

NT 617: Gospel of John Syllabus

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Fall Semester, 2008
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary--Charlotte

I. Course Description

This course applies students' exegetical skills learned in *Interpreting the New Testament* to a study of the Greek text of John's Gospel. The content, situation, literary character, and particularly theological message of John's Gospel will be examined in relation to a careful exegesis of selected passages from John. The course also (inductively) introduces the student to intermediate Greek as he or she prepares translations of particular passages for each meeting of the class.

II. Course Objectives

- *To hone exegetical and Greek linguistic skills, including becoming more acquainted with Greek.
- *To study the message of John's Gospel, particularly by attending to and interacting with Keener's commentary on the Gospel and by writing an exegesis paper on a passage in the Gospel.
- *To consider approaches to Johannine theology and the Gospel's contribution to New Testament theology, particularly through lectures, reading, and class discussion.
- *To engage current scholarship on the Gospel, including historical, literary, and reader oriented methods of interpretation of this Gospel. In particular, students will consider the possibilities that narrative readings of the Gospel offer interpreters. Also, the question of historicity will be explored during the course in reference to certain passages as well as in conversation with the Blomberg text.
- *To explore living faithfully to the witness of John's Gospel to Christian life by exploring its contribution to practical theology and ethics, and to discuss preaching from John's Gospel.

III. Relation of Course to Curriculum

This course has prerequisites of *Greek I*, *Greek II* and *Interpreting the New Testament*. It meets the requirement for degrees requiring an exegesis course in the Gospels. Students who have not taken a Greek course in the Spring semester must sit a Greek competency quiz before the Fall semester begins, usually by the time of the Integrative Seminar in August.

IV. Textbooks

Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues & Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John—A Commentary*, 2 Vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.

In addition to these texts, students should bring their Greek New Testament (UBS or Nestle-Aland) to class. Translation will be done from the text, not from electronic versions of the New Testament such as *BibleWorks* (which may, otherwise, be used in class).

V. Course Assignments

All written work should be submitted using proper footnoting style (see the SBL Manual of Style), double spacing, Greek fonts (download *BibleWorks* fonts if you do not have them), and in hard copy. Work can be turned in at the front desk or to the instructor. You may also turn in a self-addressed, stamped envelope to have material returned after marking.

A. Class Preparation:

Students need to prepare for class by reading the commentary by Keener for the set passage/s and preparing passages for translation in class (with notes the student has taken on vocabulary and grammar, but without the aid of any other tools). Students will be called on to translate verses in class and to discuss aspects of the commentary reading. Students will not be permitted to read a prepared translation in class or to use a computer program when translating in class. There will also be several unannounced quizzes during the semester to check this preparation. This requirement for the course will count for 30% of the final grade (based on quizzes and class translation/discussion).

Missed classes: If a student has a good reason for missing a class and is therefore unable to demonstrate his or her preparation for class on a given day, either the student will be given a make-up quiz or he or she will have other class work count towards this grade.

Note: The Greek requirement of this and any exegesis course must be passed in order to pass the course (by decision of the Bible Division).

B. Historicity in John Essay

Students will write an essay that interacts with the following kind of statement:

‘The evangelist is also capable of creating history-like material that points to the significance of Jesus and his mission’ (Andrew Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Black’s New Testament Commentary. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 2005), p. 134).

The essay should be an engagement with the textbooks for this course (Blomberg and Keener), one other scholar who takes the view that John’s Gospel is less historical, and a demonstration of the student’s own consideration of the matter of historicity in John. Additional works should be consulted. One aspect of the question of historicity should be considered rather than the essay being a general presentation of historical issues. Some examples of focusing the question might be: genre, authorship, the historicity of a particular periscope, contextual and temporal aspects of Jesus’ ministry in John’s Gospel, etc. Read Blomberg and Keener first, then decide on a research question.

The essay should be 2,000 to 2,500 words (double spaced, 12 point font). It must include a statement (on the last page) that you have read Blomberg’s *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel* and Keener’s Introduction. This will be worth 30% of the final grade.

C. Exegetical Essay on Christology

D. Moody Smith has written the following (in *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, New Testament Theology. (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 129f):

“In the theological, and specifically christological, debates of the fourth and fifth centuries the language of unity between Father and Son, which in the Fourth Gospel had expressed their mutual love and the character of the Son’s mission and work, was interpreted ontologically and metaphysically as the question

of the nature of that unity was explored. Subsequently, the character of the coexistence of God and man in Jesus Christ became the focus of discussion, and it too was debated and decided in metaphysical terms. These doctrinal debates and the creeds that emerged from them went beyond anything said in the Fourth Gospel itself, but it would be a mistake to think that they represent the imposition of a completely unrelated set of questions and issues upon that Gospel" (129f).

Write an essay that engages this quote either with reference to the unity of the Father and Son or with reference to the person of Christ (not both) in the Fourth Gospel. The essay should outline the breadth of the topic in John's Gospel and then focus on one particular passage (of about five to ten verses) in the Gospel. This passage should be discussed with regard to the exegetical issues (as discussed in the *Interpreting the NT* course) it contains. It should demonstrate your own exegesis of the passage and an interaction with key commentaries and other secondary sources. (It is, of course, appropriate to note in brief the views that are in continuity or discontinuity with John in the fourth and fifth centuries to which Smith alludes, but the essay's focus is to be exegetical.)

The essay should be about 3,000 words (plus or minus 10%), excluding references to books and articles in the footnotes. (Discursive footnotes should be included in the word count.) No bibliography is required as it is assumed that relevant works appear in the footnotes.

The paper will be worth 40% of the final grade. Attach a marking sheet for exegesis to the front of the paper.

D. Attendance

Students are expected to attend class. Three hours may be missed for a legitimate reason. (If class is missed without a legitimate reason, the final grade will be dropped by 1/3 of a grade. Legitimate reasons include illness, bereavement, or circumstances beyond the student's control.)

If more than three hours are missed for legitimate reasons, students will be asked to do additional work. This may involve additional reading around lecture topics and/or an additional book report.

If a student finds that he or she needs to miss more than three class periods (nine hours of the course) for any reason or reasons whatsoever, he or she should drop the course.

E. Communication With the Class and Professor

Communication with others in the class and about the class will take place on CAMS. Individual communication can take place by e-mail (see above for mine), which is far better than trying to reach me by telephone. Students may set up individual appointments with me, and I will usually be available for drop in visits the afternoon prior to our evening class.

F. Due Dates:

1. Class Preparation: due by class time each week.
2. Historicity Essay: 17 November.
3. Exegetical Essay: 29 December.

G. Bibliography:

The commentary for this course covers up to date and significant bibliographical material for the course. Key resources in Johannine studies will be identified in class during lectures.

H. First Day of Class:

Students should read the introduction in Volume 1 of Keener's commentary for the first day of class (note: this is a lengthy introduction). They should also be prepared to translate and discuss John 1.1-18 on the first day of class. This requires reading and taking notes on the commentary and working through the Greek translation of this passage so that it can be translated in class and any relevant grammatical issues discussed. Students may also work ahead as per the course outline and assignments.

VI. Marking

Marking criteria are listed in my *Handbook for New Testament Interpretation* (used in the *Interpreting the New Testament* course) and will be made available to students who did not take my course. Plagiarism is also discussed in the *Handbook* and would result in an automatic 'F' for the course.

VII. Course Outline and Format

The course will work through John's Gospel with attention to particular passages. Students are to prepare translations in bold as noted above (point A). Classes will include occasional lectures (noted in the first column), weekly translation, and discussion. Sometimes class preparation will be checked through the taking of unannounced quizzes (as noted above, point A).

| <i>Dates and Topics</i> | <i>Translation Passages/Class Discussion/Due Dates</i> |
|---|--|
| 22 September: Introduction; Sources and the Johannine Community | Jn. 1.1-18 (Prepare for first class meeting) Read Keener's Introduction (for first class meeting) |
| 29 September: Structure of John's Gospel; Miracles in the Gospels | Jn. 2.1-12 (Water into wine at Cana); Jn. 2.13-22 (Jesus and the Temple); Jn. 2.23-25 (Reaction to Jesus in Jerusalem) |
| 6 October: Johannine Theology | 3.1-21 (Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus) |
| 13 October: Feminist Readings of John's Gospel; Johannine Theology | 4.1-26 (Jesus and the Samaritan woman) |
| 20 October: Johannine Theology; The Ethics of John's Gospel | 5.1-18 (Healing of the man at the pool) |
| 27 October: John and the Synoptics | 6.1-15 (Feeding of the 5,000); 6.16-21 (Walking on the sea) |
| 3 November: Historicity in John's Gospel; Narrative approaches to John's Gospel | 9.1-25 (Healing of the man born blind) |
| 10 November: The Passion of Jesus; The Resurrection of Jesus | 11.1-27 (The raising of Lazarus) 1 st Paper Due |
| 17 November: [No lectures] | 19.1-30 (The passion) 20.1-29 (The resurrection) 1 st Paper Due |
| 24 November: NO CLASS | (SBL) |
| 29 December | 2 nd Paper Due |