NT 820 Research Methods in New Testament Interpretation

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NT 820
RESEARCH METHODS IN NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

Ben Witherington, III  
Fall 2007
858-2329 (office)  
Wednesday 2:30-5:15 p.m.

Catalog Description

A seminar in which participants explore through readings, practice, and critical discussion the range of methods employed in contemporary NT study. The entire research process—from ‘getting into the conversation’ and specifying a ‘thesis’ to the presentation of one’s research—will be discussed, modeled, and practiced.

Pre-requisites: Enrollment in the ThM or PhD (Biblical Studies)

Illustrative materials will relate to three separate portions of the NT—1) the Matthean Birth Narratives; 2) Romans 7.7-25; 3) Rev. 4-5.

Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, participants should be able:
1) To describe the major approaches to NT study today
2) To apply the critical methods employed in NT study today
3) The determine what methods are appropriate to particular problems or questions in NT Interpretation
4) To articulate central concerns, strengths, and weaknesses of the various methodological approaches comprising NT interpretation
5) To construct, follow, and revise a research agenda around a NT text or area of concern for NT study; and
6) To engage in thoughtful and generous criticism of the research agenda and products of others.

Course Reading—Required (the following items are required to be read prior to the first class in the fall. Additional required items are listed seriatim with each section of the course)


Course Requirements.

All written materials are expected to conform in style and presentation to the SBL Handbook of Style.

All written work must be submitted on time. Work that is more than one week late will lose one third letter grade per day and will receive no written comments.

1) **Class Attendance, Preparation and Participation.** See the schedule below for preparation. The assigned reading should be completed for the day the discussion will transpire. Attendance at all seminars and readiness to participate in all of them is expected of all students.

2) **Weekly Assignments on Method.** See the schedule of exercises. These exercises provide opportunities to work with the various methods of approach to the NT. They are only exemplary, not exhaustive of possible approaches. Each exercise must be submitted at the beginning of the class session when it is due and should be no longer than 1000 words in length. (35% of the course grade)

3) **Major Research Paper** The primary assignment for the Seminar is the preparation and presentation of a major exegesis paper of 7000-8000 words (not including bibliography, but including text and notes), typed, and double-spaced using Times New Roman 12 point font. Participants in the course may choose to work on a particular pericope in Mt. 1-2, or in Rom. 7.7-25, or in Rev. 4-5. (50% of the grade)

4) **Critical Response.** Each participant will prepare a written response of 1200 words (typed, double spaced) on an essay to be presented by another member of the seminar. Responses must be presented to the author of the paper and the instructor the day prior to the seminar where the paper will be discussed. The respondent must be prepared to deliver their response orally on the day of paper discussion.

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND SCHEDULE OF READING**

**WEEK ONE:** Orientation: Research Languages, Finding a Thesis, Writing Tools, Use of the Library (Guest Presenter from Faculty Info Commons)
**WEEK TWO:** Establishing the Text—Text Criticism.

**WEEK THREE:** The Issue of History and Historiography.

**WEEK FOUR:** Social History and Social Scientific Criticism

**WEEK FIVE** Rhetorical Criticism, Ancient and Modern.

**WEEK SIX** Narrative Criticism and Narratology

**WEEK SEVEN** Apocalyptic Literature and Prophecy

**WEEK EIGHT** Source, Form, Redaction, Genre and Epistolary Criticism

**WEEK NINE** Critical Reading and Engagement
Required Reading: Nancy C. Murphy, Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion, (Valley Forge: Trinity, 1994). Due: Short Essay on the Nature of Critical Thinking as Applied to NT Studies.
WEEK TEN  Presentations and Responses of Exegesis Papers Part One

WEEK ELEVEN  Presentations and Responses of Exegesis Papers Part Two