

STMA 500: HERMENEUTICS

Spring 2006

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Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the major historical and contemporary theories of interpretation and the issues around which they differ. Practical exercises in interpretation that will uncover our own approach to the matter. The pastoral implications and uses of the various approaches to texts. Ministry as interpretation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- to obtain a working knowledge of the major schools of thought in interpretation theory;
- to have a basic knowledge of the historical contexts out of which the basic theories of interpretation emerged;
- to practice interpretation so that we might discover our own practical ways of dealing with texts;
- to look at the pastoral implications of interpretation theory.

METHODOLOGIES

lecture, seminar discussion, term paper

OUTLINE (I will hand out a more detailed outline at the first class. If you want to start reading, Tracy is the place, but nothing is required for the first class.)

1. Introduction
2. Major Schools of Thought.
3. Why Hermeneutics: Tracy, chapters 1 to 3.
4. The History of Interpretation: Palmer.
5. A Contemporary Approach to the Problem: Laughery.
6. A Feminist Example: Schneiders.

STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

- Reading of texts and preparation for class
 - Class participation
 - Either
 - A term paper that interprets some text, event or object from three different hermeneutical perspectives. This should be somewhere in the range of 15 pages. It should explain the theoretical roots of hermeneutical approaches that are used, interpret the object using the methods, and critique the results of the use of those methods.
 - OR
- Write a research paper on one school of hermeneutical thought showing how it is anchored in a particular world of meaning, its basic principles and approach to texts, and its implications.

Topics to be approved by the teacher.

Papers are due at the last class session.

REGARDING STYLE

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, on standard 8 1/2"x 11" paper. Use 1 inch margins all round. Use 10 or 12 pt. type. If using a wordprocessor, do not use right-hand justification as it leads to oddly spaced words. **Staple the paper in the top left-hand corner.** Do not use plastic covers or binders. Keep a copy other than the one you submit.

GRADING

Grading will be based for the most part on the final paper. Class participation and the teacher's sense of the student's mastery of the material will also be taken into consideration.

TEXTS, in the order in which we will read them:

David Tracy. Plurality and Ambiguity, Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

Richard E. Palmer. Hermeneutics. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, edited and translated by John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Sandra Schneiders. The Revelatory Text, Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

SOME OTHER BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bernstein, Richard J. Beyond Objectivism and Relativism, Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

Bleicher, Joseph. Contemporary Hermeneutics, Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique. London: Foutledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

SU: BD241/B58

Gefre, Claude. The Risk of Interpretation, On Being Faithful to the Christian Tradition in a Non-Christian Age. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.

Hirsch, E.D. Validity in Interpretation. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Jeanrond, Werner, Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance, New York: Crossroad, 1991.

Keegan, Terence J., O.P., Interpreting the Bible, A Popular Approach to Biblical Hermeneutics, New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

McKnight, Edgar V. Post-Modern Use of the Bible, The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.

Mueller-Vollmer, Kurt, ed. The Hermeneutics Reader, New York: Continuum, 1988.

Ormiston, Gayle L., and Schrift, Alan D., eds. The Hermeneutic Tradition, From Ast to Ricoeur. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Ricoeur, Paul. Interpretation Theory, Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning. Fort Worth: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

Taylor, Mark C. Erring, A Postmodern A/theology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Wachterhauser, Brice R. Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
SU: BD241/H3365/1986

Wilson, Paul Scott. Imagination of the Heart, New Understandings in Preaching. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.