Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary  
NT630 – Exegesis of Philippains  
Class meets June 13-17, 20-24; 9:00am-12:00pm  
Course runs as Full-Summer: May 23 – August 19

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Course Description:

This course is designed to build upon the tools and methods for exegesis learned in NT 502, using the letter to the Philippians as a case study. We give attention to three aims. First, we aim to learn the content of Philippians as well as issues and skills related to its interpretation. We give special attention to its literary and historical context. Our primary approach is literary and exegetical. The essential question for the course is: To what extent is a literary reading of the letter to the Philippians helpful in determining Paul’s theological intention? Throughout the course meetings, we analyze the letter with a focus on its compositional unity and rhetorical devices in order to understand Paul’s unfolding argument. Furthermore, we seek to build an understanding of the theological significance of Philippians upon the foundation of our exegetical work.

Second, we address hermeneutical issues and consider how Philippians is a Word to live by for the Church today. Third, we aim to cultivate exegetical thinking. Although the application of exegetical steps or methods to a text is foundational, students have not actually interpreted a text until they connect the parts of their research to illuminate the whole text in a meaningful way. A reader begins with an investigation of the parts of a text, by researching its form and function, grammar and vocabulary, and social and historical background. The discrete display of this research, however, is not an interpretation, but the basis for one. Interpretation requires a creative act of the imagination. The musician is not virtuosic until she combines tempo, rhythm, dynamics and intonation with a personal engagement of the piece she plays. Thus, in this course, we give attention to engaging Paul and synthesizing the results of exegetical methods in order to produce a sound and meaningful interpretation.

Course Objectives:

In this course students will do the following:

• translate and analyze the Greek text of Paul’s letter to the Philippians (articles 1-2 of the GCTS mission statement).
• synthesize the results of their exegetical work on Philippians into a sound and meaningful interpretation (articles 1-2 of the GCTS mission statement).
• articulate the theological message of Philippians (articles 1-2 of the GCTS mission statement).
• articulate ways that their lives, theologies and ministries are informed by the message of Philippians (articles 5-6 of the GCTS mission statement).
• resolve significant hermeneutical issues involved in reading an ancient text in a modern world, and explain the ways Philippians is a Word to live by for the Church today (articles 1-3, 6 of the GCTS mission statement).
Required Textbooks:


Recommended Commentaries on Philippians:


Course Requirements:

1. Each student is required to complete all reading, translations and assignments as indicated on the syllabus. Class readings, translations, and analyses will be drawn on during class, and the instructor will assume knowledge of this material.

2. Each student is expected to be present in class. Unexcused tardiness or absence from class may be reflected in the final grade for the course.

3. All written assignments must be turned in at the end of the class for which they are due.

4. All work must be submitted on time. Late assignments will receive a 10% drop in grade. *All written work must be submitted in order to receive a passing grade for the course.*
Course Evaluation:

1. Reading and Exegetical Notebook – 25% of final grade
   Students are required to read and translate the whole letter to the Philippians, analyze the text, and read the assigned commentary plus consult one commentary of the student’s choice. Students are required to keep track of this work in an Exegetical Notebook according to guidelines provided by the instructor. These Guidelines are available on CAMS under “assignments.” Also, sample pages from previous students’ exegetical notebooks are posted on CAMS under “resources.” Students must submit their Exegetical Notebooks to the instructor by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 30, either at AC 124 or via email.

2. Class Assignments – 15% of final grade
   For some class meetings, students are required to complete an assignment in addition to the translation for the day. An Assignment Sheet is posted on CAMS under “assignments” explaining what is required. Assignments are due at the end of each class meeting as indicated on the course outline. Students must submit hard copies of all assignments. Email submissions are not acceptable.

3. Book and Study Questions – 10% of final grade
   Students are responsible for reading Michael Gorman, Inhabiting the Cruciform God and completing a set of study questions based on that reading, due on the first day of class, 6/13. Study questions are posted on CAMS, under “assignments.”

4. Final Essay – 15% of final grade
   Students will prepare a take-home final exam, to be submitted by the last day that written work is due, August 19, in which they discuss their understanding of the function of the Christ hymn (Phil 2:6-11) in the development of Paul’s overall theological argument. Students are to demonstrate their understanding of the whole letter, and the function of 2:6-11 within the whole. The purpose of the essay is to allow students to synthesize the course material, including lectures, primary and secondary readings, and their own work on the text. The essay will be “open-book,” in that students will be allowed use of their Exegetical Notebooks, Greek New Testaments, and English Bibles (other than a study Bible). Students are not allowed access to secondary material during the exam. Hint: the best way to prepare for the final essay is to do the translation, Exegetical Notebook, and assignments diligently and thoroughly throughout the course. Students may take the exam any time after the final class meeting and before August 19. The exam must be taken in a 3-hour timeframe, proctored by a friend or family member who signs his or her name under the starting and ending times.

5. Exegesis Paper – 35% of final grade
   Students are required to write a 10-12 page exegesis paper on a passage they choose, to be submitted by the last day that written work is due, August 19. Students may submit the exegesis paper to the professor via email, or through the dean’s assistant in the lower level of the AC.

*Pre-Lecture Work (to be completed between 5/23 and 6/13):

1. Complete Assignment 1, due on the first day of class (see course schedule, below).
2. Complete No. 1 on the Exegetical Notebook assignment sheet (see CAMS).
3. Read Gorman, Inhabiting the Cruciform God and complete accompanying Study Questions (see no. 4, above), due on the first day of class.
4. Strongly urged, but not required: Start/complete translation for 6/14 along with accompanying Exegetical Notebook work + Assignment 2 (see course schedule, below).
Final semester letter grades will be assigned as follows:

- A 93% and up
- A- 90
- B+ 86.6%
- B 83.3%
- B- 80
- C+ 76.6%
- C 73.3%
- C- 70
- D+ 66.6%
- D 63.3%
- D- 60
- F below 60

All work for the course will be graded according to the policies outlining performance expectations in the GCTS Catalog. In this class, grades are based on the student's actual performance in a course judged against the criteria for grading stated in the course syllabus. The following letter grades and the accompanying description are used:

- A - Reserved for outstanding work of exceptionally high quality that reflects a creative appropriation of course material and practices.
- B - Work that meets all of the stated course requirements and reflects a firm grasp of course material and practices.
- C - Work that shows a basic grasp of the course materials and practices.
- D - Work that shows serious deficiencies but meets the minimal requirements of the course.
- F - Work that fails to meet the minimal requirements of the course. No credit is given.

A “minus” or “plus” indicates work that falls just short of the stated descriptions.

**Course Outline**

**Introduction to the course**

- **Mon. 6/13** Greek competency exam
  - Introduction to the course
  - How should we read Philippians and why does it matter?
  - DUE: **Assignment 1:** Historical Background of Philippians

- **Tues. 6/14** Salutation, Thanksgiving and Intercession
  - DUE: Translation of 1:1-11
  - **Assignment 2:** Sentence diagram of 1:3-6

- **Wed. 6/15** The Priority of the Gospel
  - DUE: Translation of 1:12-26

- **Thurs. 6/16** Exhortations for the Church
  - DUE: Translation of 1:27-30

- **Fri. 6/17** Exhortations for the Church
  - DUE: Translation of 2:1-11
  - **Assignment 3:** Semantic analysis of 2:1-11

- **Mon. 6/20** Exhortations for the Church and Models to Follow (Timothy and Epaphroditus)
  - DUE: Translation of 2:12-30
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Tues. 6/21  Warnings against False Teaching
DUE: Translation of 3:1-11
Assignment 4: Sentence diagram of 3:7-11

Wed. 6/22  Warnings against False Teaching
DUE: Translation of 3:12-21

Thurs. 6/23  Final Exhortations to Unity, Joy, and Right-Mindedness
DUE: Translation text: 4:1-9

Fri. 6/24  Final Thanksgiving and Greetings
DUE: Translation text: 4:10-23

Material on CAMS (under “Course Documents,” then under “assignments” or “resources” as indicated):

Exegetical Notebook Guidelines – “assignments”
Assignment Sheet – “assignments”
Study Questions for Gorman, Inhabiting the Cruciform God – “assignments”
Sample pages for Exegetical Notebook – “resources”
Parsing Sheet – “resources”
Functions of Prepositions – “resources”
Functions of Participles – “resources”
Sentence Diagram Summary – “resources”
Discourse Analysis Handout – “resources”
“How to Mark a Book” by Mortimer Adler – “resources”
Exegetical Checklist – “resources”
Guidelines for Exegesis Paper – “resources”