

## Exegetical Paper Directions & Grading Rubric

The 12-15 page paper you write for this course will be a research project probing either a pericope from a single book using one method of higher criticism, or an issue in New Testament scholarship. The purpose of this paper is to hone your exegetical skills and to reinforce the following insights:

- that every reading of scripture is an interpretation;
- that the questions you pose to a text (your critical “method”) shapes what you discover, and so you should be aware of it; and
- that the religious experiences of scripture’s original authors and audiences are worthy of respect and disciplined inquiry, and serve as a kind of dialogue partner for our interpretations.

This is an academic paper, which means that you will apply a method, develop an argument, and render some critical judgments and evaluations about the passage you are studying. You will also consider the pastoral significance of your discoveries toward the end of the paper. In general, the breakdown of the paper should look something like this:

Introductory paragraph	$\frac{1}{2}$ page
The introduction to your paper has one role and one role alone: to introduce your paper. Identify the pericope and method you are using, and lay out a brief road map of your paper to guide the reader. There should be no footnotes or quotations in this single paragraph, since it should be introducing what <i>you</i> have produced, not what other scholars have written. It might be best to write this after the body of your paper is written, so that you actually know what the paragraph is introducing.	
Description of method	1-2 pages
In this section, you introduce the method you are using. Identify the question you are asking and the reason why you think this method will help you answer it. Present the goal of the method and the characteristic steps. You do NOT discuss your passage at all.	
Application of method to passage	8-9 pages
This is the heart of the paper, and thus its longest section. To prepare this section, learn about your method and try your hand at applying it to your passage first to generate your own insights and questions. Then read professional sources that use your chosen method on your chosen passage. See how they add to, correct, or support your own questions and insights. Now you’re ready to write! When you present your reading of the passage through your method, weave in the scholars’ insights as appropriate to your own reading/presentation.	
Pastoral Application of Exegesis	2 pages
In this section, you’ll step back from all of your research and consider whether anything you learned from your research or from the process of research has a bearing on your pastoral work or your spiritual life. For more suggestions about how to develop this section, see pp. 110-13.	
Concluding paragraph	$\frac{1}{2}$ page
The concluding paragraph has one role and one role along: to reprise what you have done in the paper and what you have learned. Like the introduction, it should have no footnotes or quotes, and no new data or information either.	

If you choose a passage to examine, it should be of reasonable length—for example, a single saying of Jesus would be too short, but an entire Matthean discourse or Pauline letter would be too long. Aim for a single pericope or argument, or a group of related sayings that appear in close proximity. Exercises #4 and #5 are designed to help you identify your topic and sources by mid-quarter. At any point along the way, feel free to e-mail and/or meet with the professor for assistance *as often as you need*. Additional resources for your paper are available at the research tab of the course Web site (such as sample student papers, research and writing tips, the style sheet for formatting your notes and bibliography, descriptions and bibliography for the most common exegetical methods). Since you are each other’s best resource, the research page will also have a link to your research pericopes and methods, once you’ve selected them. That way, those of you working on the same passage or method can share resources.

The Exegetical Paper is worth just under a third of your grade for the course (30%). The following rubric is used to evaluate your work on the project. The learning objectives are listed in the left column, the grading weight in the Score column, and the characteristics of degrees of performance in each subsequent column. My hope in sharing this with you is not to overwhelm you, but to show you that I appreciate the complexity of your project and the value of your time, and therefore to communicate clearly where your efforts should be focused.

Objective	Score	Exemplary	Acceptable	Marginal	Unacceptable
<b>Invention</b>					
▪ Originality of research and thesis	/2	Original and independent thesis.	Thesis follows sources but is articulated in your own words.	Thesis follows sources a little too heavily in both ideas and articulation.	Thesis follows sources very heavily in both ideas and articulation.
▪ Appropriateness of method for questions you're asking	/2	Method is ideal for the sorts of questions you're trying to address.	Paper sometimes veers from the method and asks different questions.	Method is well described, but paper consistently veers from it.	Method is not appropriate to your questions or conclusions.
<b>Arrangement</b>					
▪ Introduction of exegetical method	/3	Method is clearly, concisely and accurately introduced.	Method is clearly introduced, but some aspects are not covered.	Several aspects of method are not covered or a source isn't used.	Method is described inaccurately or incompletely.
▪ Application of method to passage	/3	The exegesis of the passage is a consistent application of the method.	The method is the primary means of analyzing the passage, though other methods creep in.	The application of the method reveals some misunderstanding of the method or the passage.	The method is not well understood or applied consistently throughout the paper.
▪ Quality and control of argument	/3	The argument is original and insightful, moving beyond sources to a perspective informed but not governed by the sources used. Strong synthesis and analysis of material.	Flow of argument sometimes gets lost, or argument follows the sources too heavily. Good synthesis and analysis of material.	The thesis or descriptive agenda for the paper is set out in the introduction, but the paper doesn't deliver on its promises. Synthesis and analysis of material lacking.	Paper reads like a list of citations with no conceptual thread governing their presentation. Synthesis and analysis of material lacking.
▪ "Proofs": Comprehension, integration and citation of sources	/3	Excellent selection and critical comprehension of sources. Citations never overtake paragraph, but are well introduced and their implications for your argument are discussed clearly. Sources adequately cited.	Good selection, comprehension and citation of the sources, but the integration into your argument could be improved.	Sources are not professional. Comprehension of sources is adequate, but there are some problems in how you've integrated them in your paper, such as lack of appropriate correlation to your argument or inadequate citation.	Discussion of quotations or references indicates poor comprehension of them. Some citations dropped in to paper but not introduced, discussed, or tied to your point. Sources not always cited.
▪ Pastoral reflection	/3	Reflection works with insights from paper.	Reflection works at times with paper's insights.	Reflection tangentially addresses paper's insights.	Reflection doesn't overlap with insights from paper.
<b>Style</b>					
▪ Writing style	/2	Excellent variation in sentence styles.	Good variation in sentence styles.	Occasional redundant phrasing, passive constructions.	Frequent redundant phrasings, passive constructions.
▪ Grammar and spelling	/2	No grammar or spelling errors.	Occasional grammar and spelling problems.	Grammar and spelling errors, but ideas are still apparent.	Poor grammar and spelling seriously impede effective communication.
▪ Conformity to style sheet	/2	Paper conforms to style sheet.	Problems in 1-2 areas (margins, type face, notes, bibliography).	Consistent problems with most of the format requirements.	Failure to conform paper to style sheet.
<b>Timely Submission</b>	/5	Paper submitted on time and complete.	Paper submitted within two days.	Paper submitted within one week.	Paper later than a week.