



**COVENANT BAPTIST  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

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INFORMED SCHOLARSHIP • PASTORAL HEART

## **BI41 • Textual Criticism of the Bible**

Dr. Timothy Decker

John Miller

Michael Emadi

*2 Credit Hours*

### **Course Description**

A study of the materials, history, theories, and principles of Old Testament and New Testament textual criticism with application to selected textual problems.

### **Educational Objectives**

Overview/ purpose of the course

The instructors will guide students toward achieving a basic comprehension of the issues surrounding Old Testament and New Testament Textual Criticism

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate:

1. Knowledge of the relationship of the preservation of Scripture with textual criticism
2. The ability to define basic terms of textual criticism
3. Knowledge of the history of OT and NT textual criticism
4. Knowledge of the popular methodologies used in the practice of textual criticism
5. The capability to provide a basic analysis of a textual variant in Scripture

### **Required Course Texts:**

Black, David Alan, ed. *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 2002.

———. *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide*. Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Can We Recover the Original Text of the New Testament?* Eugene, OR: Wipe & Stock, 2023.

Brotzman, Ellis R. and Eric J. Tully. *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Backer Academic, 2016.

Gurry, Peter J., “How Your Greek NT is Changing: A Simple Introduction to the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM)” in *JETS* 59/4 (2016): 675–89.  
Accessible through class on Pathway.

Stivason, Jeff, “B.B. Warfield and the Autagrapha,” in *Advancing the Vision: Essays in Honor of John H. White*. Beaver Falls, PA: Falls City Press, 2019: 185-194.  
Accessible through class on Pathway.

Ward, Mark, “Which *Textus Receptus*? A Critique of Confessional Bibliology” in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 25 (2020): 51-77.  
Accessible through class on Pathway.

## Course Requirements

1. Students are required to read all the assigned texts above.
2. Students must watch all lectures.
3. Students must select two topics from the options below and write one 3-5 page paper and one 8-10 page paper. Students who have completed a year of Greek or Hebrew (or both) should select the option dealing with the textual variant in the original language. Students who have yet to complete any biblical language course should choose from the “No Language Required” options.

## Paper Options

### *Biblical Languages*

1. NT Research Paper (8-10 pages) - With all the data and materials provided by the professors, write a 8-10 page “perspectives” paper on the textual variants of 1 John 1:4 accurately representing the popular methods of NT textual criticism (Thoroughgoing Eclecticism, Reasoned Eclecticism, Reasoned Conservatism/Sturz, Radical Conservatism, Byzantine Textform, Confessional Methodology/Decker). You may or may not know which reading each methodology will follow. Therefore, part of the exercise is to offer a conclusion based on the methodology, thereby demonstrating you have an accurate understanding of that methodology.
2. OT Research Paper (3-5 pages) - How tall was Goliath? The student should lay out the different textual evidence for Goliath’s height. Following this, the student should attempt to give an argument for which reading they believe to be correct and how the other readings may have arisen. Finally, provide a brief explanation of the theological impact, if any, of this variant.

*No Language Required*

1. Two Jeremiahs (3-5 pages) - Students should identify how the MT and Greek text of Jeremiah differ, what the current state of scholarship is regarding the differences, and how the student would think through this issue of preservation in light of the differences of these two streams of the book of Jeremiah.
2. Textual Critical Methodologies (8-10 pages) - Write a paper describing the current text critical methodologies (Thoroughgoing Eclecticism, Reasoned Eclecticism, Reasoned Conservatism/Sturz, Radical Conservatism, Byzantine Textform, Confessional Methodology/Decker), which one you find the most compelling and why.

*Grading Plan:*

The course grade will be based on the following grading plan (though this may be changed at instructor's discretion):

- Reading = 30%
- Participation = 10%
- 3-5 Page Paper = 25%
- 8-10 Page Paper = 35%

**Academic Performance**

No student will be deemed to have successfully completed the work in any course who does not achieve a cumulative grade of 75% or above for his course work. The letter equivalents for the percentile grades assigned are as follows:

A -- 95-100%	B+ -- 87-89%	B- -- 80-83%	C -- 74-76%
A- -- 90-94%	B -- 84-86%	C+ -- 77-79%	C- -- 70-73%

**Class Schedule**

<b>Class Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Instructor</b>
08/30	8:00-8:15am	Overview of the Syllabus	Emadi
	8:20-9:15am	The Preservation of Scripture	Dr. Decker
	9:25-10:15 am	Introduction: Text Criticism 101	Emadi
	10:30-11:50 am	Ancient Books and their Makers	Emadi
	12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch	

	1:00-1:50 pm	History of OT Textual Criticism and the Transmission of the OT Text	Miller
	2:00-2:50 pm	Hebrew Witnesses: Dead Sea Scrolls	Miller
	3:00-3:50 pm	Hebrew Witnesses: Masoretic Text	Miller
	4:00-4:50 pm	Ancient Versions: Septuagint	Miller
08/31	8:00-8:50 am	Other Ancient Versions: Vulgate, etc.	Miller
	9:00-9:50 am	Using Textual Apparatus and the Practice of OT Textual Criticism	Miller
	10:00-10:50 am	Case Studies	Miller
	11:00-11:50 am	Case Studies: NT quotation of OT	Miller
	12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch	
	1:00-1:50 pm	History of NT Textual Criticism	Dr. Decker
	2:00-2:50 pm	TR Onlyism & Why Choosing Any One Greek Text (Manuscript or Printed Text) As "The Text" Doesn't Work	Dr. Decker
	3:00-3:50 pm	Methodologies	Dr. Decker
	4:00-4:50 pm	Overview of CBGM	Emadi
09/02	8:00-8:50 am	Reasoned Eclecticism	Emadi
	9:00-9:50 am	Confessional Methodology	Dr. Decker
	10:00-10:50 am	Two Longest Textual Variants in the NT PA & Endings of Mark	Emadi
	11:00-11:50 am	Two Longest Textual Variants in the NT PA & Endings of Mark	Emadi

	12:00-1:00 pm	Lunch	
	1:00-1:50 pm	Two Longest Textual Variants in the NT PA & Endings of Mark	Emadi
	2:00-2:50 pm	Johannine Comma	Dr. Decker
	3:00-3:50 pm	In light of this class - Can we trust our Bibles and Which Bible/Translation is the Best?	Dr. Decker
	4:00-4:50 pm	Panel Discussion	All