

THE SCRIPTURES AND SPIRITUALITY
SPRING 2008

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Recommended Text:

The Catholic Study Bible (NAB). New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
[ISBN 0-19-528389-9] [\$35.20/\$26.40]
Please feel free to use whatever version of the Bible you have; you do not need to purchase this version. The two most commonly assigned versions of the Bible for academic study are the New American Bible (NAB) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Required Texts:

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer, *The Art of Theological Reflection*. [\$16.95/\$12.75]
New York: Crossroad, 1998. [ISBN 0824514017]
Thomas Merton, *Opening the Bible*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The [\$6.95]
Liturgical Press, 2000. [ISBN 0814604080]
Barbara E. Bowe, *Biblical Foundations of Spirituality: Touching a Finger to the* [\$24.95]
Flame. New York: Sheed & Ward, 2003. [ISBN 0-7425-3157]
A. K. M. Adam, *Faithful Interpretation: Reading the Bible in a Postmodern* [\$20.00]
World. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. [ISBN 0800637879]
Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz, eds. *The Bible in World Context: An Experiment in* [\$12.00]
Contextual Hermeneutics. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2002.
[ISBN 0-8028-4988-1]

Course Description and Objectives

For the Christian, there are two sacred texts: scripture and one's own life. This course will explore both texts simultaneously through reading, theological reflection and exegesis. We will survey the manifold spiritualities that are present in the Bible with attention to their original context and literary shape (exegesis). We will reflect on these spiritualities in the context of our own lives and experiences. And we will foreground the importance of position and interpretative responsibility through theoretical attention to the postmodern, pluralistic world in which we live. By the end of the course, you will be able to discuss the diverse spiritualities in scripture, to practice several styles of theological reflection, and to understand more deeply your role as biblical interpreter within a community of faith.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation

Class meetings will include some lecture and quite a lot of class discussion. Small group and class discussions depend upon your active engagement with the week's readings. Please complete the readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Should illness or circumstance necessitate absence, please leave word in advance of class at one of the phone numbers above or by e-mail. 30% of grade.

Course Requirements (continued)

Weekly Engagement with Scripture

Spirituality has been defined as “the active stance of anticipating revelation” (Roland Murphy, scripture scholar), while scriptures include those books which the community believes to be revealed. When one reads scripture, one encounters past revelation in the hope of present revelation, a hope that is realized by grace as one consciously brings one’s life to the text.

Traditionally, Christians have engaged in the conversation between life and scripture in several ways, through theological reflection, critical study (exegesis), prayer (such as *lectio divina*), liturgical proclamation, and ethical behavior. This course will focus on the first three of these ways through practice both outside of and during class sessions.

Theological Reflection

Killen and deBeer provide some principles and particular methods for theological reflection that may prove useful as you reflect on the week’s scripture readings (for a summary of their method, see the end of this syllabus). After reading the scriptural texts for a given class, reflect either on ONE of those readings in light of your experience or begin with an experience of yours and integrate ONE of the scripture readings in your reflection. Write a 4–5 page paper, typed and double-spaced, presenting your reflection (directions for written work can be found online through the course web site at “Writing Guidelines”). Please be prepared to discuss the *process* (not the content, necessarily) of your reflection in class, and to submit your paper at the end of each class session. 35% of grade.

Exegetical Exercise

Exegesis refers to a critical reading of scripture. One chooses a particular method of interpretation, with its own range of questions, and applies these questions to the text. For example, questions can be about the literary shape and role of the passage in its context, the rhetorical function of it, or the socio-historical conditions behind it. This critical reading requires research, using tools such as concordances, biblical dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, and commentaries.

Since you will later be required to do one major exegetical paper for the course, this short and partnered exercise affords you the opportunity to practice and receive feedback during one of our regular class sessions. We will learn this skill from each other, and you will be better prepared to do an extended exegesis of your own. Your exegesis will be delivered orally in class; you will not have to turn anything in (though if you would like to receive feedback, you are most welcome).

During the week you present your exegesis on one of that week’s assigned readings, you are not required to turn in a theological reflection paper. Steps for the exegetical process will be posted online. 5% of grade.

Lectio Divina

Occasionally during the quarter we will take the opportunity to practice *lectio divina*, or a prayerful reading of scripture. There are a few different methods we might use. If you have experience with these methods, please feel welcome to help design and guide the prayer (this is a voluntary and not required responsibility).

Exegetical Paper

A 12-15 page exegetical paper will be required, due a week after the last day of class by noon. This paper will be a research paper using the skills developed in smaller exegetical exercises and theological reflections completed during the quarter. The first 8-10 pages of the paper should be a study of a particular spirituality embodied in a section, book, or pericope of scripture. This portion of the paper uses some contemporary method of biblical exegesis to examine the biblical text closely, and therefore lays out the method first (1-2 pages) and then applies it to the biblical text. Your “method” may be focused on recovering the original context of the passage, or it may focus on exploring a modern interpretive tradition (such as African, Asian, Latin American, postcolonial or postmodern interpretation). The final creative step of exegesis is theological reflection in the manner you have been practicing throughout the quarter, and this should be the final 4-5 pages of your paper. Directions for the Exegetical Paper can be found online at “Assignments.” 30% of grade.

Schedule of Topics

Wk	Date	Topic for Class Discussion
1	4/1	INTRODUCTIONS
2	4/8	LITERATURE, INTERPRETATION AND SPIRITUALITY <u>Scripture Readings:</u> Genesis 1–3; <i>Jubilees</i> 1–3 (ERes); 1 Corinthians 11:1-16; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; John 1:1-18; Revelation 20–22 <u>Secondary Readings:</u> Merton; Bowe 1-21; Killen & DeBeer 1-19 <i>Theological Reflection #1 due</i>
3	4/15	COVENANT SPIRITUALITY <u>Scripture:</u> Exodus 11–12; 15; 19–20, (2 Kings 22) Deuteronomy 1:1-5; 5–6 <u>Secondary:</u> Bowe 23-67; Killen & DeBeer 20-45 <i>Theological Reflection #2 due</i>
4	4/22	PROPHETIC SPIRITUALITY <u>Scripture:</u> Amos; Hosea; Isaiah 1–11; 40–45 <u>Secondary:</u> Bowe 83-108; Killen & DeBeer 46-75 <i>Theological Reflection #3 due</i>
5	4/29	WISDOM SPIRITUALITY <u>Scripture:</u> Job 1–14; 38–42; Ecclesiastes 6; Matthew 5–7; 13:1-50 <u>Secondary:</u> Bowe 109-126; Killen & DeBeer 76-110 <i>Theological Reflection #4 due</i>
6	5/6	INCARNATIONAL SPIRITUALITY: THE GOSPELS <u>Scripture:</u> Matthew <u>Secondary:</u> Bowe 127-51; Killen & DeBeer 143-5 <i>Theological Reflection #5 due</i>
7	5/13	A NEW PERSON & A NEW EARTH: THE POWER OF THE CROSS <u>Scripture:</u> Romans; 1 Corinthians; Revelation <u>Secondary:</u> Bowe 153-81 <i>Theological Reflection #6 due</i>
8	5/20	THE ETHICS OF INTERPRETATION: POSTMODERN ISSUES <u>Scripture:</u> Reread Matthew <u>Secondary:</u> Adam 1-80 <i>Theological Reflection #7 due</i>
9	5/27	DISCIPLES TOGETHER, CONSTANTLY: READING IN COMMUNITY <u>Scripture:</u> Matthew 1–2; Luke 1–2 <u>Secondary:</u> Adam 81-164; Dietrich & Luz 3-49 <i>Theological Reflection #8 due</i>

Wk	Date	Topic for Class Discussion
10	6/3	<p>"A DECREE WENT OUT TO THE WHOLE WORLD": GLOBAL READINGS</p> <p><u>Scripture</u>: Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2</p> <p><u>Secondary</u>: Dietrich & Luz 51-80</p>
11	6/10	<i>Exegetical Paper due by Noon today (turn in to my office, Bannan 338)</i>