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NT 710 Faith and Wealth in New Testament Perspective

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Introduction
How closely the New Testament message is related to the realities of human existence at the turn of the third millennium is evident from a consideration of its contents against its socio-economic backdrop. By means of an exploration of the social, economic, and political environment in which the Christian movement took shape in the first century, students will understand better that issues of wealth are no more significant in this industrial-cum-information-cum-cyber era than in the first-century Roman world. How did Jesus and various New Testament writers work out the socio-economic implications of the gospel in their settings? How might their witness inform and shape our own?

Course Objectives
Having successfully completed this course, participants should:

(1) Be able to identify ways in which traditional concerns for the poor and powerless were appropriated in the first-century Roman world by Jesus and early Christian communities as these are represented in the New Testament materials;

(2) Be able to recognize the diversity and unity resident in representative New Testament writings with regard to their perspectives on faith and wealth;

(3) Be able to participate in critical reflection on the relationship between Scripture and ethics, with particular attention to hermeneutics and ethical method;

(4) Probe and propose the contemporary relevance of New Testament perspectives on faith and wealth;
(5) Be able to evaluate both their own and others’ proposals and practices vis-à-vis faith and wealth for their faithfulness to the witness of the New Testament; and

(6) Have a heightened sense of and commitment to the contemporary implications of the New Testament concern with “friendship with the poor.”

**Course Reading (Required)**


**Course Reading (Recommended)**


See further, below.

**General Bibliographical Assistance**


**Course Requirements**

*On questions of style, especially with regard to paper organization and references, see Carol Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses, 10th ed.* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).*
Students should submit written materials on time; late papers will receive no written comments and the grade will be penalized.

(1) Class Preparation, Attendance, and Participation. The success of this course depends on solid preparation and active participation by all involved. Persons missing more than two sessions will not be eligible for a passing grade. (15%)

(2) A Community-Based Project: A project of the student’s formulation, experientially and integrally related to the content of the course, that should:

(a) be “community based” (i.e., either singly or in groups, become involved [or continue involvement] in a community- or church-sponsored enterprise related to issues of faith and wealth);

(b) combine in some fashion “practice and critical reflection”;

(c) occupy no less than a total of 25 hours of “service.”

Examples of previous projects will be given at the first session of the class. A proposal outlining the project’s venue and objective(s), should be submitted in writing to the instructor no later than the beginning of class, 21 September 2000. Written (850-1400 words—i.e., ca. 3-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, with a standard 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins) and oral (about 15 minutes) reports on the project are due at the beginning of class, 16 November 2000, and should:

(a) describe the venue chosen (including as appendices any brochures or other easily attainable descriptive or publicity material related to the venue), and include names of primary supervisors and/or other contact persons;

(b) describe the nature of student involvement;

(c) provide critical and integrative reflection on the experience with respect to the values and issues concerning faith and wealth surfacing in the context of the class.

In cases where more than one student is involved in a single project,

(a) 2 points of extra credit will be given, and
(b) a single, joint report, listing the names of all students involved, is expected. Joint reports should be longer than that prescribed above, since a short section should be included in which each student describes the nature of her or his involvement.

(3) A Seminar Assignment: From the Course Schedule, choose to present to the class either a review of a book (not chapter or article) assigned as “recommended” or an exegesis of one of the scriptural texts designated for that day. This report should be presented in written form (1350-2000 words—i.e., ca. 5-7 pages, typed, double-spaced, using a standard, 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins) to the instructor at the beginning of the relevant class session, and in oral form (no more than 30 minutes will be allowed) to the class. General information regarding my expectations of book reviews can be located on the Asbury network in the Media Center: T:\Green\Course Assignments\Book Reviews. Exegetical papers should attend to normal socio-historical and literary concerns, employing appropriate secondary literature. Because this assignment involves seminar presentation, strict limits on word length and time of presentation will be observed. A Seminar Assignment sign-up sheet will be available beginning with the first day of class.

(4) A Critical Review: A review of Wuthnow, Poor Richard’s Principle—1650-2200 words (i.e., ca. 6-8 pages, typed, double-spaced, using a standard, 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins). General information regarding my expectations of book reviews can be located on the Asbury network in the Media Center: T:\Green\Course Assignments\Book Reviews. Note, however, that for this assignment a primary point for critical engagement has to do with interaction with Wuthnow in light of the values and issues concerning faith and wealth surfaced in the context of the class. Reviews may be completed by each student or by two or three students working together on a single review; 2 points of extra credit will be given in the latter case. Due by 4:30 pm, 11 December 2000.

Course Schedule
7 Sept 1. From Amos to Hadrian: Social Upheaval and Social Gospel
Required Reading: Hamel, chs. 1-3.
Recommended Reading:

Joel B. Green α Faith&Wealth α Page 4 of 13


14 Sept 2. Beggars and Benefactors: Wealth, Status, and the Roman Empire

**Required Reading:** Hamel, chs. 4-5.


**Recommended Reading:**


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21 Sept 3. Scripture and Ethics: Method

**Required Reading:** Wheeler, chs. 1-2.

**Recommended Reading:**


28 Sept 4. From John to Jesus: Social Critique and Social Solidarity

**Required Reading:** Hamel, chs. 6-7; Wheeler, ch. 3.


**Recommended Reading:**


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**5 Oct 5. Economic Relations in Paul: Friendship, Work, and the Collection**

**Required Reading:** Wheeler, ch. 5.

**Texts for Discussion:** 2 Cor 8:1-15; Phil 4:10-20.

**Recommended Reading:**


Hengel, Martin. *Property and Riches in the Early Church*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974 (chs. 4-6, 8).


**Required Reading:** Wheeler, ch. 6; James.


**Recommended Reading:**


**Required Reading:** Gospel of Luke.

**Texts for Discussion:** Luke 1:46-55; 14:7-14.

**Recommended Reading:**


**Required Reading:** Wheeler, ch. 4; Acts.

**Texts for Discussion:** Acts 2:42-47; 20:25-35.

**Recommended Reading:**


**Required Reading:** Revelation.


**Recommended Reading:**


9 Nov

**Required Reading:** Wheeler, chs. 7-9.

**Recommended Reading:**

16 Nov 11. Project Reports.

23 Nov No Class


**Recommended Reading for Sessions 12-13:**

*Joel B. Green α Faith&Wealth α Page 12 of 13*


**11 Dec**  **Due (by 4:30 pm):** Critical Review.