **Do your own work; "Thou shalt not steal."**
 - As stated in the UDTS Student Handbook, "The Seminary defines **plagiarism** as the copying or use of another person's work in any form without acknowledgment. Students shall not represent the work of another as their own or in any way misrepresent their own work, or the work of another. The use of any outside source, whether of idea or of paraphrase, shall be properly acknowledged. Any quotation, even of phrase, shall be marked by quotation marks. Misrepresentation shall be avoided. The first offense of plagiarism definitively established will be penalized by an 'F' on the assignment. Second offense, definitively established, will be penalized with an 'F' for the course. Third offense, definitively established, results in the student being subject to dismissal from the Seminary."
 - **Copying and pasting** material from other websites constitutes plagiarism (unless such material is properly quoted and cited).
- **Be kind; "Speak the truth in love."**
 - Be **respectful** of each member of the classroom, including peers and instructor. You are encouraged to write as if you were talking to the person face to face. If you would hesitate to say out loud and in company what you're preparing to post or email, it is probably wise not to press the "send" or "post" button.
 - **Avoid cynical or humorous comments**, as they can be misinterpreted.
 - **Concisely** give readers something **substantive** to read.
 - **Avoid dominating** class discussions.
 - Use **gender-inclusive language**. As stated in the UDTS Catalog, "The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary affirms the equality of women and men in ministry and in the theological seminary, and affirms that language used in reference to humanity and to the people of God shall be gender inclusive."
 - **Evaluate** the course (teaching materials, instruction strategies, work load, and classroom administration) in an appropriate context which will be made available at the end of the term. If there are specific questions or concerns, please address them directly to your instructor.
- If another student makes a post that you believe does not abide by this etiquette, please **email** the professor as soon as possible.

Tentative Schedule

See below.

| Week | Tue | to | Mon | Gen | Email Topic | Stumped Topic | Sermonette | Bible Study |
|---------|------|----|------|----------------------------|--|--|------------|-------------|
| Week 1 | 1/17 | to | 1/23 | 1 | N/A: Read Gorman Book | N/A: Read Gorman Book | Dr. Matt | Dr. Matt |
| Week 2 | 1/24 | to | 1/30 | 2-5 | The Historical Adam | Tree of knowledge | TBD | TBD |
| Week 3 | 1/31 | to | 2/6 | 6-11 | The Ark Encounter | Sons of God OR Noah's Nakedness | TBD | TBD |
| Week 4 | 2/7 | to | 2/13 | 12-15 | What about the non-elect? | How does Gen 14 relate to context? | TBD | TBD |
| | 2/14 | to | 2/20 | Study Days | | | | |
| Week 5 | 2/21 | to | 2/27 | 16-20 | Why does God tell Hagar to go back? | What's Sodom's sin? | TBD | TBD |
| Week 6 | 2/28 | to | 3/6 | 21-24 | Cave & Land: https://tinyurl.com/yd93ymuj | What is the Bible's position on polygamy? | TBD | TBD |
| Week 7 | 3/7 | to | 3/13 | 25-28 | Racism in Gen 26:34-35; 27:46-28:9? | Who's the bad guy? Esau or Jacob? | TBD | TBD |
| Week 8 | 3/14 | to | 3/20 | 29-32 | Emulate Jacob in Gen 31? | Gen 30:25-43 OR identity of stranger at Peniel | TBD | TBD |
| Week 9 | 3/21 | to | 3/27 | 33-36 | Gen 34 & pastoral care | Jacob & Esau's Reunion: Why short-lived? OR Does Jacob repent? | TBD | TBD |
| Week 10 | 3/28 | to | 4/3 | 37-41 | Onan | Why does Ruth 4:12 talk about Gen 38? | TBD | TBD |
| | 4/4 | to | 4/10 | Research & Easter | | | | |
| Week 11 | 4/11 | to | 4/17 | 42-45 | Joseph is confusing. | Gen 44:15. Divination? | TBD | TBD |
| Week 12 | 4/18 | to | 4/24 | 46-50 | Do I really need to forgive? | Gen 47:13-26. Why is it in the Bible? | TBD | TBD |
| | | | | Exams: none for this class | | | | |