

BIBL 5240 The New Testament Texts and Their World
North Park Theological Seminary
Spring Semester 2017/18
Location: Fountain of Life Evangelical Covenant Church, Madison, WI
Class Begins: Monday January 29, 2018; Class Ends: Friday May 25, 2018
Class Meetings: February 16/17 2018, March 16/17 2018, April 20/21 2018
Instructor: Stephen Chester, Professor of New Testament
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COURSE AIM

To introduce students to the study of the New Testament texts, equipping them to begin to interpret these texts in a manner informed by history, theology, and hermeneutics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge of the New Testament texts in such matters as their genres, historical origins, general content and literary relationships to each other;
2. explain the significance of the world of the New Testament (historical, social, cultural, and religious contexts) for the interpretation of its texts;
3. exegete selected passages from New Testament texts in an informed way in the light of critical discussion relating to them;
4. understand and engage with the hermeneutical challenges involved in interpreting the New Testament texts for Christian discipleship and ministry today.

CONTENT

The class includes:

1. consideration of foundational hermeneutical issues connected to the interpretation of New Testament texts;
2. an introduction to the history and nature of Second Temple Judaism;
3. a survey of the Gospels, including their origins, genre, literary relationships, and four-fold witness to the life and ministry of Jesus;
4. an introduction to the nature of Graeco-Roman culture, especially its political, social, and religious structures;
5. an introduction to the history of early Christian mission, with a focus on the book of Acts and the life and ministry of Paul;
6. a survey of the Catholic Epistles and the book of Revelation, including their origins, genre, and literary relationships;
7. a study in English of selected passages from New Testament texts informed by the learning envisaged in content points 1-6.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (revised edition; New York: OUP, 2010). This is a study edition of the NRSV. Other versions are acceptable, especially TNIV, but please do not use a paraphrased translation (e.g. New Living Bible) or an idiomatic/colloquial one (e.g. Eugene Peterson). As helpful as they are in the right context, a more literal translation of the Greek texts is necessary for this class.
2. B. Longenecker, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* (2nd Edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). This is a novel written by a leading New Testament scholar. Although it is fictional, the setting of the

story and the concerns of the characters accurately reflect the cultural context of early Christianity.

3. Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012).
4. Dennis R. Edwards, *1 Peter* (Story of God Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).
5. S. McKnight, *The Letter to Philemon* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017). This new commentary on Philemon offers careful exegesis but also pays attention to contemporary application.

ASSESSMENTS

1. Read and Review B.W. Longenecker's novel, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). Your review should concentrate on what you have learnt from reading the book about the cultural context of early Christianity. The review should be 1000 words in length. The review is due on **February 28**.
2. There will be two quizzes (50 marks each) that cover Parts 2-5 of the class. These will take place on **March 17** and **April 21**. All the questions will concern issues covered in class or in the specified reading. The questions will either be multiple choice or invite you to write brief comments.
3. A paper of 1500 words on interpreting 1 Peter. You will read the "Introduction" to Dennis Edwards' 'Story of God' commentary and select one of the units of text into which he divides 1 Peter (see "Contents" page). You will also read the interpretations of the same unit of text provided by Lewis Donelson and Karen Jobes in their more traditional historical commentaries on 1 Peter (both available as e-books through the Brandel library). The paper will compare their approach and that of Dennis Edwards and explore the ways their methods of interpretation are compatible and/or in tension. A separate handout detailing how you are to approach this paper will be issued. The paper is due on **April 9**.
4. A research paper exegeting **one** of the texts listed below. There will be three stages to this paper, which will culminate in the production of your own 'commentary' on the text. The aim of the exercise is to increase your understanding of, and skill in, the process of interpretation. A separate handout detailing how you are to approach each stage of the task will be issued. Stage 1 is due on **March 16**, stage 2 is due on **April 20**. The paper is due on **May 18**, with grace until **May 25**.
Matthew 4:1-11
Matthew 9:9-15
Matthew 16:21-28
Matthew 18:8-14
Matthew 21:33-44
5. The grade for class participation will be based upon (i) attendance, assigned group discussion, and voluntary participation throughout the semester, and (ii) the reading contract. The reading contract is due on the day of the last class. A form will be distributed cataloguing read pages.

GRADING (percentage of total marks awarded for each assessment)

Book Review	20%
Quizzes	20%
Paper on 1 Peter	20%
Exegesis Paper	30%
Class Participation	10%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Please note that the *Dictionary of New Testament Background* and *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* are both available as e-books through the Brandel Library. On the library web-site see under "Research Guides" then "Seminary," then under "Online Resources for Biblical and Theological Studies." All other reading is from required texts, or available online using the ATLA Religion Database, except for the reading for the first meeting of the class on Friday February 16 and the reading for first part of the class on Friday April 20. These readings will be posted in Canvas.

The intensive format of three Friday/Saturday sessions provides less teaching time than in a regular class. For this reason, parts of the class will be delivered online using North Park's Learning Management System, Canvas. "Part 6: The Catholic Epistles and Revelation" will consist of interaction with lectures posted online. "Part 7: Exegeting the Text: Philemon as a Test Case" will involve engagement with fellow students in online discussion boards. Both these parts of the class are integrated into the workflow calendar provided after this class schedule and the instructor will provide further detailed guidance on how to engage with Part 6 and Part 7 of the class as the time approaches.

PART 1 EXEGESIS AND INTERPRETATION

Friday February 16, 6.30-9.15pm

6.30pm-7.45pm

- Syllabus Review
- The Nature of the New Testament texts as Scripture

Reading: Michael Goheen and Michael D. Williams, "Doctrine of Scripture and Theological Interpretation" in *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 48-71.

8.00pm-9.15pm

- Hermeneutics: Issues Behind the Texts (e.g. Quest of the Historical Jesus), Exegeting the Texts (What is New Testament exegesis?), Issues in front of the Texts (e.g. social locations of New Testament readers and their strategies for interpretation).

Reading: Jeanine Brown, *Scripture as Communication* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 252-73.

PART 2 JESUS AND JUDAISM

Saturday February 17, 9.00am – 5.00pm

9.00-10.30am

- The History of Second Temple Judaism: From Alexander to the Destruction of the Temple (70CE)
- Josephus: Our (Reliable/Unreliable?) Narrator

Reading: "Jewish History: Greek Period," "Jewish History: Roman Period," and "Jewish Wars with Rome" in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (IVP: Downer's Grove, 2000), 570-74, 576-80, 584-88.

Reading: "Josephus" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd edition; IVP: Downer's Grove, 2013), 444-48

11.00am-12.30pm

- Jesus and the Covenant in the Second Temple Context
- The Temple at the Center: Its Role in Judaism and Jesus' Attitude towards the Temple

Reading: "Josephus" and "Israel" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd edition; IVP: Downer's Grove, 2013), 444-48, 403-07.

Reading: "Temple," "Temple Act," and "Priests and Priesthood" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd edition; IVP: Downer's Grove, 2013), 939-47, 947-52, 696-705.

1.30pm-3.00pm

- Groups in Second Temple Judaism: The Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Jesus Movement

Reading: “Pharisees” and “Sadducees” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd edition; IVP: Downer’s Grove, 2013), 673-79, 823-25.

3.30pm-5.00pm

- Eschatology in Second Temple Judaism: The Essenes and the Zealots and the Expectations of Jesus

Reading: “Essenes,” “Revolutionary Movements,” and “Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Teaching” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2nd edition; IVP: Downer’s Grove, 2013), 239-42, 789-99, 23-33.

PART 3 THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS**Friday March 16, 6.30-9.15pm****6.30pm-7.45pm**

- What are the Gospels (genre)? For whom were they written (audience)? Why are there four canonical Gospels?

Reading: Hagner, 59-104

8.00pm-9.15pm

- Introducing the Synoptic Gospels: The Relationships between Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- Introducing the Synoptic Gospels: The Distinctive Perspective of Mark

Reading: Hagner, 105-62, 163-92

Saturday March 17, 9.00am-5.00pm**9.00am-10.30am**

Introducing the Synoptic Gospels: The Distinctive Perspectives of Matthew and Luke

Reading: Hagner, 193-254

11.00am-12.30pm

Introducing John’s Gospel

Reading: Hagner, 255-304.

PART 4 GRECO-ROMAN SOCIETY AND THE EARLY CHRISTIANS**1.30pm-3.00pm**

- Quiz 1
- The Nature of Graeco-Roman Society: Empire, Economy, and Social Status

Reading: “Roman Political System,” “Greco-Roman Cities,” “Patronage,” and “Slavery” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (IVP: Downer’s Grove, 2000), 995-99, 212-15, 766-71, 1124-27.

3.30pm-5.00pm

- The Nature of Graeco-Roman Society: Religion, Gender, and Ethnicity
- Early Christians in Graeco-Roman Society: The Corinthian and Thessalonian Churches as Case Studies

Reading: Read “Greco-Roman Religion,” “Women in Greco-Roman World and Judaism,” and “Diaspora Judaism” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (IVP: Downer’s Grove, 2000), 917-26, 1276-80, 281-96.

Reading: John M.G. Barclay, “Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity,” in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 47 (1992), 49-74. The full text is available online through the

ATLA Religion Database (see under “Online Resources” and then “Humanities” on the Brandel Library Website).

Friday April 20, 6.30pm-91.5pm

6.30pm-7.45pm

- Early Christians in Graeco-Roman Society: The Message of the Cross in 1 Corinthians

Reading: EITHER David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 59-89 OR Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 68-102.

8.00pm-915pm

- Introducing the Book of Acts: From Jerusalem to Rome

Reading: Hagner, 307-42.

PART 5 EARLY CHRISTIAN MISSION

Saturday April 21, 9.00am-5.00pm

9.00am-10.30am

- Introducing Paul’s Life: From Persecutor to Apostle to the Gentiles

Reading: Hagner, 345-54, 419-25.

11.00am-12.30pm

- Introducing Paul’s Letters: The Undisputed Letters (1) – Romans and Galatians

Reading: Hagner, 520-45, 436-56

1.30pm-3.00pm

- Quiz 2
- Introducing Paul’s Letters: The Undisputed Letters (2) – 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and 2 Corinthians

Reading: Hagner, 457-75, 546-61, 501-19

3.30pm-5.00pm

- Introducing Paul’s Letters: The Disputed Letters and Pseudepigraphy

Reading: Hagner, 426-35.

PART 6 THE CATHOLIC EPISTLES AND REVELATION

Online lectures (scheduled for viewing March 18 – April 19)

PART 7 EXEGETING THE TEXT: PHILEMON AS TEST CASE

Online discussion boards (scheduled for April 22 – May 25)

WORKFLOW CALENDAR

It is impossible to carry out all the work for a graduate level class in intensive format in the immediate run-up to class meetings. Consistency of effort across the whole of the class period (January 29-May 25) Is essential. You need to set aside time regularly to work. This calendar is intended to help you to plan your work.

January 29

Class Opens

January 29-February 15

Read and review class syllabus

Read B.W. Longenecker, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Michigan, 2015)
Complete all reading in preparation for class meeting on February 16/17

February 16/17

Class meets at Fountain of Life ECC, Madison

February 18-28

Complete your review of Longenecker's *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* (**submission February 28**)

March 1-March 15

Complete all reading in preparation for class meeting on March 16/17

Revise for Quiz 1

Prepare Stage 1 of your research paper proposal (**submission March 16**)

Read "Introduction" to Dennis Edwards' Story of God commentary on 1 Peter and choose and read one of the units into which he divides 1 Peter

Read Lewis Donelson and Karen Jobes on the same verses in 1 Peter

March 16/17

Class meets at Fountain of Life ECC, Madison

March 18-March 31

Begin to view online lectures on "Part 6: The Catholic Epistles and Revelation"

Begin to write your paper on 1 Peter

April 1-April 19

View remaining online lectures on "Part 6: The Catholic Epistles and Revelation"

Complete all reading in preparation for class meeting on April 20/21

Revise for Quiz 2

Prepare Stage 2 of your research paper proposal (**submission April 20**)

April 20/21

Class meets at Fountain of Life ECC, Madison

April 22-May 25

Complete any remaining research and write research paper (**submission May 18 with grace until May 25**)

Engage in online discussion boards for "Part 7: Exegeting the Text – Philemon as Test Case"

Complete and Submit Reading Contract

OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS

ATTENDANCE

If you experience difficulties, please speak to the instructor about it. Illness and other unforeseen circumstances beyond your control will be regarded sympathetically, but poor planning on your part is not a good excuse. Poor attendance without good reason will affect the mark awarded for class participation. The same principles apply to requests for extensions for reports and papers. Late submission without good reason will result in reduced marks.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

Students are reminded of the regulations concerning Plagiarism and Cheating, which can be found in the Academic Catalog. Do not be tempted to plagiarize as a way out of difficulties in completing your assignments. If in difficulty, speak to the instructor.

CLASSROOM PROFESSIONALISM

Please silence any cell phones or electronic devices before each class session. Please do not text or web-browse during class sessions.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-5565) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5599) for information about campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students, and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University's Title IX coordinator in certain situations help ensure that the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking.

Please refer to North Park's Safe Community site for contact information and further details.

<http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Safe-Community>

ACCOMMODATIONS

North Park Theological Seminary provides services for students with documented disabilities to ensure equal access to programs, services, facilities, and activities. Students with a disability who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Seminary Academic Services as soon as possible. If desired or necessary, discussion pertaining to documentation and accommodation can take place at another suitable location or by telephone. Further information about the American Disabilities Act Services is found in the Student Academic Handbook.