BS502 Introduction to Biblical Studies
Final Version

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Course Description: The two-course sequence, BS501-502, comprises three interrelated sections: (1) an introduction to the concept and significance of the canon of Scripture, the discipline of hermeneutics, and a contextual, text-centered approach to biblical interpretation; (2) an introduction to the Old Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts; and (3) an introduction to the New Testament in its historical, literary, and canonical contexts. Course participation, reading, and projects will be configured in part so as to reflect the character of the degree specialization represented among the course participants.

Objectives

1. The student will be able to trace the development of canonization, discuss the meaning and significance of the canon and of the canonicity of the New Testament, and articulate the major issues involved in the relationship between the testaments.

2. The student will be able to discuss the historical background of the Bible and the critical historical issues surrounding the production of the various New Testament books, and will demonstrate the ability to make appropriate use of this historical information in the interpretation of the biblical text.

3. The student will be conversant with the major issues in interpretation (i.e., will be able to identify these issues, articulate the main contemporary positions surrounding these issues, and present in a reasonable and informed fashion his/her own perspective regarding these issues), and will demonstrate the ability to make use of these interpretive insights in the actual reading and application of the New Testament text.

4. The student will demonstrate the ability to observe, interpret, and apply the New Testament text, and to show the significance of this interpretation and application of the biblical text for the tasks of his/her ministerial vocation. Specifically, the student will be able (a) to identify the structure of a biblical book and show the significance of this identification for the interpretation of the New Testament text; (b) to engage in a “close reading” of individual passages so as to make relevant observations useful for interpretation; (c) to move from interpretation of the New Testament passage to specific and creative application to contemporary Christian life.
5. The student will demonstrate the ability to show how the teachings of individual passages within the New Testament contributes to the flow of biblical revelation and to trace the development of major biblical themes and motifs throughout the whole of scripture.

6. The student will be able to articulate the issues involved in the integration of biblical studies and ministry.

Course Requirements:


Turning in assignments on time is a high priority. Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e., A paper becomes A–, B paper becomes B–, etc.).

1. **Preparation, Attendance, and Participation**: Attendance is expected and will be recorded. It is the students’ responsibility to make sure that they record their attendance in class. The professor will not record attendance at a later time. Students who miss more than 6 class sessions will not be eligible for a passing grade. Students should come to class prepared by completing reading and assignments prior to the beginning of the class period. Each student will have the opportunity to participate in group discussions and projects during class time (5%).

2. **Interpretive Assignments**: These assignments will consist of various close readings of the biblical text and practice using particular interpretive tools (50%).

3. **Mid Term**: The midterm exam will consist of short essay questions addressing course material and the reading. It will be a take home exam. (20%).

4. **Final Exam**: The final exam will consist of two parts: (1) a short take home essay exam. Answers to the questions should demonstrate familiarity with the course materials (textbooks, lectures, discussion, etc.), facility with the text of the New Testament, and awareness of one’s own interpretive location. In addition, course reading will be counted as part of the grade on the final exam. This consists of two questions: 1) how much of the NT have you read this semester, and 2) how much of the course reading have you completed (exam + reading = 15%). (2) a creative group project undertaken with other students from your MA program and presented during the class period in the finals week. This creative project will show integration between the NT class and your MA program (10%).
5. **Extra Credit:** You may turn in a 3-4 page (750-1,000 words) book report on Achtemeier’s book. A “B” or better paper can be used to replace your lowest grade on an interpretive assignment.

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

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

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

Required Reading:
- The New Testament (RSV or NRSV or a similar translation)

Recommended Reading:

Schedule:

All reading for the summer course should be completed prior to the beginning of class. This includes Willimon and the pages from deSilva (these are pp. 29-297; 270-275; 463-472; 531-534; 555-597; 668-684; 800-806; 814-840; 885-931)

- **July 3**  
  - Introduction to the Course and Scriptural Formation of the Reader  
  - Reading the Canon of Scripture  
  - Issues of Interpretation: Reading the Text  
  - Issues of Interpretation: The 4 Gospels

- **July 5**  
  - The First Century World  
  - Due: Synoptic Problem, Bartimaeus (deSilva, pp. 258-262)

- **July 6**  
  - Matthew’s Gospel; Mark’s Gospel  
  - Due: Literary Context, Mark 3:13-19 (part of Mark 3:7-35)

- **July 7**  
  - Due: Interpretive Assignment, Luke 19:1-10
July 10  John’s Gospel  
Due: Segment Survey of John 9:1-41  
Group Discussion: the ‘world’

July 11  The Ministry of Paul and the Book of Acts  
Due: Detailed Observation, Acts 6:1-6

July 12  Epistles – Philemon – A Sample Study of an Epistle  
The Corinthian Correspondence  
Due: Interpretive Assignment, Philemon

July 13  Revelation  
Due: The Readers of Revelation

July 14  The New Testament and the MA Programs – Articulating Integration  
Required: Presentation of Group Finals

Take Home Final; Due Date TBD