Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
NT 502: Interpreting the New Testament (Spring, 2014)

Class Time: Fridays, 2-5 pm
Class Dates: January 27—May 2, 2014
Reading Week: Feb 17—21, Mar 17—21

Mark A. Jennings Contact Information:
Email: mjennings1@gordonconwell.edu
Office hours: TBD

Byington: Blaine Boyd, bboyd@gordonconwell.edu

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, etc.). Part 2 (the “art” of exegesis) comprises two components. The first centers on 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:
- Appreciate the need for exegesis and hermeneutics when teaching the New Testament. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
- Employ various methods for exegeting the Greek New Testament, being able to identify the strengths and shortcomings of each method. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
- 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)
- Read critically and use judiciously secondary sources when interpreting the Greek New Testament. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)
Consider and articulate the difference between interpreting Scripture and interpreting any other Ancient text. (Art 1 and 2 of GCTS Mission)

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)

I am teaching under three working assumptions:

The authorial intent is the inspired, inerrant Word of God.
You desire to teach and preach the Word of God in service to the church. (This “service” can take many forms.)
You agree to be taught by me and to do the required work necessary to benefit from the teaching.

Take 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. Finally, this course does not aim to make you one of the 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 NA27/28)

**Recommended:** *(SEE MORE RESOURCES ON CAMS)*


**Requirements**

Be prepared each day to discuss the reading for that day. [SEE COURSE SCHEDULE]. The class discussions and lectures will be based on the assumption that the material has been read and considered. Sometimes the lectures will move beyond the reading – sometimes they will highlight one aspect of the reading – sometimes they will focus only on the reading – but they always assume the reading. The professor has the right to excuse anyone (and everyone) from a particular class if the reading is not completed.

Attendance at every class is expected. Failure to attend class will impact your overall grade by as much as one whole grade (B+ becomes C+). You will be notified if your attendance is becoming a concern. Besides, who wants to miss class?

There likely 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.

Complete and submit all graded assignments.

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

Assignments are to be electronically submitted – if possible.

**AN ASSIGNMENT IS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS AND IS CONSIDERED LATE AFTERWARDS.**

Late assignments will receive an automatic 20% deduction.
Note: Assignments must be submitted in order they are assigned. For example – the Word Study assignment will not be accepted until the Text Critical Assignment has been submitted.
The student may be asked to “step outside” during the portion of class in which the “late assignment” is discussed.
The “late assignment” must be submitted within one week of the original due date unless special exceptions are made.
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.

The written assignments are:
- Textual Criticism Assignment (See “Text Crit Assignment Handout”)
- Word Study Assignment (See “Word Study Assignment Handout”)
- Sentence Diagram Assignment (See “Sentence Diagram Assignment Handout”)
- Semantic Structure (See “Semantic Structure Assignment Handout”)
- Response to Webster (See “Webster Response Handout”)

Write an Exegesis Paper of 3000-4500 words (strictly enforced) on a passage in which you systematically analyze a complete passage of the Greek text from Galatians or Philippians.

LATE EXEGESIS PAPERS WILL RECEIVE A TWO-GRADE PENALTY. ANY STUDENT WHO DOES NOT SUBMIT AN EXEGESIS PAPER WILL FAIL THE COURSE.
See “Exegesis Paper Handout”

Submit a Reading Report for all required reading. “Reading Report Form” will be provided.
Grade Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textual Criticism</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Study</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Diagram</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Structure</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Webster Response”</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Report</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exegesis Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Note Regarding Participation: Class participation is expected and assumed. Failure to adequately participate in class may result in a 5-10% deduction from your final course grade.

Final semester letter grades will be assigned as follows:
- A+ 97% and up
- A  93%
- A-  90
- B+ 87%
- B  83%
- B- 80
- C+ 77%
- C  73%
- C- 70
- D+ 67%
- D  63%
- D- 60
- F below 60

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.

No visitors will be allowed in the class without the express permission (at least one-week in advance) of the Professor.

Regarding Extension Requests:
An extension of time for an assignment will be rarely granted. Late submissions are accepted, as are partial ones. But, if an unavoidable (as determined by me) circumstance occurs that delays the submission of an assignment, the student may request an extension from me.

Any student requesting a “last-minute” extension (within 1-week of deadline) will be required to demonstrate the work done on the assignment prior to the extension request. An extension request may not be granted, even in the event of an “unavoidable last-minute circumstance” if an appropriate amount of progress (determined by me) on the assignment has not been made.

The Byington: My “Byington” is Blaine Boyd. He is well equipped to assist you in navigating through the assignments. Blaine will have “office/workshop” hours that will be designed to assist in helping you understand the concepts. These are not “one-on-one” tutoring opportunities, but will often be “group workshops.” Blaine is not obliged to make his schedule fits yours. The out of class assistance is limited to either my office hours or Blaine’s workshop offerings. The Byington can be an enormous help – you are encouraged to use this resource.

And lastly…

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. We are custodians of the message of Scripture, nothing else. 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, those who attempt to explain and proclaim the Revelation of God given in His Word, stand in a position of great responsibility and daunting liability. 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.

Soli Deo gloria