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NT 655 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. This course examines how Jesus and various New Testament writers worked out the socio-economic implications of the gospel in their settings and how their witness inform and shape our own.

Two or three semester hours.

Prerequisites: NT520, CS601

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**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 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

3. Have a heightened sense of and commitment to the contemporary implications of the New Testament concern with “friendship with the poor.”
**Course Reading (Required for All Students)**

**Additional Course Reading (Required for Students Enrolled for 3 Semester Hours)**

**Course Reading (Recommended)**
See further, below.

**Course Requirements**

On questions of style, especially with regard to paper organization and references, see Carol Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (11th ed.; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Students should submit written materials on time. Late papers will receive no written comments. Assignments that are more than one week late will be penalized one-third of a grade per day.

Orlando students should submit written materials to my e-mail address (joel.green@asburyseminary.edu) as e-mail attachments: *.wpd, *.pdf, *.doc, or *.rtf. Wilmore students may do the same.

Students wishing feedback on written assignments prior to their due date may submit complete drafts at least 4-5 days prior to the due date.
(1) **Class Preparation, Attendance, and Participation (2 and 3 semester hours).** See the schedule of reading for each class session. Note that assigned reading should be completed by the day listed. Attendance at and readiness to participate in all sessions of the Seminar is expected. Persons who attend all sessions of the seminar will have 2 points added to their final grade. Discussion questions will be posted to a Conference Folder on the Intranet (“Faith/Wealth—JBG”) in advance of most sessions to guide student preparation. Persons who participate frequently and substantively in the Seminar discussion, demonstrating their reflective interaction with course reading and posted questions, will have as many as 2 points added to their final grade.

(2) **A Community-Based Project (3 semester hours):** 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 20 hours of “service.”

This project will have three parts:

*Part One—Exegesis:* Choose one biblical text from the course schedule on which to prepare a short exegesis paper—i.e., about 1350-1600 words (ca. 5-6 pages, typed, double-spaced, using a standard, 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins). Due at the beginning of class on **15 March.** The purpose for submitting this paper is *formative*—that is, you will receive feedback from the instructor, which can be used in preparing the essay for re-submission with the final project at the end of the semester. General information regarding my expectations of exegetical papers can be located in the Course Center. (Initial Submission: 15%)

*Part Two—Critical Engagement:* Choose one of the books (not chapters or articles) assigned as “recommended” from the course schedule on which to write a book review. The review should be presented in written form (1350-1600 words—i.e., ca. 5-6 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 class on **5 April.** The purpose for submitting this review is *formative*—that is, you will receive feedback from the instructor, which can be used in preparing the review for re-submission with the final project at the end of the semester. General information regarding my expectations of book reviews can be located in the Course Center. (Initial Submission: 15%)
Part Three—Project Report: Written (1350-1900 words—i.e., ca. 5-7 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 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 (1-2 pages);

(b) describe the nature of student involvement (½ –1 page);

(c) provide critical and integrative reflection on the experience with respect to the issues concerning faith and wealth surfaced in the context of the class, and particularly with respect to the exegetical and critical work completed as parts one and two of the project (3-4 pages).

The final project (4000–5000 words) is due on 3 May, and should include final versions of all three parts—i.e., the revised versions of the exegesis paper and the critical review, as well as the project report. The final project will count 70% of the final grade, with the exegesis and critical review sections counting 25% each of the total grade for the final project, and the project report counting 50%.

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.

A 10-15-minute oral presentation of reports will be expected on 3 or 10 May.

(2) A Community-Based Project (2 semester hours): 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 15 hours of “service.”

This project will have two parts:
Part One—Exegesis: Choose one biblical text from the course schedule on which to prepare a short exegesis paper—i.e., about 1350-1600 words (ca. 5-6 pages, typed, double-spaced, using a standard, 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins). Due at the beginning of class on 15 March. The purpose for submitting this paper is formative—that is, you will receive feedback from the instructor, which can be used in preparing the essay for re-submission with the final project at the end of the semester. General information regarding my expectations of exegetical papers can be located in the Course Center. (Initial Submission: 20%)

Part Two—Project Report: Written (1350-1900 words—i.e., ca. 5-7 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 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 issues concerning faith and wealth surfaced in the context of the class, and particularly with respect to the exegetical and critical work completed as parts one and two of the project.

The final project (2700–3500 words) is due on 3 May, and should include final versions of both parts—i.e., the revised version of the exegesis paper as well as the project report. The final project will count 80% of the final grade, with the exegesis section counting 30% of the total grade for the final project, and the project report counting 70%.

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.

A 10-15-minute oral presentation of reports will be expected on 3 or 10 May.
Course Schedule
9 Feb 1. From Amos to Hadrian: Social Upheaval and Social Gospel
   Required Reading: González, chs. 1-2; Hamel, chs. 1-3.
   Recommended Reading:
   ________. What Does the Lord Require? The Old Testament Call to Social Witness.
   Gordon, Barry. The Economic Problem in Biblical and Patristic Thought. Supplements to
   Wright, Christopher J.H. An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today.
       Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1983 (esp. chs. 3-4).
   ________. God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament.
   ________. Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament.
       Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1995 (esp. chs. 7-8).

16 Feb 2. Beggars and Benefactors: Wealth, Status, and the Roman Empire
   Required Reading: González, chs. 2-3; Hamel, chs. 4-5.
   Recommended Reading:
   Badian, E. Publicans and Sinners: Private Enterprise in the Service of the Roman Republic.
   Malina, Bruce J. “Interpreting the Bible with Anthropology: The Case of the Poor and the


23 Feb 3. Scripture and Ethics: Method

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

**Recommended Reading:**


1 Mar 4. From John to Jesus: Social Critique and Social Solidarity

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


**Recommended Reading:**


**8 Mar**

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

**Required Reading:** Wheeler, ch. 5; 1-2 Corinthians.

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

**Recommended Reading:**


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


**Due:** Exegesis Paper (All Students).

**Recommended Reading:**


**Required Reading:** Gospel of Luke.

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

**Recommended Reading:**

29 Mar  No Class (Spring Reading Week)

Required Reading: Wheeler, ch. 4; Acts.


Due: Critical Engagement Assignment (3-hour only).

Recommended Reading:


12 Apr 9. Visions of Wealth from Below: Money and Power in John’s Revelation

Required Reading: Revelation.


Recommended Reading:


Required Reading: González, chs. 4-13; Wheeler, chs. 7-9.

Recommended Reading:


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**Recommended Reading:**


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3 May 12. **Project Reports.**

Due: Final Project (All Students).

10 May 13. **Project Reports**