

“How to Read the Bible”

Spring 2020 Syllabus

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Introduction

The scriptures are, according to our ELCA Constitution, “the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.” So what does this mean for how we read the bible? This course will begin to unpack our relationship to scripture, expose the learner to the history of biblical interpretation, and encourage the learner to begin to be self-aware of their own hermeneutical lens with which they approach scripture.

Pre-Work

As we will have a double session in April it is vital learners take the responsibility to begin their journey before we engage as a class for the first time together. As pre-class work the learner should do three things.

- 1) Pick which bible they are going to use and familiarize themselves with it.
- 2) Read the following articles...
 - a. “The Bible as Word of God”
https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/32-4_Word/32-4_Hoffman.pdf
 - b. “‘Today this word is fulfilled in your hearing’: A Scriptural Hermeneutic of Biblical Authority” https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/26-4_Biblical_Authority/26-4_O'Day.pdf
- 3) Write a one page reflection on the position from which you approach scripture.

Session 1

This session will take some time to discuss our histories with the bible and its use. Questions for conversation will begin with our one page reflections on the position from which you approach scripture.

- What is your history with the Bible? When did you first become aware of it?
- What are your feelings related to the Bible?
- Has your view of scripture changed over time? Is it more or less authoritative?

The second part of class will discuss various ways scripture has been interpreted through a multiplicity of academic, cultural, and socio-economic realms.

Session 2

This session will focus on why we read the Bible today. In our ELW Worship liturgies scripture takes a very prominent place and many of our words throughout worship reflect scriptural roots as well. We will also discuss how we encounter scripture as Law and Gospel in the Lutheran tradition and what difference that makes for worship and preaching.

Reflection Paper (3 to 5 pages)

Choose a set of lectionary texts (<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/>) and...

- 1) Consider why these texts were put together in a set of readings

- 2) Does their placement together enhance the hearer's experience?
- 3) Where do you hear the Law and the Gospel in these texts?
- 4) What would be a starter for connecting these texts in a sermon?

Session 3

In this section we will reflect on how the Bible is a source of living revelation for the church today. Building on our reflection paper we will discuss what we learned about scripture and how we approach it. We then will discuss how we can read the Bible in the 21st century and convey what we gain from reading into a compelling story that can be shared with others.

Final Reflection Paper (3 to 5 pages)

1. Pick a scripture passage that you have found meaningful in the past.
2. Using the resources you have been introduced to in this class reflect on how others have interpreted this scripture and found meaning. Particularly others from a different social/geographical position than you. Communicate their readings in your paper and what you are learning from them.
3. Produce a one page "help" that you could provide someone reading this passage to aid them in seeing the various ways this scripture can be interpreted and how understanding those interpretations enhances your ability to proclaim Law and Gospel from this text.