NT502: Syllabus
Interpreting the New Testament

Instructor: Dr. Rollin G. Grams (rgrams@gordonconwell.edu)
Summer, 2013 June 14-15; July 19-20; Aug. 16-17

Class Times: Friday, 6:30 – 9:30; Saturday, 8:30 – 4:30

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 must 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 primarily 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:

Suggesting the time that assignments might take to complete 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 or an undergraduate that involved research and writing in the humanities). Students do need to plan to spend significant time in this course—perhaps more time than many other courses in the curriculum.

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

Sakai will be used for this course. Be sure that you have access. 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. If you do not have one of these, download a free copy from the internet sites whether or not you own a copy of the software.

Style: Proper footnoting and referencing according to the SBL Handbook (see a student version of this online 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., ‘NT502 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*. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. It includes improper referencing of sources (such as quoting material without using quotation marks, even if the resource is later footnoted).

**Description of Assignments**

There is one reading report and there are three papers for this course that work towards an exegesis of 1 Tim. 2.8-15.

The reading report is on the text by Everett Ferguson. This is important information for reading the New Testament in its context. Students are to complete a reading report showing that they read all the required pages of this book. Grading of this assignment is pass/fail. A ‘pass’ will be awarded if and only if all the required pages are read. This assignment is worth 10% of the final grade. This report is due on August 30th (depending on whether the course is taken this summer or in the fall), along with the last paper. The following pages must be read from Ferguson:

- *Ferguson. Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 1-47
- Jewish Backgrounds: 396-582
- Graeco-Roman Backgrounds: 48-395

The three papers in this course constitute a single exegesis paper. 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. Students will, therefore, actually be marked down if they show any indication of having used secondary source scholarly interpretations of 1 Tim. 2.8-15.

*Paper 1:* The Text (2,000 words, including footnotes, but not including the word count for the translation of the passage; due 4th week, **July 19**; 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 authentein, 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: 8th week, August 16; worth: 30% of final grade).

This paper should have the following structure:
Introduction (1 paragraph)
Literary Discussion of the Place of the Passage in 1 Timothy
Historical Context Discussion of the Content of 1 Timothy and the Situation Timothy is facing in Ephesus (also that Titus is facing in Crete)
Historical Context Discussion Using Primary Sources Relevant to this Text
Use of the Old Testament in 1 Tim. 2.8-15

Conclusion (1 paragraph)

In this assignment, students are to present the following:

1. **Primary Sources:** The primary sources should be at least 25 in number, relevant to interpretation of the passage, quoted and referenced properly (as discussed in class), and explained in reference to 1 Tim. 2.8-15. Quotations from primary sources should demonstrate the student’s ability to use a wide 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. Every primary source text should always be read in the primary source to be certain of the context and meaning of the text and that it is quoted correctly. The primary source is to be referenced in the body of the paper, and the translation from which it is taken should be referenced in a footnote accompanying the quotation.

2. **Use of the Old Testament in the Passage:** see the book by Gary Burge. This needs to be your own work and not come from commentaries, monographs, and journal articles, which will be used in assignment 3.

3. **Observations of the Text in its Context—both Literary and Historical-Cultural Contexts:** Students should give their own 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:* Engagement with Secondary Sources and Conclusions (1,500 words; due: 2 weeks after the last day of class, **August 31**; worth: 30% of final grade).

This paper should have the following structure:

Introduction (1 paragraph)
Description, Analysis, and Critique of Secondary Sources on 1 Tim. 2.8-15
Conclusion

In this assignment, students are to:
1. Engage 3 academic commentaries (using Greek, primary sources, etc.)
2. Engage 3 academic journal articles (use ATLA for this)
3. Engage 3 Bible dictionaries
4. Engage their previous papers in order to analyse and critique the secondary resources used in this paper
5. Draw conclusions based on all the research done (in the previous two papers and this paper)
6. Demonstrate good learning in this course
7. Briefly exploring the meaning of the text for today within the student’s own geographical, ecclesial, and cultural context.
8. Demonstrate proper referencing and footnoting and academic reasoning and writing at the master’s level.

Guidance for these assignments will come from the textbooks, the information on Sakai, and the lectures. The first two assignments should engage secondary sources very minimally (tools such as Greek critical editions, our textbooks, lexicons, grammars, and word dictionaries 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 do not include attending weddings, going on mission trips, or family holidays, but might include bereavement or illness. However, students should probably drop the course if an entire weekend will be missed as learning in this course will probably be affected. If any hours are missed, extra work may be assigned. 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. 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, Sakai, 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 Sakai.

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.

Use of Recording Devices
Students must ask the professor if they wish to record lectures. If permission is granted, the students are to use the recordings only for their own purposes in this course and not make them available to others outside this course.

Course Outline

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

*First Part of the Course:

1. Introducing New Testament Interpretation
2. Translating the New Testament: Lexical Analysis; Grammatical Analysis; Translation Theory; Tools for Translation (see Fee textbook)
3. History of Translation of the English Bible
4. Sentence Diagramming (see Fee textbook)
5. New Testament Textual Criticism (see Fee textbook; Metzger and Ehrman textbook)
6. Greek Word Studies (see Fee textbook)
7. Library Tour

Assignment 1 Due: 4th week of class, 19 July

*Second Part of the Course:

1. Overview of the History of Interpretation
2. Intertextuality: The New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament (see Beale textbook)
3. Primary Sources and New Testament Studies (see Evans, Fee, Ferguson textbooks)
   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; Synoptic Problem
6. Genre Criticism
7. Narrative Criticism

Assignment 2 Due: 8th week of class, 16 August

*Third Part of the Course:
1. The Quest for the Historical Jesus and Criteria of Authenticity  
2. Rhetorical Criticism  
3. Social Science Criticism  
4. Archaeology and Geography  
5. Scripture and Authority  
6. Biblical Theology  
7. Researching and Writing an Exegesis Paper  

Assignment 3 Due: 30 August

Course Textbooks

Textbooks:


Further Reading:


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).


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.


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).


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


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.]


