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## NT 641 Exegesis of Hebrews

Ruth Anne Reese

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## NT 641 Exegesis of Hebrews

**PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS; SUBJECT TO CHANGE; THE FINAL SYLLABUS SHOULD BE PRINTED OUT FROM THE COURSE CENTER; DO NOT USE THIS SYLLABUS AS THE FINAL SYLLABUS**

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Spring 2002

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Office Hours: Mondays 9-11:30 ET; Other Times by Arrangement

**First:** “The development of this extended learning syllabus is intended for distribution to members of the course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from the professor (RuthAnne Reese).” **Thanks for honoring these instructions.**

**Welcome to NT641 Exl.** I am looking forward to teaching this course during which we will have an opportunity to study the Epistle to the Hebrews, to explore the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts out of which it arose, and to examine the theology of the text. It will be our goal to draw all of this together into a coherent way of understanding and proclaiming the epistle in the contexts where we live and work.

**Preliminaries:** This is my first time teaching this particular course online; although, I have taught NT520 online several times. I learned a lot from those semesters, but I still have much to learn about teaching and working in an online environment. I would ask that you extend some grace to me as we learn to communicate and work in this medium. Also, I'll be looking forward to your comments on the class. Are the assignments and discussions working? Are you having problems? Let me know.

**Prerequisites:** Concise Greek, IBS 1, and New Testament Introduction are all prerequisites for this class.

**Office Hours:** I will be keeping virtual office hours on Wednesday afternoons from about 1:00pm to 3:00pm Eastern Time. During this time I will be logged into the system and will be responding to all of your postings (in the order in

which they were received). I will also be checking on the class periodically throughout the week. However, Friday is my writing day, and I am not available to students on that day. I will let you know if I am going to be away during my office hours or for any extended time during the semester. Please let me know if you will be away for any extended periods as well. We can also arrange times to chat or to speak via telephone either during my office hours or by special appointment. Just let me know if you would like to set that up. **Note:** If you have an urgent matter, please flag your email with the word Urgent in the subject line.

**Work Load:** This course has a steady workload. It requires careful reading of the biblical text using the Greek language to the best of your ability, commentary reading, and required textbook reading. It also requires regular postings both individually and in teams. I recommend using the syllabus to help guide you as you prepare for the semester's workload.

### Support Staff:

Technical Difficulties: Andy Adams, [exl\\_support@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:exl_support@asburyseminary.edu)

Exl Coach: Amy Jo Adams, [exl\\_coach@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:exl_coach@asburyseminary.edu)

Interlibrary Loan Information: [dorothy\\_james@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:dorothy_james@asburyseminary.edu)

Library Reference: [hannah\\_kirsch@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:hannah_kirsch@asburyseminary.edu)

Bookstore: [exlbooks@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:exlbooks@asburyseminary.edu)

## THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

**The Course Icon:** This is located on the First Class desktop. Use this icon to enter the classroom.

**Course Center:** This is the location where all of the modules will be posted.

**Office:** This icon is used to post things to the professor. All postings to this icon are private and will only be read by the professor. Please use this icon/address rather than my personal email address.

**Team Folders:** This is the location where you will carry on discussion in your teams. Each member of the class will be assigned to a team. You will only be able to read other team mates postings. People from the larger class, who are not on your team, cannot post material in your team folder.

**Question Folder:** This is the location where you will post the written questions/comments you make for each chapter/s that you read. A limited number of these questions may be responded to. Please feel free to respond to your classmates questions in this folder.

**Prayer Folder:** This is a folder that I have asked Andy to create for us. Any needs or prayer requests, praises, etc. can be placed into this folder so that we as a class may keep members of the class in prayer at important junctures in their lives. I also commit to pray for each of my students once each week during the semester, so if you have particular concerns you would like me to remember feel free to let me know.

**Archives Center:** When we are finished with a module or a section of a module, I will move the discussion and work that has been generated from the module into the archive center. You can access things in the archive center, but you cannot change, delete, or add to them. They are a reference source for you to consult if you have questions about previous class material.

**Resource Center:** This icon links you to various resources like the library and specific sources available through the internet.

**Discussion Center:** The discussion center is the lower part of the classroom. When you click on the classroom icon you will see postings that are to be read by the whole class.

**Description:** This is a course on the book of Hebrews, its content, its context, its interpretation, and its theology. In the course of the semester, we will study the epistle to the Hebrews; the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts out of which it arose; various types of interpretative methods used to study the epistle; and theological themes in the epistle. We will work to draw this knowledge together into a means for thinking about the book of Hebrews in our contemporary context.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** By the end of this course we will be able to:

- Employ a range of exegetical approaches relevant to the interpretation of Hebrews, and to apply those approaches to other NT books of similar genre;
- Understand Hebrews within its socio-historical, literary, and canonical contexts;
- Identify central issues in the critical study of Hebrews;
- Articulate the importance of one's own presuppositions in the task of interpretation;
- Articulate primary theological and ethical concerns of Hebrews;
- Demonstrate awareness of how the theological and ethical concerns of Hebrews contribute to those of the canon and of constructive theology and ethics;
- Differentiate between critical and homiletic/devotional commentaries and studies of Hebrews and other NT books; and
- Evaluate critically the usefulness of secondary literature in the study of Hebrews.

### **Concise Greek Students should be able to:**

- Use Greek-based language tools to demonstrate proficiency in lexical semantics;
- Use Greek-based language tools to identify grammatical constructions (i.e, with regard to sentence structure and use of clauses);
- Use Greek-based language tools to engage in syntactical analyses (i.e, with regard to verbal aspect, mood, and voice; use of the genitive and dative cases).

### **Course Guidelines:**

- 1. Assignments:** Papers should be typed, double spaced in a 12 point font using one inch margins. All assignments are due by the stated due dates. These are outlined below for your reference. Late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day late. For example, a B paper turned in one day late becomes a B-, etc.
- 2. Postings:** Individual postings in the Discussion Center, in the Question Folder, and in your team folder should be limited to between 50 and 75 words.
- 3. Grammar:** I expect us (myself included) to use proper English grammar at all times. This includes complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. For assistance in this area, consult a standard style guide such as Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, and Theses* (11th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Poor grammar will be reflected in the final grade.
- 4. Discussion:** A crucial element of this course is the dialogue that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.

### **Course Requirements:**

- Class preparation and participation (20%): Students should prepare for class by (1) carefully reading the assigned texts, (2) making their own notes on the text, (3) answering the assigned questions, and (4) comparing their observations with those made in one of the required commentaries below. The preparation and participation grade also includes assignments done together in teams.
  - Interpretive Assignment (3 x 10% = 30 %): You may do an interpretive assignment on any passage from chapters 3-13 of Hebrews. These are due on the dates stated in the schedule. Interpretive assignments are not accepted late. You may do as many of these as there are opportunities, and I will count the three highest grades. For more on Interpretive Assignments, see the Assignments folder in the Course Center. (1,000 words)
  - Commentary Review (20%): Write a critical review comparing and contrasting at least two of the required commentaries below. General guidelines on book reviews

are available in the Assignments folder in the Course Center. Page Limit is 5-6 pages (1,250--1,500 words)

• Final Exam or Research Paper or Project (30%): The final exam will consist of 4 essay questions addressing the book of Hebrews. It will be an open book exam. You may use class discussions, commentaries, videos, and any other resources. If you wish to complete a Research Paper or Project you **must** submit a proposal to me by April 15. This may be a paper or project on a topic of your choosing related to Hebrews. Guidelines for research papers are available in the Assignments folder in the Course Center. Page limit is 8-12 pages (2,000 -- 3,000 words).

## GRADING

I want to encourage both your own interpretive work on the book of Hebrews as well as dialogue with other members of the class around your work. I have asked that you post the answers to many of the participation assignments in your team folder. **The most effective way to do your work will be to do your own work and post it to the team folder or question folder PRIOR to reading your teammates' work.**

Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives

B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives

C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (-) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C- = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

### A Special Comment on Preparation and Participation Grades:

The Participation assignments listed in the syllabus consist of two parts: (1) a task or an answer to a question or questions and (2) the posing of your own questions. The tasks/answers should be sent to the office, and the questions should be posted to the questions folder.

As in a physical class, it is my expectation that you will come to the online class ready to participate fully in the totality of the course. An online class presents some challenges for the teacher regarding grading. I often give individual and group assignments in my physical class that are not graded but which I monitor and respond to as needed. In a similar fashion, I expect all participation assignments to be completed in a timely and thoughtful manner; however, I will only be grading 4 of the 8 participation assignments. These will be selected on a random basis. Also, team projects/assignments will be graded mainly on the basis of the final product with consideration for each team member's contribution also being taken into account in some instances.

### Important Notes on My Grading Policies:

1. Interpretive Assignments are NEVER accepted late

2. Other late papers are marked down 1/3 of a letter grade per day late.
3. Poor grammar figures into the final grade.
4. Papers that are too long (over the word limit) or too short (under the word limit) are marked down. (I don't count words, so if you are over or under by 50 words that isn't going to matter, but if you have many pages or almost no pages, then you need to rewrite your paper before you submit it.)
5. Participation grades are based on quality and responsiveness of contribution.
6. You may complete as many of the 6 interpretive assignments as you would like (I take the 3 highest grades to count towards your final grade).
7. You may consult with me before turning in papers and projects to see if you are on the right track.
8. You may seek my direction or input on your final research paper at any stage before you turn in your final paper. Take advantage of this; it will be to your benefit.

### How to Submit Your Work

If you send your work as an attachment please use the following formula to name your attached file:

Your last name followed by IA for interpretive assignment followed by the number, 1,2, 3, etc., CR for commentary review, and RP for research paper. For example, if I were turning in my first interpretive assignment using an attachment I would call it ReeseIA#1. Your assistance in this way will help me keep all the papers that I get in order. Thanks.

### Using Greek Fonts

It is important to me to encourage you to use both Greek and Hebrew. Please follow these instructions so that you may use Greek fonts in the papers that you submit. Download the Bwgrkl font that is in the Resource Center in our Course Folder onto your hard drive. Then load this font into your word processing program. Use this font for all your Greek work. This should guarantee that I will be able to read all of the Greek that you type in, and there should not be a compatibility problem.

### Required Reading:

Greek New Testament (Nestle-Aland for comprehensive students or an interlinear for concise students).

DeSilva, David. *Despising Shame: The Social Function of the Rhetoric of Honor and Shame in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.

Lindars, Barnabas. *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

### Buy TWO of the following commentaries (Hints below)

Attridge, Harold W. *Hebrews*. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

DeSilva, David. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle 'to the Hebrews.'* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1991.

–. *Hebrews 9-13*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1991.

Hints on buying commentaries. 1. Lane will be available through Prolepsis (see note below on using Prolepsis). You may want to read and use Lane before deciding whether to buy a copy of this two vol. commentary or not. It is the best resource out there in terms of the Greek text and translation, but the actual exegesis is sometimes cumbersome. 2. Attridge is a basic, critical commentary -- sound, careful, with helpful excursus. 3. Bruce is a readable commentary that focuses more on theology than the other commentaries and has good but limited references to the Greek text. 4. DeSilva uses Greco-Roman background and socio-rhetorical method to illuminate Hebrews. Very readable, some Greek but not extensive, some help with communicating the message of Hebrews for today. Hopefully, these notes will help you decide which commentaries may be most valuable to you.

### Using Prolepsis:

To use the Prolepsis server it must be downloaded onto your computer. Follow these instructions to download Prolepsis. Open First Class; Open the Intranet folder; Open the Resources folder; Open the Prolepsis Databases folder; Read the Read First document; install Prolepsis. You will want to use the Logos Bible software. Inside this software you can access both Lane's two volume Word Biblical Commentary as well as the Anchor Bible Dictionary. If you have technical problems with downloading or using the software, you should contact Andy Adams in ExL Support. If you have reference problems you should contact Hannah Kirsch in the library.

## Schedule

### Intro Module (Feb 10 - 24)

Introduction

IBS and Exegesis: The Meeting of 2 Methods

Using Greek in Interpretation: Things to Notice

Approaches to Interpretation

Theological Approaches to Hebrews

Hebrews as a Whole: Outline and Context

Reading: Read the book of Hebrews at least 3 times; begin reading DeSilva; read the introduction from one of the required commentaries.

Participation Assignment #1 (Due on Feb. 18--send to the office): Prepare a broad outline of the book of Hebrews. *Next to each break, indicate why you have chosen to place a*

*break in that place.* Do not consult commentaries or other reference works for this assignment.

## Module 1 (Feb 24 - March 28)

Hebrews 1-6

Exploring words, structure, and sentences

Exploring themes

Exploring context

Theology: Salvation

Reading: Finish reading DeSilva; read the introduction from the second required commentary.

Participation Assignment #2 (Due Feb. 27): Carefully read Hebrews 1-2 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. Try to summarize the main point of chapter 1 in a single sentence. Make a short list of 2-4 questions or points of interest that arise for you from the chapter. Describe in 2-3 sentences the relationship between chapters 1 and 2. AFTER you have answered these questions, read the section on chapters 1 and 2 in at least one of the required commentaries. Add any questions or comments arising from your commentary reading to your list of questions/comments. Post your questions/comments to the Question Folder.

Participation Assignment #3 (Due Mar. 6): Carefully read Hebrews 3 and 4 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. How does chapter 2 connect to chapter 3? What is the relationship between chapters 3 and 4 or How are chapters 3 and 4 connected? AFTER you have done these things, read the section on chapters 3 and 4 in one of the required commentaries. Add any questions or comments arising from your commentary reading to your notes. Post your questions/comments to the Question Folder.

**Due (Mar 4):** Interpretive Assignment # 1 - a pericope of your choosing from Hebrews 3-4. Interpretive Assignments are to be completed prior to consulting a commentary or other secondary sources.

Participation Assignment # 4 (Due Mar. 20): Carefully read Hebrews 5-6 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. How does the beginning of chapter 6 relate to the

## Reading Week (April 7-13)

## Module 2 (March 28 - April 28)

Hebrews 6-10

Theology: Salvation

Reading: Finish reading Lindars; Begin reading for your research paper

Participation Assignment #5 (Due Apr. 17): Carefully read Hebrews 7-10 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. Make a note of all the comparisons and contrasts in this

section. Be especially careful to note the  $\mu\epsilon\nu / \delta\epsilon$  formula as it occurs. What does the author of Hebrews indicate about the *way* he interprets the OT. AFTER working with these topics begin to read one of the required commentaries on chapters 7-10. Add any questions or comments arising from your commentary reading to your notes. Post your questions/comments to the Question Folder.

Due (Apr 8): Interpretive Assignment # 3 - a pericope of your choosing from Hebrews 7-8

Due (Apr 15): Interpretive Assignment # 4 - a pericope of your choosing from Hebrews 9-10

### Module 3 (April 29 - May 16)

Hebrews 11-13

Teaching, Preaching, and Counseling from Hebrews

Theology: Exhaltation

Reading: Continue reading for your research paper.

Participation Assignment #6 (Due May 1): Carefully read Hebrews 11 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. How does chapter 11 relate to the chapters that come before? What are the most difficult verses for you to understand in this chapter? What words might bear careful attention in this chapter? What purpose does the repetition in this chapter serve? AFTER working with these topics read one of the required commentaries on chapter 11. Add any questions or comments arising from your commentary reading to your notes. Post your questions/comments to the Question Folder.

Participation Assignment #7 (Due May 8): Read Proverbs 3; if you can, read it in the LXX. Reread Exodus 19. Carefully read Hebrews 12 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. How do the parts of chapter 12 relate to each other? What is the flow of the argument? AFTER working with these questions, consult one of the required commentaries on chapter 12. Post your questions/comments to the Question Folder.

Participation Assignment #8 (Due May 15): Carefully read Hebrews 13 in a Greek or in an interlinear Greek version. What is the main point of this chapter? How does it affect our understanding of the whole book? AFTER working with these questions, consult one of the required commentaries on chapter 13. Post your questions/comments to the Question Folder.

Due (May 6): Interpretive Assignment #5 - a pericope of your choosing from Hebrews 12

Due (May 13): Interpretive Assignment #6 - a pericope of your choosing from Hebrews 13

**Final Paper Due May 22 at noon ET.**

## A Quick Reference Guide to Due Dates

Feb. 18 -- Participation #1  
Feb. 27 -- Participation #2  
Mar. 4 -- Interpretive Assignment #1  
Mar. 6 -- Participation #3  
Mar. 18 -- Interpretive Assignment # 2  
Mar. 20 -- Participation # 4  
Mar. 28 -- Commentary Review  
Apr. 8 -- Interpretive Assignment # 3  
Apr. 15 -- Interpretive Assignment #4  
Apr. 17 -- Participation # 5  
May 1 -- Participation # 6  
May 6 -- Interpretive Assignment # 5  
May 8 -- Participation #7  
May 13 -- Interpretive Assignment #6  
May 15 -- Participation # 8  
May 22 -- Final

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