Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
NT 502: Interpreting the New Testament (Spring, 2012)

Instructor: Mark A. Jennings
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781-812-0166 (home, so be even more considerate)

Course Description

The intent of this course is to better prepare and equip future ministers and teachers in the interpretation of the Greek New Testament. The course is (somewhat artificially) divided into two parts. Part 1 covers the “science” of exegesis, comprising the various means/approaches necessary for understanding the Greek New Testament text (e.g., textual criticism, lexical study, grammatical analysis, historical background, etc.). Part 2 (the “art” of exegesis) comprises two components. The first centers are the various lenses that can be used to view the text (historical background, narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism, etc.). The second component centers on hermeneutical aspect of interpretation, such as what it means to read the text in faithful obedience and the role of theology, canon, and church in interpretation. This course is designed to expose students to the rigors of intentional, deliberate investigation of the Greek New Testament, as well as the creative, artistic nature of interpretation. Throughout the entire process this course will emphasize the necessity of an appropriate posture of prayer and thanksgiving when approaching the perilous, and wondrous self-revelation of God occurring in Scripture.

The format of this course will include some lecture, substantial class discussion/presentation, and multiple writing assignments.

Objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to:
1. Appreciate the need for exegesis and hermeneutics when teaching the New Testament. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
2. Employ various methods for exegieng the Greek New Testament, being able to identify the strengths and shortcomings of each method. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
3. Adequately interpret any text of the Greek New Testament without solely relying upon secondary sources by bringing established methods into conversation with each other to best understand the authorial intent. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
4. Read critically and use judiciously secondary sources when interpreting the Greek New Testament. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
5. Consider and articulate the difference between interpreting Scripture and interpreting any other Ancient text. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)

6. Speak thoughtfully regarding the nature of Scripture as God’s revelation and understand the role exegesis plays in worship and devotion. (i.e., avoid the error of seeing exegesis as the goal itself and merely viewing Scripture as a “thing to be mined for content”). (Art 1, 2, and 3 of GCTS Mission)

Final Note: This is a demanding course. First ~ this course has several assignments purposefully designed to be demanding, requiring both time and concentration, to ensure the familiarity with a particular method or approach. Second ~ by its very nature this course moves quickly and can feel quite “episodic” in its approach. As a result of the demands of this course, one can often feel they are “always on deadline” and swimming like crazy to keep up. Nevertheless, this course is designed, not to make you masters of exegesis, but to set the baseline foundation for growth. I do not apologize for the challenging nature of this course, but rather encourage you to embrace it, recognizing the rippling impact such a course can have in your future ministry work.

Texts

Required:


Greek New Testament (UBS 4 or NA27)

Recommended:


Requirements

1. Be prepared each day to discuss the reading for that day. The class discussions and lectures will be based on the assumption that the material has been read and considered.

2. Attendance at every class is expected. Failure to attend class will impact your class participation grade. (Besides, who wants to miss class?)

3. There will be some “non graded assignments” throughout the term. The success of these assignments is directly related to the level of attention given to them.

4. Complete and submit all graded assignments.

   a. Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments are to be typed, double-spaced, 1 in margins, 12 pt font.)

   b. AN ASSIGNMENT IS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS AND IS CONSIDERED LATE AFTERWARDS. EACH STUDENT IS ALLOWED TO SUBMIT ONE “LATE” ASSIGNMENT (THIS EXCEPTION DOES NOT APPLY TO THE BOOK REVIEW OR THE EXEGESIS PAPER).

      i. This “one late assignment” will receive a two-grade penalty.

      ii. Any subsequent late assignments will receive a “zero” grade and will not be evaluated.

      iii. The student may be asked to “step outside” during the portion of class in which the “late assignment” is discussed.

      iv. The “late assignment” must be submitted within two class periods of the original due date unless special exceptions are made.

         1. After this extended deadline – the assignment will receive an automatic “zero.” For purposes of counting late assignment due dates– Reading Week classes will not count as a class period.

   c. Textual Criticism Assignment - Analysis of Gal 1:11

      i. Answer the following question: Was the UBS4 and NA27 correct in their preference of γάρ? Be sure to provide the strengths and weakness of the
various options, explain your conclusion, and describe how one’s preference impacts the interpretation of the epistle.

ii. For this assignment, do not consult any secondary sources or commentaries. Please use and submit Ciampa’s charts located at http://www.viceregency.com/TextCritCharts.pdf. You are to submit these charts with your assignment.

iii. Your answer is to be no more than two pages. Fonts such SIL Apparatus are available online, but other options are possible. Please feel free to use numbers for the major uncials.

d. **Word Study Assignment ~ Analysis of κοσμός in John 3:16**
   
i. Answer the following question? *Who comprises “the world” in John 3:16?* First and foremost your work should examine the use of κοσμός in the Johannine writings. You may also include information from broader investigations, including the NT, LXX, other Greek writings, etc.?
   
ii. After you establish the range of possible meanings, identify and explain the “best three” meanings. Why are these the “best three” and what are the theological implications for these three. After discussing these “best three” argue for which one should be preferred.
   
iii. Do not consult any commentaries. You may consult a “Lexicon” after doing your own work, but your answer should reflect your own efforts. (A Note: Do not simply trust a Lexicon – you should always investigate their reference and see if it fits the context).
   
iv. Your answer is to be no more than three pages. Do not quote entire passages unless absolutely necessary, citations and brief notes are sufficient.

e. **Sentence Diagram Assignment ~ Analysis of Phil 2:1-4**
   
i. *Using the phrasing method taught in class (the Nicholl method) diagram Phil 2:1-4.*
   
ii. Provide a brief statement regarding information gleaned from this method. Be sure to identify and discuss which “decisions” were more difficult. How might the results of this diagram direct and inform your exegesis. Based on the diagram – what is the driving grammatical point? What decisions will require further exegesis to confirm.
   
iii. This assignment should be typed (if at all possible).

f. **The Use of the OT in the NT ~ Analysis of Gal 3:6-14.**
   
i. *For this assignment you are to analyze the presence and function of the Old Testament in Gal 3:6-14.* Paul employs the following texts: Gen 15:6 (Gal 3:6); 12:3/18:18 (Gal 3:8); Deut 27:26 (Gal 3:10); Hab 2:4 (Gal 3:11); Lev 18:5 (Gal 3:12); and Deut 21:23 (Gal 3:13).
   
ii. In your analysis you are to comment on the following:

   1. What role do the texts play (if any) in the structure of the passage?
   2. How does Paul build and establish an argument with these texts?
3. Does Paul change or alter the text he employs? If so, why?
4. Does Paul use the text in a manner consistent with its original intent (in other words, would a 1st century Jewish interpreter think Paul was playing “fast and loose” with the text)?
5. Why do you think Paul chose these particular texts in the first place? How do they serve the message of Galatians?
6. Any other comments?

iii. You are not to use any commentaries or other secondary sources in doing your analysis. You may use any other primary sources that you choose.

iv. Your analysis should be in essay form. I’m not looking for you to discuss every reference, but rather for you to demonstrate a good understanding of Paul’s handling of the OT in this critical text.

v. Your analysis should be no more than four pages.

5. Write an Exegesis Paper of 2500-3500 words (strictly enforced) on a passage in which you systematically analyze a complete passage of the Greek text from Galatians or Philippians.

a. You are to email me two copies of your paper before the start of class on the day the paper is due. One copy is to be a Word (or Pages) document and the other is a .pdf or .jpeg copy.


c. This paper should employ all relevant exegetical methods developed in “Interpreting the New Testament” (original text, section boundaries, rhetorical criticism, historical background, literary background, grammar, syntax, semantic structure analysis, etc.). Part of your evaluation not only will be on how you employed your methods, but which methods you chose to use. Please note – not every method will provide the same level of insight to every passage, and some may be hardly useful to a particular passage. Do not use a variety of methods to “demonstrate knowledge.” Use the methods that are the most useful for your study.

d. This is a “methods paper” ~ meaning I am more interested in how you work on the passage yourself than in how you process the work of others.

i. Do not misunderstand, this paper should reflect the responsible use of the scholarly secondary literature (commentaries, peer-reviewed articles and chapters, etc.), but the weight of your paper should be directed
towards your findings and not simply a restatement of the conclusions of others.

ii. Be sure to read your sources carefully and cite his/her opinion, not simply an opinion they are discussing. This is especially true for commentaries where multiple opinions are presented.

iii. Try to cite the best representatives of certain arguments. (For example, if Harry, Hermione, and Ron all cite Severus regarding a certain view – then it makes the most sense for you to follow suit and use Severus as the best representative for that point.)

iv. NOTE: DO NOT PLAGARIZE! ALL ACTS OF PLAGARISM WILL BE FULLY PURSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GCTS POLICIES. NO EXCUSES.

v. Limit your use of direct quotations. A good rule of thumb regarding quotations – only use them if the author said something much better, and more completely, than anyone else has (including yourself).

e. You are to follow SBL format. (Format is taken very seriously – attention to form often indicates that the paper was taken seriously. A poorly written and poorly formatted paper will substantively harm a good idea.) Also – since you will give the full bibliographic information the first time you cite a text in the footnotes, you do not need to provide a bibliography at the end of your paper.

f. Your paper is to divided into the following structural elements:

i. **Translation**: This should be in accurate and idiomatic English. It should be a “functional/dynamic equivalent” translation (in other words, not a paraphrase or something overly formal). Consider it to be a translation that would be useful for teaching and preaching in a church setting with newcomers, new believers, visitors, and old salts of the faith. It should reflect and anticipate the various exegetical decisions you made on your passage. (THE TRANSLATION WILL NOT BE INCLUDED IN THE TOTAL WORD COUNT OF THE PAPER.)

   1. Establish the original text. It is assumed you are following the preferred text of the UBS4/NA27 unless otherwise indicated. The discussion of significant textual issues should be reserved for footnotes to the text within this section of the paper. Especially important textual issues may merit some additional comment in the commentary section.

   2. Any significant textual decisions – especially those where you prefer a variant reading that differs from preferred text should be accompanied by the appropriate charts in the appendix.

ii. **Commentary**: This section should include the following:

   1. **Introduction**. Introduce the passage, the relationship of the passage to the broader context, and identify the major issues to be discussed. Establish the coherence and boundaries of the passage. Do not make your whole argument here – rather “prime the pump” for what you are about to say. This section is important for telling me what to expect. Writers often say “way too much” in their introduction. This is not the section where you discuss authorship, dating, occasion, etc.
2. **Body.** Use a verse-by-verse approach (some flexibility if the versification overly disrupts your argument). Here is where you will exhibit your exegesis, interact with representative secondary sources, etc.
   a. *Opening Remarks:*
      i. Briefly explain the introductory issues (especially the occasion) of the book in which your passage is found. If relevant – discuss how the passage fits in the rhetorical structure of the epistle.
      ii. Provide the outline structure of the passage.
   b. **Verse-by-Verse**
      i. Discuss complex, unusual or particularly important and important features of the grammar of the passage (any diagrams should be attached as appendices).
      ii. Explain important aspects of the historical and literary context as its relevant
      iii. Explain important or unusual words and concepts including scriptural and/or cultural backgrounds that inform them.
      iv. Discuss the semantic movement of the verse.
      v. You are to make decisions regarding “tough choices.” In other words, I want you to come down on a side, even if your certainty is slight at best.

3. **Summary.** No more than one or two paragraphs summarizing the argument of the passage.
   iii. **Theological Reflection.** No more than one page identifying the main theological point and the relevance of the passage to the life of the believer, the practice of the church, and ultimately towards an understanding of who Christ is (which is why we do exegesis!). This is not a summary. I take this page very seriously. One approach is to think of this as a “devotional” that is built off of your exegesis. Another approach is to consider this section as the main theological point that would govern your homiletics.
   iv. **Appendix.** Include here any relevant diagrams. The paper MUST HAVE a sentence structure analysis of the entire unit. These appendices should naturally coincide with your exegetical and translational decisions. (THE APPENDIX WILL NOT BE INCLUDED AS PART OF THE PAPER’S WORD COUNT).
      1. I only want to see diagrams. Do you use the “Appendix” as an opportunity to show me how much you know on a topic that you just could not “fit-in” the paper.
   v. **Word Count:** Please give the word count of the paper. Be sure not to count: a) Appendices; b) Translation; c) Bibliographic information; d) Title and subtitle headings. You will count every word unless otherwise mentioned. NOTE: I stop reading once the word count is reached.
vi. LATE PAPERS WILL RECEIVE A ZERO. ANY STUDENT WHO DOES NOT SUBMIT AN EXEGESIS PAPER WILL FAIL THE COURSE.

6. You are to write a **Book Review** of Webster’s *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*. The review should be:
   a. Between 750-1000 words (strictly enforced).
   b. Put the full bibliographic citation at the top.
   c. The review is a critical exposition of the text. The reviewer should tell the reader what the book says including: main argument of the book, main contribution to the field, scope of the work, author’s method and approach, weaknesses, strengths, implications, etc.
      i. N.B. Treat the author as you would want to be treated. Before you can adequately critique the book, you need to demonstrate you adequately understand the argument. When you criticize – use courtesy.
      ii. Try to avoid the criticism of “He should have talked about…” unless it is a glaring oversight. After all – one has to make decisions about what to include. Sometime the author is forced to cut based on the publisher’s demands. It is easy to criticize someone for not discussing something, it is much more challenging to criticize what was actually said. The former can be done by perusing the table of contents and index while the latter requires reading the book.
   d. The review should enable a reader to decide whether or not to read the book.
   e. Feel free to read critical reviews of similar books to get a better sense of form and function, but under no circumstances are you to consult other reviews (of any sort) of Webster’s book.
   f. At least 75% of the book should be the summary of the book. A good format to follow is to summarize every chapter. After the summary provide your evaluation.
   g. LATE REVIEWS WILL RECEIVE A TWO-GRADE PENALTY.

**Grade Components**

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>Word Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Diagram</td>
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<td>Semantic Structure</td>
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<td>OT in the NT</td>
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<td>Exegesis Paper</td>
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Final semester letter grades will be assigned as follows:

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A Brief Note on Intellectual Property Rights

No audio or video recordings are allowed. Furthermore no publication (audio, video, written) or live transmission of classroom proceedings will be permitted without express permission. Any requests for such privileges must be made in writing and must receive written approval from the instructor.

A Brief Note Regarding Internet Usage

Please do not access the internet (email, apps, websites, etc.) during class. This can be extremely distracting to all parties – and quite frankly it is unbecoming to do so. Exceptions may be made on occasion.

A Final Note

A elderly Christian woman, a real saint of the faith, upon hearing of my higher degrees in Biblical Studies, said to me, “Oh, goodness my dear ~ you seminary grads always want to tell me that my Bible doesn’t really say what we’ve all thought it did.” Her remark spoke volumes.

Too often the exegete relies too heavily upon his/her intellect, accepts too easily the supposed undeniable soundness of method, and assumes too arrogantly that those who came before somehow have not seen or considered what he/she sees and considers. Let us walk in full humility, knowing that we stand upon the shoulders of those who have come before us, realizing that the Holy Spirit informs and illumines His word in all those who belong to Him. Let us be ever mindful that we who attempt to explain and proclaim the Revelation of God given in His Word, that we stand in a position of great responsibility and daunting peril. Therefore, let each of us, and all those summoned to interpret the Scripture of God, do so in a posture of prayer, seeking Him and the grace of His Revelation, letting our gentleness be evident to all that Christ is near.
Course Schedule (Subject to instructor’s revision at any time. The Schedule will be made available one week before the start of class.)

- Unless otherwise indicated, all readings are found in the required reading or on CAMS.