

BI 628D Genesis (English Exegesis)

(3 credits)

Prerequisite: BI 411/511D

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

Faculty Information:

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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*. Revised and expanded edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010. ISBN: 978-0801046407.

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, and generally speaking it's a good idea to refer to his work. 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.

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.

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.

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.

Westermann, Claus. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Continental Commentaries. 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.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of theological themes in Genesis.
2. Identify literary structure and artistry in Genesis.
3. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses in interpretations of Genesis.
4. Relate Genesis to modern contexts.

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 examinations, written work, and/or presentations.