

North Park Theological Seminary
3225 W. Foster Ave., Chicago, IL 60625

BIBL 6290 (Section 1)
Ethnic American Biblical Interpretation
Summer 2012 Syllabus (v. 3/7/12)

Professors	Dr. Max J. Lee
Class Hours/Location:	MTWThF 8:30am-4:30pm (5/21–5/25/12) Rm: TBA
Office	Nyvall 39
Office Hours	During the intensive week, the best available time for office hours is eating lunch together MTWThF For other times, let's make a separate appointment
Email	mlee1@northpark.edu

Description

In this course the student will be interpreting select biblical texts from the Old and New Testament Christian canon with an appreciation for how African–American, Asian–American, Latino/a–American, and other ethnic-American communities hear these same texts from a social and cultural location different from an exclusively European and American context. Three hours.

Course Objectives

- ♦ To be more aware of **your own biases and presuppositions** to biblical interpretation. By reading interpretations of the biblical text ‘from the margins’ or from specific cultural and ethnic social locations, students are asked to re-examine traditional (Reformational) ways of understanding the Bible and explore alternative methods for biblical interpretation.
- ♦ The class will still seek *to build a common vocabulary* with the ancient world of the biblical writer (i.e., the task of exegesis and the historical critical method) and *apply* his original message into our present Christian context (the task of hermeneutics and theological reflection). Yet this mode or method of biblical interpretation (known as the **historical-critical method**) has its own set of limitations and deficiencies, and the class will seek to explore how reading biblical texts using other methods might inform the traditional task of exegesis, hermeneutics and theological reflection.
- ♦ In order to achieve the above objective, it is necessary to study also the history, cultural milieu, social networks, religious value systems, and politics of Palestine and the ancient near east in the OT period, and for the NT period, Second Temple Judaism and the wider Roman world. We do this to ask how **the ancient world** frames perennial questions that continue to have relevance today.
- ♦ Also half the class will be pointed to **cultural studies**. We study the lives of Asian Americans, Latino/a Americans, and African Americans - their history, culture, and contributions in the United states so that we can adequately think about how the Bible speaks to their situation and ours.
- ♦ We will also engage with scholarship from non-European, ethnic-American, and ‘majority world’ perspectives or perspectives ‘from the margins.’ We will be reading select commentaries, articles, and essays from ethnic-American scholars or scholars of color, who collectively represent alternative ways to read the biblical texts and its central themes. We then compare their work with the dominant European and American segments of the academy to understand how certain biblical texts have been heard, read, understood and how EABI can contribute to the ongoing conversation on how the Bible informs the Christian life.

Required Textbooks

Gonzales, Manuel G. *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*. 2nd Edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009 [ISBN: 978-0253221254]

Holt, Thomas C. *Children of Fire: A History of African Americans*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010. [ISBN: 0809067137]

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Updated and Revised Edition. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1989; 1998 [ISBN: 978-0316831307]

The Ethnic American Biblical Interpretation Reader (hence **EABIR** on moodle)

On moodle, PDF versions of journal articles, essays, and select chapters from books/monographs will be available online as part of your required reading. The assigned readings from the reader are *required* and provide additional materials to your textbooks. The reader includes important material from non-traditional scholars, scholars of color, and scholars who write for the non-European and non-(white)American ‘majority world’ or with a perspective ‘from the margins’

[For all MDiv students]: *The Greek New Testament* (UBS⁴ or NA²⁷) and *The Hebrew Bible* (BHS).

MDiv students are encouraged to work from the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Bible at select points from the course. You are allowed, however, to bring your English Bible as well (see comments just below).

[For non-MDiv students]: *The English Bible* in any contemporary translation, but preferably the **NRSV** or **TNIV/NIV2010**.

Please do not use a paraphrased translation (e.g., New Living Bible) or an idiomatic/colloquial one (e.g., Eugene Peterson's translation). A more literal translation of the Hebrew/Greek texts are needed for the course. If you have any questions concerning if a particular version or translation is acceptable or not, please do not hesitate to ask the instructor.

Recommended

Cosgrove, Charles H, Herold Weiss, and K.K. Yeo. *Cross-Cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. [ISBN: 978-0802828439]

Vanhoozer, Kevin. *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Landmarks in Christian Scholarship. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998; repr. 2009 [ISBN: 978-0310324690]

On Reserve

Select works which could *possibly* be in high demand from the whole class will be placed on library reserve so there will be fair access to all. A bibliography of on-reserve books will be given during the first week of class if this library reserve is created

Pre-requisites for the Course

There are no pre-requisites for the course but it is *highly recommended* that the student has taken already either an OT or NT introduction course, or New Testament Exegesis, or Hebrew Exegesis, or any other biblical studies elective which explains the historical-critical method and/or methods of interpretation. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to email the instructor of the course.

Overview of Assignments

Assignment Description/Summary	Max Points
Top Ten Historical Events Shaping the Cultural Identity of Asian Americans, Mexican Americans and African Americans (3 X 100pts)	300
Exegetical Exercises in EABI (3 X 100pts)	300
Bibliography of Secondary Literature	50
Final Paper	250
Attendance and Participation (includes reflections on the class field trip)	100
<i>Total Possible Points</i>	1000

Top 10 Historical Events (3X 100pts = **300 pts** or 30% of your final grade)

For each of the 3 textbooks on the culture and history of Asian Americans (Takaki), Mexican Americans (Gonzales) and African Americans (Holt), either individuals, pairs, or small groups, you will be asked to distill the content of each book into a short paper focusing on the top 10 historical events which has shaped Asian American, Mexican American, and African American identities. Details of the assignment will be distributed in the coming weeks before class starts.

Exegetical Exercises (3X 100pts = **300 pts** or 30% of your final grade)

For each of the major sections we will cover for the course: Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics, Latino/a American Biblical Hermeneutic and African American Biblical Hermeneutic, you will be asked to write a short interpretative paper (2-3 pages single-spaced; 4-5 pages doubled; or **1000-1500 words**) that exegetes and interprets a biblical text and theologically reflects on how the text speaks to the social location of each cultural group. The paper will involve cultural studies, exegesis and theological interpretation, and critical engagement with secondary literature on your chosen passage.

While you will be mostly on the written portion of your work, you will be asked to give a short presentation on your paper in class (15-20min; time will be strickly enforced so we have time to hear from each student).

For your presentation, please provide a short 1-page outline for the whole class. Further details of the assignment will be distributed later.

Bibliography of Secondary Literature (50 pts)

As part of your final paper presentation but not limited in scope to your chosen biblical text, you will choose one (1) of the following areas: Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics, Latino/a American Biblical Hermeneutics or African American Biblical Hermeneutics. Compile a comprehensive bibliography of monographs, books, journal articles, essays on how biblical scholars have interpreted Old or New Testament texts from their social and cultural location. The bibliography is limited to *exegetical* works, so you will *not* be looking for works in Asian American *theology*, for example, but specifically 2ndary literature which provides some sort of detailed *exegesis* of the biblical texts yet applies the message of the text to the social location of your chosen cultural location (i.e., Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics). At a minimum, your bibliography should include 30 items. Further details of the assignment will be distributed later.

Final Paper (250 pts)

You will be asked to write an 5-6pp. research paper (single-spaced; or 10-12 double-spaced; **2500-3000 words**) that interprets a chosen biblical text in the OT or NT from a cross-cultural perspective. Your paper will consist of the following components: an exegesis of your biblical text, a historical or cultural study on the social location of either Asian Americans, Latino/a Americans, or African Americans living in the United States (choose 1), and an integration of your two studies (biblical and cultural) so that you are interpreting the text for/from a cross-cultural perspective. The student should provide **a written proposal for the topic and a preliminary bibliography** of the secondary sources used for the paper (separate from the bibliography project which is broader) in seeking the instructor's approval for your final paper topic. Further details of the assignment will be distributed later.

Participation, Attendance, and Class Field Trips (100 pts)

You are expected to be present during class as the class is *heavily* discussion oriented. Absences from part of the class during any of the sessions may result in the lowering of the participation grade. *You are expected to be prepared* to discuss the biblical texts and the secondary reading for each session. It is not enough to be just present but you must be prepared to participate.

As part of your participation grade, there will be **one class field trip** planned for Thursday 3/24. As part of our effort to understand a particular cultural/ethnic group, we will be visiting one (may be if we can squeeze it in 2) of the following possibilities:

1. Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) Legacy Center of Chicago

4427 North Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60640

<http://www.jasc-chicago.org/index.html>

2. The DuSable Museum of African American History

740 East 56th Place
Chicago, Illinois 60637

<http://www.dusablemuseum.org/>

3. The National Museum of Mexican Art

1852 West 19th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60608

http://www.nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org/nmma_education/students.html

It is *mandatory* that every student attends the trip and pay for the cost of admission into each exhibit (Note: the cost is minimal and in some cases free). Rides will be arranged later. Further details of the trips will be announced later as the instructor of the course makes arrangements with prospective museums.

You will be asked to turn in a written reflection on the trip as part of your participation grade.

Make-up work

Work should be turned in on time. Late papers/assignments will be deducted 5pts for each day it is late (excluding weekends/holidays). No assignments will be accepted 1 week after the due date unless there are documentable and unusually harsh circumstances as covered by the NPTS student handbook for emergencies, sudden loss of family member, or hospitalization.

Grading System

The final percentage will be calculated from the total points earned over the total points possible. The following scale is used for your final grade:

93-100%	A	77-79	C+	60-62	D –
90-92	A–	73-76	C	0-59	F
87-89	B+	70-72	C –		
83-86	B	67-69	D +		
80-82	B –	63-66	D		

The above scale *may* be curved at a later point, but only if the overall class grades are too low, and this would be done at the end of the semester as part of your total grade (not with individual assignments).

Ethical Standards

Cheating of *any kind*, whether plagiarism in written assignments or the giving/receiving of information during quizzes/exams, will result in an F for the assignment, and most likely an immediate F in the course. There also may be additional penalties (e.g., suspension, expulsion) lodged against the student. If you have any questions on what constitutes plagiarism or what constitutes acceptable exam-taking practice, please ask the instructor.

Disability Accommodations

North Park Theological Seminary provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found in the Student Academic Handbook.

Class Schedule

It is strongly recommended that you finish the reading from **Takaki, Gonzales, and Holt** *prior* to the start of the class. When instruction begins, you are expected to have completed the reading assigned for the day and be prepared for a critical and reflective discussion of its content. Starting the reading now will save much grief later

Day	Time	Texts and Topics	Required Readings and Assignments
1	8:30 – 10:00am	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus <i>What is Ethnic American Biblical Interpretation?: The Tension between Cultural Studies as an Academic Discipline and the Insider's Instincts to One's Own Cultural Location</i>	EABIR: Liew, "What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics?", 1–17 <i>Recommended:</i> Segovia, "Toward a Latino/a American Criticism," 193–223
	10:20am – 12:00pm	Student Presentation 1: Top 10 Historical Events Shaping the Cultural Identity of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans	Takaki, <i>Strangers from a Different Shore:</i> Preface to the New Edition ch. 1: From a Different Shore ch. 5: Ethnic Solidarity (Japanese Americans) ch. 6: Ethnic Islands (Chinese Americans) ch. 7: Struggling against Colonialism (Korean Am) ch. 13: One-Tenth of the Nations (Asian Americans in 21st cent.)
	1:30 – 3:00pm	Top 10 Discussion (Cont.)	<i>Recommended:</i> remaining unassigned chapters
	3:20 – 4:30pm	Biblical Texts that Speak to the Cultural History of Asian Americans	
2	8:30 – 10:00am	Example of Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics: Yamada on Gen 2-3 and Japanese Internment Camps	EABIR: Yamada, "What Does Manzanar Have to Do with Eden? A Japanese American Interpretation of Genesis 2-3," 97-108.
	10:20am – 12:00pm	Student Presentation 2: Top 10 Historical Events Shaping the Cultural Identity of Mexican Americans	Gonzales, <i>Mexicanos:</i> Introduction ch. 6: The Depression, 1930–1940 ch. 8: The Chicano Movement, 1965–1975 ch. 9: Goodbye to Aztlán, 1975–1994 ch. 10: The Hispanic Challenge, 1994–present
	1:30 – 3:00pm	Top 10 Discussion (Cont.)	<i>Recommended:</i> remaining unassigned chapters
	3:20 – 4:30pm	Biblical Texts that Speak to the Cultural History of Latino/a Americans	
3	8:30 – 10:00am	Example of Latino/a American Biblical Hermeneutics: :	EABIR: TBA (still deciding on which article to use – MJL)
	10:20am – 12:00pm	Student Presentation 3: Top 10 Historical Events Shaping the Cultural Identity of African Americans	Holt, <i>Children of Fire:</i> Preface ch. 1: only the section called "Africa," pp. 18–22 ch. 4: A New Birth of Freedom ch. 7: A Second Reconstruction ch. 8: Citizens of the Nation/World
	1:30 – 3:00pm	Top 10 Discussion (Cont.)	<i>Recommended:</i> remaining unassigned chapters
	3:20 – 4:30pm	Biblical Texts that Speak to the Cultural History of African Americans	

Day	Time	Texts and Topics	Required Readings and Assignments
4	8:30 – 10:00am	Field trip to either (details TBA) 1. Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) Legacy Center of Chicago 2. The DuSable Museum of African American History 3. The National Museum of Mexican Art	EABIR: Vanhoozer, <i>Is There a Meaning in this Text?</i> , 197–213; 381–431.
	10:20am – 12:00pm		
	1:30 – 3:00pm		
	3:20 – 4:30pm	Travel back to campus	
	5pm onwards	<i>BBQ at the Lee's</i>	* Reflection on the field trip(s) and Ethnic American Biblical Interpretation as a whole
5	8:30 – 10:00am	Example of African American Biblical Hermeneutics:	EABIR: Blount, “Wreaking Weakness,” 69–89 <i>Recommended:</i> Cosgrove, “Paul and American Individualism,” 68–103.
	10:20am – 12:00pm	Toward an Ethnic American Biblical Hermeneutic: What Evangelical Christianity Can Learn by Reading the Bible from Different Cultural Locations	