NT 631: Exegesis of Colossians and Philemon
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—South Hamilton
Summer Session III 2015

Instructor: Dr. Joel White
Course Dates: MTuWThF, July 20-31, 2015
Course Times: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Course Description:
Competency in New Testament Greek and exegesis skills will be honed by means of a close look at Paul’s epistles to the Colossians and Philemon. Careful attention will be given to introductory issues, both those of a general nature (these are similar for both letters), and more particular issues such as the religious-historical background of the so-called Colossian Heresy and slavery in the ancient world. Since the letters are brief we will exegete them in toto, using the standard tools of the historical/grammatical method, while at the same time analyzing the text from a textpragmatic standpoint (i.e., we’ll be considering what Paul wished to accomplish by means of what he wrote). Throughout the course, we will have one eye out for continuing relevance of these letters for the Church and society today.

Course Prerequisites and Relation to the Curriculum:
One year of New Testament Greek plus the course Interpreting the New Testament (or its equivalent at another seminary) are required. NT 631 satisfies the requirement for all degrees that stipulate successful completion of an exegesis course in the epistles.

Course Objectives:
Upon successful completion of the course students will:

• have a good grasp of recent scholarship on Colossians and Philemon and be able to assess the contribution of various historical, literary, and socio-rhetorical approaches to these books.
• have gained competency in exegeting the Greek text of Colossians and Philemon based on understanding of the interpretive issues in particular passages and knowledge of common scholarly interpretations.
• understand the theological issues raised by Colossians and Philemon and their implications for church and society today.
Course Textbooks:

Recommendation to buy:


Readings will also be taken from the following:


Course Requirements:

1. Successful completion of the Greek competency quiz:

   There will be a brief quiz on the first day of class to determine students’ proficiency in basic Koine Greek. Specifically the quiz will test students’ ability to translate a short passage and describe the morphological (i.e. parsing) and syntactical functions of various terms. Students must pass the quiz in order to take the class for credit.

2. Attendance:

   A total of 3 hours of class may be excused for a legitimate reason. Missed class time over 3 hours must be made up through additional reading or assignments at the discretion of the instructor. Students will be called upon in class to translate the Greek text directly from the Greek NT without the use of notes.

3. Preparation of a personal study guide:

   This study guide will consist of two parts:

   a. a brief presentation (max. 3 pages) of the student’s position on the following issues:
Authorship, date, and place of the letter to the Colossians
The nature of the Colossian heresy
the status of Onesimus at the time of the writing of Philemon
The discussion of the latter two points should reveal interaction with the works of Francis and Meeks as well as Barth and Blanke, respectively (see required reading on the course schedule).
b. an independent translation from Greek into English of the text of Colossians and Philemon. This should be completed without the aid of an English Bible or translation software (electronic dictionaries may be used, but reference should not be made to any translation while translating). Important lexical and syntactical information should be noted below the translated text. Group work on translation is encouraged, as long as this consists of work together on individual texts rather than dividing up texts and exchanging results. Students should compare their translation to Moo’s, note where there are significant differences, read Moo’s commentary on these passages, and make any necessary changes (but only where they find Moo’s arguments convincing). Translations should be further corrected in class. Corrections should be transparent. In other words, changes to be made should be stricken through (rather than deleted), either electronically (in soft copy) or with a pencil or pen (in hard copy), using different colors of ink for corrections from Moo’s commentary and those made during class. Study guides should be submitted as a PDF File that must be received by the instructor as an email attachment by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on August 15, 2015, in order to avoid penalties for late work.

Due Date: August 15, 2015
Percentage of final grade: 40%

4. Preparation of an Exegesis Paper:

This paper will consist of 3,500 (+ or – 10%) word exegesis paper based on a portion of the Greek text of Colossians or Philemon. The passage should be a self-contained unit (pericope) roughly six verses in length, and should be approved by the instructor in advance. In preparing the paper students should consult Fee’s *New Testament Exegesis*. The paper should conform to general academic standards for exegesis papers and follow the *SBL Handbook of Style* with regard to form. *BibleWorks* fonts should be used for Greek and Hebrew characters. Plagiarism in any form, as defined in the Student Handbook, will result in a grade of ‘F’ for the course. Papers should be submitted as a PDF File that must be received by the instructor as an email attachment by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on August 15, 2015) in order to avoid penalties for late work.

Due Date: August 15, 2015
Percentage of final grade: 60%
4. Reading:

In addition to interaction with Moo’s commentary in the course of translating Colossians and Philemon, students are expected to complete the readings as noted in the course schedule. A brief email stating the percentage of the reading completed should be mailed to the instructor by August 15, 2015. Failure to complete at least 90% the required reading will have a negative effect on the final grade (up to one full grade deduction if less than 50% is completed).

Course Schedule (tentative):

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>July 20th</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<td>Introduction to Colossians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>July 21st</td>
<td>Introduction to Colossians (cont.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>July 22nd</td>
<td>Col 1:1-14</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>July 23rd</td>
<td>Colossians 1:15-20</td>
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<td>Beetham, 113-156; Fee, 317-325, 595-619; Wright, 99-119</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>July 24th</td>
<td>Colossians 1:21-2,5</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>July 27th</td>
<td>Colossians 2:6-23</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>July 28th</td>
<td>Colossians 3:1-17</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>July 29th</td>
<td>Colossians 3:18-4:18</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>July 30th</td>
<td>Introduction to Philemon</td>
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<td>Moo,361-378; Barth and Blanke, 1-102</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>July 31st</td>
<td>Philemon 1-25</td>
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Taping, Copying, and Exchanging of Computer Files:

Students may tape lectures and discussion for the purpose of individual study only. No course materials, including handouts and Powerpoints in addition to tapes, may be given to third parties without the express consent of the instructor.

Contact Information:

Email: jwhite@gordonconwell.edu

Appointments: I am happy to make breakfast or lunch appointments (i.e. before and after lectures) on the days on which the course meets.

Please note: I am available in person only from July 20th to August 1st. After that date and via telephone or Skype in Germany.
Recent Scholarly Commentaries on Colossians and Philemon


