

**IST 3047: Text to Sermon: Gospel of John**  
**Iliff School of Theology**  
**Fall 2014**

Instructor: Eric C. Smith, Ph.D.

Gathering Days Meetings: Thursday October 9, 1-5pm; Friday October 10, 8am-noon

Office Hours: Iliff Hall 202-A, Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30-11, or via

Skype/Google+/FaceTime/whatever

Email: [ecsmith@iliff.edu](mailto:ecsmith@iliff.edu) (the “c” is crucial; otherwise you will reach a Methodist district superintendent who finished his DMin at Iliff 8 years ago)

**Course Description:**

Taking as its material the Gospel of John, this course will cover strategies and methods for exegesis in the task of composing sermons. Students will employ a variety of critical tools and readings to develop sermon ideas and full sermons, providing valuable skills and experience for those interested in entering parish ministry, or those simply interested in biblical exegesis.

**Course Goals:**

- (1) To discover and develop methods and strategies for the exegesis of the bible.
- 2) To become familiar with the Gospel of John, including its history and theology, and to become familiar with the history of interpretation of the gospel.
- (3) To become practiced at the use of exegesis in the preparation of sermons (or other works of exegesis).

**Required Texts:**

*Harper Collins Study Bible* (NRSV) or another good, modern NRSV study Bible (contact your professor if you aren't certain whether yours qualifies). (\$31.73 from Amazon in paperback)

Hayes, John H. and Carl R. Holladay. *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2007. (\$9.99 Kindle Edition from Amazon, or \$15.76 for paperback from Amazon)

McKenzie, Steven L. and Stephen R. Haynes. *To Each Its Own Meaning, Revised and Expanded: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1999. (\$16.98 from Amazon in paperback)

Brown, Raymond E. and Francis J. Moloney. *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. (\$29.17 in hardback from Amazon)

### **Recommended Texts:**

Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times*. Paulist Press, 1979. (E-book format from Google Books for \$8.98, or \$11.90 from Amazon in paperback)

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **(1) Weekly Writing Prompts (40%)**

This is the heart of the course. Each week, each student will write two posts of their own. The two kinds of posts are:

- a) **Marginalia Exercises:** Each week will feature one pericope (passage) from the Gospel of John. This will be our communal “test text” for the week’s exegetical method or philosophy.

Each week the test text will be posted on the Canvas home page. Using a program called Marqueeed (free registration required), we will spend the week annotation the text, calling each others’ attention to places where the text invites scrutiny, commenting on each others’ observations, and constructing a group reading of the text. We will have the ability to comment on the text, and also to comment on each others’ comments. Hopefully, the result will be something like a scholarly, communal, digital *lectio divina*, with each new reading bringing forth new observations and opportunities to “insert our exegetical knife,” in the words of Krister Stendahl.

The word “marginalia” comes from the textual practices of ancient people, including Christians, who made notations, illustrations, and observations in the margins of their texts. These could be corrections, critiques, humorous responses, or pretty much anything else that came to the scribe’s mind. In that tradition, we will be inscribing and re-inscribing portions of John each week of the quarter.

- b) **Close Reading Posts:** Each student will choose a single “close reading” text for the quarter from among the 44 lections from John as defined by the Revised Common Lectionary. These can be found at <http://www.textweek.com/john.htm>. It is preferable that you *not* choose a text that we are already using for one of our test texts in the course, although that rule is flexible with a good argument from the student. Each week, the student will write a post (1-2 paragraphs, or 5-10 sentences total) on that pericope in

relation to the week's method. The effect of this is to delve deeply into a broad variety of approaches to a single text.

Example: In week 3, we will be considering Literary Criticism, and in week 4 we will be considering Form Criticism. Susie has chosen John 17:1-7 as her quarter-long "close reading," so in week 3 she will write a post on Literary Criticism and John 17:1-7, and in week 4 she will write a post on Form Criticism and John 17:1-7, and so on.

**(2) Responses to others' writing (20%):** Each week, each student should respond to at least two other students' Close Reading post. Students are encouraged to engage in further discussion beyond these two posts, and to even go back into previous weeks to continue discussions, but only two posts are required for the purposes of this 20% of the grade.

Students should be respectful and gracious, but I also hope that we can be an honest and forthright community, pushing on assumptions, oversights, and alternative interpretations when we see them.

**(3) Sermon preparation and delivery (30%):** See the description in week 5 of the course schedule below.

**(4) Doing the reading (10%):** Completing the readings is an expectation for this course. It will not be possible to complete the course successfully without doing the readings, as your grade in this category and others will suffer.

### **ADA Accommodations:**

Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with disabilities to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students are encouraged to contact their assigned advisor to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The advising center can be contacted at [advising@iliff.edu](mailto:advising@iliff.edu) or by phone at 303.765.1146.

### **Course Outline and Schedule of Readings:**

#### **Week One (September 8 - 14): Introduction to John and to Exegesis**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 1-33  
McKenzie and Haynes pp. 5-12  
Brown pp. 26-39  
Read the entire Gospel of John

Writing Prompt: Choose a quarter-long “Close Reading” text, and write a post explaining why you chose it. You may consider noting other texts you thought of choosing, saying why you ultimately did not choose them. We will NOT annotate a “Test Text” this week.

### **Week Two (September 15 – 21): Text Criticism and Historical Criticism**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 34-71  
John 7:53 – 8:11  
Brown pp. 40-89, 281-284

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text in Text Criticism OR Historical Criticism context.

Marginalia exercise: group annotation of 7:53-8:11

### **Week Three (September 22 – 28): Literary (Source) Criticism**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 90-103  
McKenzie and Haynes pp. 35-57  
Brown pp. 189-219  
John 1:1-18

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text and Literary (Source) Criticism

Marginalia exercise: group annotation of 1:1-18

*Optional:* Sermon prep roundtable (Google Hangouts); September 23, 7:00 p.m.  
Mountain Time

### **Week Four (September 29 – October 5): Form Criticism and Tradition Criticism**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 104-114, 115-126  
McKenzie and Haynes pp. 58-89, 90-104  
Brown pp. 115-150  
John 14 (Form Criticism), John 21 (Tradition Criticism)

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text and Literary (Source) Criticism **OR** Tradition Criticism

Marginalia exercise: group annotation of *both* chapters 14 and 21

### **Week Five (October 6 – 12): Gathering Days: Thursday October 9, 1-5pm; Friday October 10, 8am-noon**

During our Gathering Days meetings, each student will have 30 minutes, which will be divided into 15-20 minutes for sermon delivery and 10-15 minutes for discussion,

questions, suggestions for further work, etc. Each student may deliver sermons in whatever format is most suitable to her habits and faith tradition; however, sermon manuscript MUST be turned in to the professor that day (whether you used it or not). Because the sermon is (in this context) the product of an exegetical exercise, and is also an academic assignment, a written text will be needed for evaluation.

Students will NOT be evaluated on their public speaking skills, nervousness, the sound of their voices, or anything else unrelated to the exegesis. It is hoped, however, that the experience of delivering the sermon out loud will add to coursework in homiletics that is available at Iliff, helping set students at ease for the task of preaching.

There is no writing prompt or marginalia exercise for week five.

### **Week Six (October 13 – 19): Feminist Criticism**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 169-170 (yes, two pages!)

McKenzie and Haynes pp. 268-282

Women's Bible Commentary article on John (pp. 381-393) (PDF)

John 4:1-42

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text and Feminist Criticism

Marginalia exercise: group annotation of 4:1-42

### **Week Seven (October 20 – 26): Liberation Theology**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 168-169 (two pages again!), 171-173

McKenzie and Haynes pp. 283-306

Brown pp. 234-248

Gutierrez, pp. 121-140 (PDF)

John 2:1-12 and 2:13-25 (two pericopes that we will read together), John 3:1-21

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text and Liberation Theology

Marginalia exercise: group annotation of 2:1-25 and 3:1-21

### **Week Eight (October 27 – November 2): Queer Reading**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 172-173 (just barely counts as two pages!)

Stone, "'Do Not Be Conformed to This World': Queer Reading and the Task of the Preacher" (PDF)

Jennings, "The Man Jesus Loved" (PDF)

Heacock, *Jonathan Loved David*, ch. 6 (PDF)

John 13:1-30, 21:20-25

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text and Queer Reading

Marginalia exercise: group annotation of John 13:1-30 and 21:20-25

Bonus: Canvas Q&A with Gil Rosenberg, an Iliff/DU PhD student in Biblical Interpretation and a scholar of queer theory and its hermeneutical uses. Details TBA.

### **Week Nine (November 3 – 9): Postcolonial Analysis**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 170-171 (look, two pages again!)  
John 18:28-40

Sugirtharajah, RS. *Postcolonializing biblical interpretation*, from Sugirtharajah, RS. *The Bible and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001.

Three articles from Sugirtharajah, RS, ed. *The Postcolonial Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

*Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic* by  
Fernando Segovia

*The Danger of Ignoring One's Own Cultural Bias in Interpreting the Text* by  
Randall C. Bailey

*The Savior of the World but not of This World: A Postcolonial Reading of Spatial  
Construction in John* by Musa W. Dube

Writing Prompt: Your close reading text and Postcolonial Analysis  
Marginalia exercise: group annotation of John 18:28-40

### **Week Ten (November 10-14): The Fruits of Exegesis**

Hayes and Holladay pp. 178-211

Writing Prompt: This week you are asked to write two responses. The first is to reflect on the sermon-writing process from earlier in the course, and on the exegesis that brought you there. Would you do it differently, having been through the second half of the course?

For the second prompt, you should write a post explaining your evolving relationship with your Close Reading text. Have your insights into your Close Reading text changed at all over these ten weeks? Do you *like* the text more or less, having analyzed it from every angle?