

NT502: Syllabus

Interpreting the New Testament

Instructor: Dr. Rollin G. Grams (rgrams@gordonconwell.edu)

Student Assistant: Denise Flanders

Fall, 2011

Class Times: Thursday nights, 6:30-9:30 from Sept. 29 through Dec. 8 (ten sessions)

Note: Thanksgiving (24 November) is a holiday

Course Description:

'Give a person a fish, and he or she will eat for a day; teach a person to fish, and he or she will eat for a lifetime.'

This course is all about learning to interpret the New Testament. It is an introduction to issues, methods and tools for interpreting the New Testament in preparation for further courses in New Testament studies and for ministry of the Word of God. Attention will be given to the various tasks of theology (the exegetical, Biblical theological, convictional, and pragmatic tasks) and other hermeneutical issues, yet the focus of this course is on the exegetical task. Familiarity with and facility in behind-the-text, in-the-text, and in-front-of-the-text methods of interpretation form a major part of this course, and time will be spent in class demonstrating how to use these methods in interpreting the New Testament. The course assignments are designed to train students in some of the more basic and essential methods of New Testament exegesis.

The course also functions to prepare students for Biblically focused research in both primary and secondary literature. Thus students will need to spend considerable time in a theological library for this course. (Electronic and online resources will also be very helpful.)

While lectures attend to the history, methods and theory of interpretation, students will apply some of these in assignments designed to teach them how to engage in primary source research for New Testament studies. Students will especially explore the following exegetical methods/issues as they exegete 1 Tim. 2.8-15: intertextuality, the historical-cultural context (primary sources), textual criticism, sentence diagramming, grammatical and lexical research, and word studies. The course culminates in students producing their first exegetical research paper on this passage.

Pre-Requisites and Relation to the Curriculum:

Students must have completed or be concurrently enrolled in Greek II to take this course. If there has been a period of one semester or more since taking Greek II, a competency quiz must be taken prior to enrollment and passed at 75% or above. If students have taken Greek II in the Spring, a competency quiz is not required.

Students ought to take the New Testament competency exam or complete New Testament Survey prior to taking this course (knowledge of the NT is a critical tool for interpreting it). However, this is not required.

Interpreting the NT is a pre-requisite for NT exegesis courses, in which skills of interpretation will be honed for different genres.

Basic skills in research and writing are assumed so that the course may focus on acquiring new skills in primary source research and in applying key methodologies for New Testament studies.

This course is taught from the perspective that Scripture is God's Word. Therefore, interpretation is understood primarily as what we do to 'hear' Scripture through exegesis. However, we will also consider hermeneutical and Biblical theological issues.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will become comfortable with the issues, methods, and tools needed for New Testament interpretation (particularly exegesis and New Testament theology). They will demonstrate their ability to apply some of these to their study of the New Testament, and these exercises will prepare students for further courses in exegesis as well as for ministries of preaching and teaching.
2. Students will be introduced to hermeneutical issues such as: interpretation particular to specific genre, development of the New Testament canon, history of interpretation, levels of meaning, theological exegesis, unity and diversity of Scripture, tradition enquiry, contextualization, ethics of interpretation, and the use of the Bible in the Church today. This should prepare students for the lively discussions in ministry contexts as they pertain to the use—and hearing—of the New Testament.
3. Students will gain facility in primary source research. They will be introduced to tools and methods for New Testament research. This will enable them to understand the more academic commentaries on the market and prepare them to engage in the same level of research. The course trains students to this level of academics for the purpose of ministry, whether preparation for preaching, counselling, teaching, or serving on a Church committee exploring a difficult issue facing the Church.

Course Delivery:

The meeting times for this course consist of lectures and some discussion. Questions and discussions are encouraged. Individual students should be sensitive to the rest of the class, however, and not dominate classroom discussion. Some of the lectures will be devoted to demonstrating some of the methods of interpretation, although the course textbooks are crucial for the assignments (they list resources and discuss methodology). Students will work on a series of short papers between class periods to show mastery of certain exegetical methods and the use of relevant scholarly resources. A *Course Handbook* prepares students for the lectures and assignments.

Course Time and Assignments:

Assigning temporal values to assignments is not a science! In this course, sometimes students ‘hit the jackpot’ with resources while others spend numerous additional hours trying to find resources. A good part of this course is getting to learn one’s way around a theological library and learning how to use certain online or electronic resources. Some students have acquired a skill already while others are still learning it (e.g., students may have different abilities in Greek). That said, we do want to accumulate feedback on the hours you take to be able to give ‘average hours per assignment’ for future students.

Assignment	Expected Time	Actual Time
Class Attendance	30 hours	
Assignment 1 (reading, research, writing)	35 hours	
Assignment 2 (reading, research, writing)	35 hours	
Assignment 3	35 hours	

Course Assignments, Due Dates, and Marking

The assignments in this course are designed to develop exegetical skills by training the student in methodologies and acquainting students with research tools for New Testament studies.

Online Materials

CAMS will be used extensively for this course. The resources placed on it will be helpful for doing the assignments.

Style and Format for Assignments

Fonts: Students are to use *BibleWorks*, *Logos*, or *Accordance* Greek fonts for Greek words.

Style: Proper footnoting and referencing according to the *SBL Handbook* (see a complete online copy at <http://rdtwot.files.wordpress.com/2007/05/sbl-handbook-of-style1.pdf>, or a shortened version at http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/SBLHSrevised2_09.pdf).

Turning in Assignments

Always keep a copy of your work when handing it in for marking. Assignments must be e-mailed to me at rgrams@gordonconwell.edu (no hard copies). When turning in an assignment, do not raise questions in the e-mail as the e-mail will simply be filed for later marking. In the ‘Subject’ line for the e-mail, write: ‘NT502’ and then the assignment number, e.g., ‘Assignment 2.’

Late assignments may be marked down up to one full grade at the discretion of the instructor.

Marking Criteria

Marking criteria are listed in my “Research and Writing for New Testament Studies”. Students are responsible for using this resource for the assignments and may keep an electronic copy (not to be forwarded to others, though) for use in other courses.

Plagiarism for any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course, and the Seminary will hold a judiciary enquiry into the matter in accordance with the *Student Handbook*.

Description of Assignments

There are three papers for this course that work towards an exegesis of 1 Tim. 2.8-15.

The first two papers avoid research using commentaries, monographs, and journal articles so that students may learn to do their own primary source research, use methods taught in class and through the textbooks, and use certain tools for interpretation before exploring the arguments of others on this passage.

***Assignment 1:** The Text (2,000 words, including footnotes, but not including the word count for the translation of the passage; due 2nd weekend; worth: 30% of final grade). The length may be increased if necessary due to the length of quoted material in this assignment.

This paper should have the following structure:

Introduction (1 paragraph)
Textual Criticism
Translation and Discussion
Sentence Diagram and Discussion
Word Study

In this assignment, students are to present the following:

1. Textual criticism on the problem in 1 Tim. 2.8-15 (using the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Society critical Greek NTs; Metzger and Ehrman; Metzger’s *A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT*; and other pertinent resources; however, the student’s own assessment of the manuscripts and own use of text critical methods should be apparent).
2. Their own translation of the passage into good English and a discussion of the translation (with reference to other English translations).

Discussion should include:

- a. lexical issues (with use of various lexicons and theological word

- dictionaries),
- b. grammatical issues (with use of advanced grammars),
 - c. similarities and differences to other English translations;
 - d. and it should *not* include commentaries, monographs, and journal articles, which will be used in assignment 3.
3. Their own sentence diagram of the passage following the method taught in class (and in Fee's *NT Exegesis*). A brief discussion of the significance of the diagram should follow.
 4. Their word study of *authentēin*, demonstrating method and use of tools and resources (electronic and online word study tools, lexicons, and theological word dictionaries) for word studies (but *not* commentaries, monographs, and journal articles, which will be used in assignment 3).

***Assignment 2:** The Historical and Literary Context (2,000 words; due: 3rd weekend; worth: 30% of final grade).

This paper should have the following structure:

Introduction (1 paragraph)
Primary Source Collection
Use of the Old Testament
Place of the Passage in 1 Timothy
Conclusion (1 paragraph)

In this assignment, students are to present the following:

1. Their collection of 25 or more relevant primary source quotations on the role and status of women from a wide variety of sources demonstrating an ability to work with (i.e., collect, assess their relevance for 1 Tim. 2.8-15, and properly reference) primary sources. Note: the primary sources should simply be quoted (from a sentence to a paragraph or so in length). The relevance of the passage for 1 Tim. 2.8-15 should be stated in a sentence or two along with the quotation. Quotes should demonstrate the student's ability to use a *variety* of authors and primary source texts (this affects the grade) and an even distribution of primary sources from Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and early Church (no later than the early 3rd century) literature. Students are *not* to use someone else's collection (e.g., from a monograph or commentary): find the quotes on your own.
2. Their study on the use of the Old Testament in the passage (following the process as outlined in class and not using commentaries, monographs, and journal articles, which will be used in assignment 3).
3. Their reflection on the place of this passage in the structure and argument of 1 Timothy (again, this should be from your own reading of 1 Timothy and not from what has been said by commentators and other scholars writing on this text).

***Assignment 3:** The Exegesis Paper (4,000 words; due: 4 weeks after the last day of class: worth: 40% of final grade).

This paper should have the following structure:

Introduction (1 paragraph)

Establishing the Text

Translation: students own translation and discussion of translation issues in light of other translations and scholars' arguments;

Discussion of the text: textual criticism, grammatical, and lexical issues for the translation

Structure: sentence diagram and brief discussion; structural location of the passage in 1 Timothy

Exegetical Commentary on 1 Tim. 2.8-15 (discuss all exegetical issues in light of working with the text and engaging scholarly arguments; structure this however you wish—verse by verse; topically; both)

Use of the Passage Today: hermeneutical and Biblical theological concerns, ecclesial traditions (3 or so paragraphs)

Conclusion (1 or so paragraphs)

In this assignment, students are to write a well-balanced exegesis paper that examines all exegetical issues in 1 Tim. 2.8-15. This includes:

**selectively integrating and abbreviating* work from previous assignments into this paper;

**adding* arguments from scholarly literature and critically engaging them from your own exegesis;

**completing* the exegesis of the passage if some issue has not been covered;

**demonstration* of methods learned in this course;

**use* of primary sources;

**careful use* of tools for exegesis;

**use* of contemporary, secondary, scholarly studies: dictionary and journal articles, commentaries, relevant monographs;

**awareness* of hermeneutical and Biblical theological issues in interpretation (including historical, ecclesial, and cultural issues);

**briefly exploring* the meaning of the text for today within the student's own geographical, ecclesial, and cultural context.

**proper referencing and footnoting* for primary and secondary sources.

Guidance for these assignments will come from the textbooks, the information on CAMS, and the lectures. The first two assignments should engage secondary sources very minimally (tools such as lexicons should be used—as already noted). Secondary sources should be used to engage the student's own research in the third assignment and to highlight points of disagreement and arguments in scholarly literature.

Course Attendance

Students are responsible for attending all lectures. Valid excuses for missed lectures (bereavement, illness) are, of course, acceptable, but extra work of some sort will necessarily be given for anyone missing more than three class hours for any reason. The extra work will depend on which lectures are missed. Clearly, class attendance is expected and, if anyone arrives late or leaves early, it is appropriate to notify the instructor why this was necessary.

No student may miss three classes and continue in the course. The course should be dropped if this is the case for whatever reason.

If enrolment is below 15, it is possible that some lectures will be turned into reading requirements.

Internet Usage

This course will use the Seminary's internet resource, CAMS, for posting lectures, resources, and contacting students. Students should be sure that their e-mail addresses are correctly registered with the Seminary for these purposes, and they should regularly access CAMS.

Students are asked to refrain from accessing the internet at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. "Surfing the web," checking e-mail, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor, and they prevent the student from fully participating in the class session.

Course Outline

Many of the lectures will be posted on CAMS in Microsoft Powerpoint. The following outline is a guide for the course, with some changes inevitable. Our main goal each weekend will be to cover material pertinent to upcoming assignments.

***First Weekend of the Course:**

1. Introducing New Testament Interpretation
2. Translating the New Testament: Lexicons, Grammars; Theological Dictionaries
3. History of Translation of the English Bible
4. Sentence Diagramming
5. New Testament Textual Criticism
6. Greek Word Studies
7. Library Tour

***Second Weekend of the Course:**

1. Overview of the History of Interpretation
2. Intertextuality: The New Testament's Use of the Old Testament
3. Primary Sources and New Testament Studies

Historical-Cultural Criticism: History of Israel, Greece and Rome;
Philosophies of the Greek and Roman World
Collecting and Citing Primary Sources

4. Formation of the New Testament Canon
5. Gospel Criticisms: Source, Form, Redaction Criticisms
6. Genre Criticism
7. Narrative Criticism

***Third Weekend of the Course:**

1. Interpreting the Parables
2. Rhetorical Criticism
3. The Quest for the Historical Jesus and Criteria of Authenticity
4. Social Science Criticism
5. Archaeology and Geography
6. Scripture and Authority
7. Researching and Writing an Exegesis Paper

Course Textbooks

The student will need to use all the textbooks for assignments. Stronger essays will demonstrate a broader understanding of interpretation than simply an ability to use tools and focus solely on a given word or passage. To this end, the student should read all the textbooks and become familiar with the resources for exegesis that are discussed on the web and in the library.

Evans, Craig. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. ISBN: 978-0801046179

Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). ISBN: 978-0664223168

Grams, Rollin and Mark Poe. *Internet Resources for Biblical and Early Church Studies*. 2010 (available from GCTS Bookshop or online at http://www.gordonconwell.edu/lifelong_learners/cooley_research_resources).

Grams, Rollin. *Research and Writing for Biblical Studies* (available on CAMS).

Metzger, Bruce and Bart Ehrman. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-0195161229

A Few Further Works Useful for Your Library and in this Course

You will be able to use our library (if commuting, find a nearby theological library for this course) for these resources, but you might consider purchasing some of these for

your own library. You should consider purchasing a Bible research computer program such as *BibleWorks* or *Logos*. If you use a MacIntosh computer, the program to purchase is *Accordance*. These three are considered top of the line. Some of these are on the reserve shelf in our library, and *BibleWorks* is available on library computers. *Accordance* is available in the Cooley Center in the library.

Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition of the Synopsis Quatuor Evangeliorum with the Text of the Revised Standard Version* (United Bible Societies, 1972).

David A. Black and David S. Dockery, eds., *Interpreting the New Testament. Essays on Methods and Issues* (Nashville: Broadman, 2001).

Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

Colin Brown, ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Eerdmans Press).

Donald Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992).

Donald Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996).

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read The Bible Book By Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*. Rev. ed. (Westminster Press).

Everett Ferguson, ed. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

Joel Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

Donald Hagner, *New Testament Exegesis and Research. A Guide for Seminarians* (Fuller Seminary, 1992).

William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and R. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993).

I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (Eerdmans, 1977).

Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991; coming out in a new edition).

Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

Students should find the following useful for placing this course in the larger context of the history of Biblical (especially New Testament) Studies:

C.E. Braaten, 'The Gospel Proviso: Lessons from 20th Century Theology for the Next Millennium,' *Dialogue* 38.14 (Fall, 1999): 245-253.

C. Cosgrove, 'A History of New Testament Studies in the 20th Century,' *Review and Expositor* 96 (1999): 369-383.

Rollin G. Grams, *Rival Versions of Theological Enquiry* (Prague: International Baptist

- Theological Seminary, 2005). [Chapters 1, 2, and 3, especially. Available at the GCTS bookshop.]
- Werner G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (ET: Abingdon, 1972).
- Stephen Neill and N. T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986* (Oxford, 1988²).
- Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism. Evangelicals, Scholarship and the Bible in America* (Harper, 1986).
- Brian Rosner, 'Looking Back at the 20th Century: 1. New Testament Studies,' *Expository Times* 110 (July 1999): 317-21.
- Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).