

Exegetical Paper

Purpose: Having focused on research and thesis construction the last two steps, the final part of the Exegetical Paper has you integrating these two writing tasks into an elegant, relevant, and exciting paper. You will write an essay of **6 pages** that addresses two issues: 1) It will unfold the meaning of the text for the people who gave it to the world; 2) It will clarify your view of the value of the text today. So in addition to assessing your research ability, this last step asks you to work on crafting a thoughtful, well-written argument in conversation with your sources.



As such, this paper will have a two-fold thesis. One part of the thesis will explain **who wrote the text, for whom, and why** (so your thesis from the review/bibliography); the other part has you making claims about the **relevance of the text today**. For the first part, you are not expected to come up with a radically new interpretation, but should explain what you think to be the most compelling interpretation from the sources you have investigated. The second part asks you to be an interpreter of the text, meaning you will use information & ideas from the “Eco-Social-Religious Location” paper from a century ago as well as previous readings, notably *Moral, Believing Animals*. If you are still having trouble with your thesis, look over the *Easy Writer* pdf again, or this website [Formulating a Thesis](#). You can also run it past me.

Task: 1) Write the Research-Component:

In **4 pages**, craft an argument that clarifies: **1) Who wrote your passage, when, for whom; 2) what values and/or message the original author(s) aimed to give to their readers; 3) How the author(s) crafted this message in terms of its literary qualities.**

- This section of the paper should be **thesis-driven**, with your thesis arising out of your **research**. But your thesis should not be in the body of the paper. It will go into the **Introduction**, which you should write last.
- Your argument should use **clear examples/evidence** from the **primary text** (i.e. the Bible) and from **secondary sources** (i.e. research). You should have at least one citation each paragraph. Again, your sources must be academic sources, not popular and/or web-based sources. Refer again to the research guide set up by Ken Johnson, our bibliographic instructor, if you are still unsure
- Each paragraph should have **3-5 sentences**. For an example of paper that does this part well, see: [Exegesis Example](#)

Some things to guide your writing:

As you write, imagine that you are writing for alums of this class, so people who are generally familiar with the Bible, but not necessarily familiar with the passage you have chosen.

- What** do these well-educated, thoughtful people need to know about the passage? These should include things like: Who wrote it? When? Why? For whom? Literary genre?

--How do you clarify the **passage's historical audience, literary qualities, and social context** in a manner that is both **interesting and informative**?

--What **historical problems** yet remain about the passage that you discovered in your research? Why is this relevant for our contemporary appreciation of the passage?

2) Write the Contemporary Relevance Component:

Because we are a class thinking about desire, ecology, and moral norms in conversation with the Bible, an additional task of the paper is to give you space to think about the contemporary relevance for the passage. With this task in mind, you'll need to begin by re-reading "Living Narratives" (from *Moral, Believing Animals*, pp. 67-76). Next, choose which narrative best (even if imperfectly) shapes your social imaginary. You already completed this task in the "Eco-Social-Religious Location" Paper. Develop an argument that places your passage into this narrative such that you clarify its value within the contemporary context.

--This section of the paper should also be **thesis-driven**, but this thesis will arise out of your **values**. As an example, it might say "As my social imaginary lies in the X narrative, I view the passage's value as Y, because of Z." You should not put this thesis in the body of the paper; it will go into the **Introduction**.

--You may include research that addresses the passage's contemporary relevance to develop your argument.

--Each paragraph should have **3-5 sentences** and explicitly connect to your view understood through "Living Narratives" and "Human Culture(s) as Moral Order(s)" from *Moral, Believing Animals*.

--The length, double-spaced, should be **2 pages**.

3) Write your Introduction and Conclusion:

--The introduction should be one paragraph of **3-5 sentences**.

--It must include a **two-fold thesis**, thereby covering both parts of the assignment, so one related to the social-historical location of the text and one related to your view of its value today. I'd suggest writing this type of thesis in two sentences, so something like: "The first part of this paper will argue that the authors of Genesis 4.... In the second part of the paper, I'll argue that"

--The conclusion should be one paragraph of **3-5 sentences**.

--Rather than introducing any new themes or ideas, the conclusion should sum-up your argument. You can also bring up questions that still remain about the text.

4) Revise your bibliography and attach to this paper.

You should still have at least 6 sources, **properly** cited in either **MLA or Chicago style**. These sources need to be academic sources, so no web-based sources will be accepted.

Rubric: Assessment will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) Depth of research around the historical, social, literary, and value dimensions of the passage.
- 2) Strength, clarity, and thoughtful nature of your two-fold thesis in a focused introduction.
- 3) The quality of your conclusion to end your paper.
- 4) A properly cited bibliography with at least 6 legitimate academic sources, inc. 2 Commentaries.
- 5) The logic and organizational structure of your argument.
- 6) Grammatical correctness and fluidity of your writing.
- 7) Effective connection to other texts, specifically the chapters from *Moral, Believing Animals*.