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NT 520 New Testament Introduction

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NT520, NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION

January Term 2008: January 7 – February 1

Class Meetings: January 16-18, 22-23

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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

1.1 Catalog Description

An introduction to (1) the literature of the New Testament in its socio-historical, literary and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the New Testament.

1.2 Learning Objectives for Students. Having completed this course, students should be able

- 1.2.1 to give a broad account of the content of the individual New Testament writings and identify resources for further study of these writings;
- 1.2.2 to articulate the social and historical background out of which the New Testament arose;
- 1.2.3 to articulate how one's beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
- 1.2.4 to identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts
- 1.2.5 to identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy those sources critically in New Testament study;
- 1.2.6 to probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
- 1.2.7 to demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and
- 1.2.8 to integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutical method.

2. COURSE MATERIALS AND TEXTS

2.1 Required Course Texts

deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004 [hereafter abbreviated *INT*].

Longenecker, Bruce W. *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2003 [hereafter abbreviated *LLP*].

Wright, Christopher J. H. *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992 [hereafter abbreviated *KJOT*].

2.2 Biblical Texts

- 2.2.1 Assumed: It is assumed that students have access to at least two contemporary translations of the Bible, preferably the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), or New American Standard (NAS). The Living Bible, New Living Translation, *The Message*, the King James, and New King James, whatever their other merits, do not well serve the objectives of this course.
- 2.2.2 Recommended: Meeks, Wayne A. et al., eds. *The HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version with Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Rev. ed. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

2.3 Recommended Supplemental Texts

The following texts may be of use in various assignments for the class.

2.3.1 Representative and Complementary New Testament Introductions

2.3.1.1 Conservative and Evangelical (i.e., uniformly high estimation of historicity and authenticity):

Carson, Donald A., Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1992.

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. 4th ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

2.3.1.2 Moderate and Critical (varied estimation of historicity and authenticity):

Achtemeier, Paul J., Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Message*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001.

Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Childs, Brevard. *New Testament as Canon: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984.

Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford, 2000.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. 3rd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

Koester, Helmut. *Introduction to the New Testament, Volume 2: History and Literature of Early Christianity*. 2d ed. New York: de Gruyter, 2000.

Kümmel, Werner Georg. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Rev. Eng. ed. of 17th ed. of *Elinleitung in das Neue Testament*. Translated by Howard C. Kee. Nashville: Abingdon, 1975.

Moule, C. F. D. *The Birth of the New Testament*. 3d. ed. London: Black, 1981.

2.3.2 Recommended Supplemental Reference Works¹

Evans, Craig A., and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Dictionary of New Testament Background*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000.

Green, Joel B., and Scot McKnight, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992.

Martin, Ralph P., Gerald Hawthorne, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1993.

Martin, Ralph P., and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997.

Freedman, David N., ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Sakenfeld, Katherine Doob, ed. *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. 2 of a projected 4 vols. Nashville, Abingdon 2006 - .

Most of the above will be available in the Reference section of the library, and the remainder should be available in the Reserves.

¹ Note: The four IVP dictionaries are bundled together with numerous other high quality reference works from InterVarsity Press in *The Essential IVP Reference Collection: The Complete Electronic Bible Reference Library*. This would be an excellent purchase for students who are building a theological library or who do not have regular access to the Seminary library.

3. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

3.1 A New Testament Notebook (40% of Course Grade; Due February 1)

3.1.1 Purpose: To become familiar with the basic issues of critical introduction to the NT and to have compiled a handy resource which summarizes those issues for future use and reference.

3.1.2 Format:

3.1.2.1 The end-product should be a single word processing file (please do not submit separate files for each book).

3.1.2.2 Each outline entry should start on a new page that is clearly titled (use hard page break [Ctrl + Enter]). No entry should be longer than one page and the font must not be smaller than 10 pt. For certain shorter texts (e.g., 2 or 3 John, Jude, Philemon), an entry of less than a page is acceptable

3.1.3 Contents.

3.1.4 There will be twenty-seven entries in the notebook, one for each book of the NT.

3.1.5 For each entry there should be a brief statement (or discussion where necessary) of the following issues. When your research sources disagree significantly, note the specific positions in the outline:

3.1.5.1 **Authorship:** who wrote the document? If this is disputed or unknown, discuss briefly, including a summary of the primary arguments.

3.1.5.2 **Date:** when was the document was written? How certain is the dating? If this is disputed, discuss possibilities and the evidence briefly.

3.1.5.3 **Provenance and destination:** From what location was the document written (provenance) and to whom located where (destination)? Are these clear, disputed, or unknown?

3.1.5.4 **Rhetorical occasion or historical background:** What circumstances occasioned the document? Be *as specific as the text allows* (make specific references to evidence in the text).

3.1.5.5 **Optional: Any “loose end” issues** (e.g., literary integrity, canonicity)

3.1.5.6 **A broad outline of the contents:** Preferably not more than two levels of subordination: major divisions (say 3 to 6 per book), under which include subdivisions where applicable. Long books especially will need to be outlined in large scale.

3.1.5.7 **Predominant themes and application:** In a paragraph reflect on the major themes found in this book and on the specific value and relevance of each text for Christians and their communities in the 21st century.

3.1.5.8 **References:** List in proper bibliographical form the sources used for the entry beyond the deSilva text.

3.1.6 **Expected Research.** The expectation is that for each entry students will use both deSilva and another scholarly source, noting significant differences where relevant. All of the resources in 2.4 above are pre-approved. Students wanting to use other resources must submit them to the professor for pre-approval.

3.1.7 **Grading.** This assignment will be graded as follows. I will scan the whole notebook to assess the general quality of engagement, and I will randomly select five books to read closely in order determine the grade.

3.2 Textbook Reading and Essays (30% of Course Grade [10% each])

Students will write a reflection essay on each of the textbooks. Writing the essay certifies that you have read all of the assigned material in each respective book. If the

book has not been read in its entirety, the student should state clearly what percentage of the book has been read in the introduction to the essay. Each essay should be between 300 and 500 words and should answer these questions: (1) What did you learn from this book, or in what ways did you find it stimulating and helpful? (2) What questions did the book stimulate for you, or what misgivings or disagreements did you have that you might pursue in further study?

3.2.1 A Reflection on *KJOT* (Jan 11)

3.2.2 A Reflection on *LLP* (Jan 15)

3.2.3 A Reflection on *INT* (Jan 30). It is *recommended*, but not at all required, that students read as much of this text as possible before our first class meeting on January 16. The background it provides will allow you to get the greatest benefit from our class meetings. See Course Schedule.

3.3 Essays in NT Introduction and Theology (30% of Course Grade [15% each]; due February 1)

3.3.1 An Essay in NT Introduction

Students will engage *one of the following* critical questions for one NT text, all having to do with the historical issues surrounding particular NT texts. The papers should be written clearly but economically and should not exceed five pages double-spaced (absolute maximum is 1,500 words). The purpose of these assignments is to practice engaging various critical issues with the goal of learning how to assess and to such arguments.

For helpful supplementary bibliography see 2.4 above. In many cases, a scholarly commentary will also be among the best resources for certain of these questions. *Note well: Please avail yourself of the recommended resources rather than using inferior alternatives.*

- 3.3.1.1 **Authorship.** Address the question of authorship for any NT document for which it is uncertain or for which traditional authorship disputed. For all practical purposes, this includes every NT text *with the exceptions of* Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. (Though the authorship of Hebrews is disputed, let's avoid this one. It is too speculative to be worthwhile.)
- 3.3.1.2 **Literary Integrity.** Address the question of whether one of the following is a composite of several originally discrete documents: 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Romans, or the Gospel of John. Students may also address the text-critical question of the ending on Mark (16:9-20) or the Woman Caught in Adultery of John (7:53-8:11).
- 3.3.1.3 **Historical Criticism.**
- 3.3.1.3.1 With respect to Jesus, the gospels, and Acts. Select a tradition (e.g., saying, parable) attributed to Jesus or an event involving Jesus or the early church (e.g., cleansing of the temple, baptism by John, the Census of Quirinius, Jerusalem Council) reported in a canonical text. What is the evidence for the historicity of this event? What are the difficulties? Assess the plausibility of its authenticity.
- 3.3.1.3.2 With respect to Paul, attempt from the evidence available to reconstruct the historical events that lie behind and lead up to the writing of *Romans*, *Galatians*, the *Corinthian correspondence*, the *Thessalonian correspondence*, or *Philippians*. Make sure to include the question of recipients, provenance (whence it was written), and the correlation of events as depicted in the letters with events in the book of Acts.
- 3.3.1.4 **Reception/Canon Criticism:** Inquire of a book of the NT for which canonicity was disputed how it was ultimately received into the canon: especially recommended: *Hebrews*, *James*, *2 Peter*,

Revelation) What were the issues and arguments on both sides and made by whom (be specific with references to the sources)? How was the question ultimately “settled”? Has it remained a settled question?

3.3.2 An Essay in NT Hermeneutics or Theology

Students will choose an essay from one of the following questions. The papers should be written clearly but economically and should not exceed five pages double-spaced (absolute maximum is 1,500 words).

- 3.3.2.1 Respond to this statement: “Only with a full knowledge of the social and historical backgrounds is it possible to accurately interpret the NT writings.” Is this a true statement, a false statement, or an overstatement? Explain and defend your answer.
- 3.3.2.2 Describe the Jewish world that Jesus entered, the historical and political background, and the social characteristics. What were the various expectations of a Messiah in this context? To what extent did Jesus fulfill expectations?
- 3.3.2.3 What is your perspective on the controversies surrounding the historical Jesus? What can we know about Jesus as a historical figure? What do we need to know? Is this a fruitful or necessary exercise for Christian faith?
- 3.3.2.4 Describe the various biblical criticisms discussed in class and in your readings in terms of the typology of “behind,” “in,” and “in front of” the text? In your estimation, what is the relative value of these various ways of engaging the text?
- 3.3.2.5 Discuss the Christology of the NT? Is the evidence for an early Christian view of Jesus’ divinity early or late? Abundant or sparse? Be ready to cite (and discuss if necessary) the key texts.
- 3.3.2.6 What is the value and relevance of Acts as canonical Christian Scripture? Discuss its historical, theological, and practical value and the hermeneutical challenges it presents for contemporary appropriation.
- 3.3.2.7 What is the “New Perspective” on Paul? What contribution does it make to our understanding of Paul? Do you see any problems in the NPP? Should we regard “justification by faith” as an important Pauline theme or merely a Protestant doctrine?
- 3.3.2.8 What do we mean when we say that the NT letters are “occasional” documents? What are the implications of their occasional character for the way in which we understand and apply the text?
- 3.3.2.9 Discuss the phenomenon of “intertextuality” in the NT, especially as it relates to the use of the OT (or LXX) by biblical authors. Did NT authors change the “meaning” of the OT by their use of it in their writings? If so, in what sense? If not, why not? Discuss the implications for our interpretation and appropriation of Scripture.
- 3.3.2.10 To what extent should the Fourth Gospel be thought of as an historical account of Jesus? Discuss the question of the historical authenticity of the speech of Jesus and the events recorded in John’s gospel. How are historical authenticity and theological authority related to each other?
- 3.3.2.11 Does apocalypticism have abiding value for modern Christians or have we “outgrown” it? How should Christians in the 21st century interpret and use the book of Revelation? What is its continuing value for us?

4. COURSE PROTOCOL AND POLICIES

4.1 Attendance

Regular attendance and participation is a basic expectation. Students are allowed to miss up to a total of one half of a day with no penalty, but there are no “excused absences.” Four percentage points (4%) from the total course grade will be subtracted with each additional half day missed and two percent (2%) for partial absence (arriving more than ½ hour late or leaving early). Note that 4% will usually

result in a drop of two grade increments (e.g., A- to B). *Students* are accountable for material missed, class announcements, etc. for class time missed. It is the *student's* responsibility to make advance arrangements with fellow students or the professor to access missed material.

4.2 Submitting Work

- 4.2.1 Assignments should be submitted as email attachments to the Course Office. Please *do not* send zip files. Please name the files as follows: lastname_assignmentname.doc.
- 4.2.2 Work that is late will be given no higher 70% credit no matter how late. Midnight of the due date is considered the final deadline. Work submitted after February 1 will be given no credit.

4.3 FirstClass Bulletin Board and Course Center

- 4.3.1 Although minimum participation on FirstClass is required for this class, students are responsible for information and class announcements posted on FirstClass. All Asbury students have a FirstClass account. See InfoCommons staff for instructions regarding installing the software on your computer; students may also access FirstClass from the computers in the library.
- 4.3.2 All PowerPoint slides and class handouts will be uploaded as files into the Course Center not later than 8 PM before the next day's class for the students' review. Many students like to print the PowerPoint slides in advance of class for note-taking purposes.
- 4.3.3 Students are strongly encouraged to ask any questions and to raise any concerns they have about the course in the course forum, whether it be about the meaning of something you are reading, the syllabus, a problem with an assignment, a request for resources, etc. Your question, and hopefully my answer ☺, may well benefit others beside yourself. For that reason, unless the nature of your inquiry is expressly private, please post it on the course bulletin board rather than sending me a private email.

5. COURSE SCHEDULE

Because this is a January course, time is limited, and course work will need to begin well before our first class meeting on campus. Below is a schedule of due dates.

6	7 Term Begins: First Day of Course	8	9	10	11 Reflection Essay on KJOT	12 Recommended: deSilva INT: 19-193
13	14	15 Reflection Essay on LLP	16 Intro to Course Approaching the Study of the NT The NT Canon Second Temple Judaism Cultural Scripts of the 1st Century Quests for the Historical Jesus	17 Introduction to Biblical Criticisms The Synoptic Problem MARK Textual Criticism MATTHEW Intertextuality	18 LUKE Parables ACTS Narrativity and Normativity Letters in the Ancient World and in the NT What have they been saying about Paul?	19 Recommended: deSilva INT: 194-448 NT Notebook: Gospels and Acts
20	21 MLK Holiday: No Class Meeting	22 1, 2 THESS GALATIANS 1, 2 COR ROMANS PRISON EPISTLES PASTORAL EPISTLES	23 HEBREWS and CATHOLIC EPISTLES JOHANNINE TRADITION REVELATION	24	25	26 Recommended: deSilva INT: remainder NT Notebook: Pauline letters
27	28	29	30 Reflection Essay on INT	31	Feb 1 Final Coursework Due: NT Notebook NT Intro Essay NT Theology and Hermeneutics Essay	