NT 630 EXEGESIS OF PHILIPPIANS
Aída Besançon Spencer

Through comparison with other New Testament letters, Paul’s unique relationship and message to the Philippians will be discovered. The course also examines the historical context of the letter. Major emphases are the translation, exegesis, and application of the Greek text of the Letter to the Philippians.

GENERAL GOALS
This course addresses the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Mission statement by:
1. encouraging students to become more knowledgeable of the structure and theology of the Letter of Philippians in its historical milieu and more competent in using language, interpretative, and application skills learned in NT 502 and Greek 1 & 2 (mission goal 1). Students will be encouraged to become creative, original, careful scholars who employ primary source materials and who allow their conclusions to flow from a careful and accurate reading of the text and to further an enjoyment and awe of God and of the New Testament.
2. introducing students to the Christian scholarship issues in Philippians (mission goal 2).
3. helping students mature in their character, outlook, conduct, relationships, and involvement in society by the teacher’s model, class dialogue, mentoring opportunities and prayer (mission goal 4).
4. providing resources and strategies that will lead to effective local and global ministry, mission, evangelism, and discipleship as evident in Philippians (mission goals 3, 5, 6).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Skim read Acts and all of Paul’s letters in English.

2. Read Philippians in Greek (10%). (Use a word list and a grammar book. Do not use an analytical lexicon!) (4% grade - translation, 5% - quiz) All students are required to take the quiz and have a passing grade. Remedial work is possible. 10% penalty if second quiz not taken.

3. Keep a journal of insights and questions encountered in reading Philippians. Completion of all English reading assignments affects in-between grades. Book review is 1% of grade. Th. M. students need to read and complete an additional book review (book must be 250+ pp.)

4. Hand in an original historical context study (20%) (Sept. 24, grace 9/28, 9 a.m. professor’s home) (3-6 pp.) and “character”/thematic study and analytical outline of Philippians (20%) (1 p. each) (Oct. 1, grace 10/5, 9 a.m. professor’s home). Papers may be re-written, if both drafts and original cover sheet included up to week 8, Nov 5.

5. Complete an 8-12 page exegesis paper (50%) (Th. M.13-17 pp.). Update on research insights due on day passage is translated. Papers due by week 8 (Nov 5, grace 11/9, 9 a.m., professor’s home). Papers may be re-written, if both drafts and original cover sheet included, by Dec 3.
6. Attendance at every class session except for an emergency.

REQUIRED TEXTS

WEEKLY SESSIONS

Week 1 (Sept 17):
Introduction to course, procedures, requirements. Explain historical context study, character study, outline.

Assignments for next class: (1) As part of historical context study, read Acts, especially on Philippian ministry and as it fits into Paul’s overall ministry and all of Paul’s letters (Pastoral Epistles optional), especially Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians—the Prison Epistles. Complete historical context study of Philippians for next class.

Week 2 (Sept 24):

Assignments: (1) Rd. Polycarp’s Letter to Philippians.
(2) Complete “character”/thematic study and outline of Philippians for next class.
(3) Choose one passage in Philippians to study.
(3) Translate 1:12-26.
(4) Optional read chapters 1-2 Style: An Anti-Textbook.

Week 3 (Oct 1):
A. Translate 1:12-26.
B. Discuss 1:7-17. Historical context of letter. Overview of important events. The place of imprisonment. Events in Philippian ministry. When and from where was Philippians written? General information on prisons.

Assignments: (1) Read A. Besançon Spencer, Paul’s Literary Style, 51-2, 55-6, 60-2, 65-7 only after own historical context study is completed.
(3) Begin exegesis paper.

Week 4 (Oct 8):

History of Macedonia and Philippi. Archaeology of the City.

Assignments: (1) Translate 1:27-2:18.
(2) Read Paul’s Literary Style, 94-96 for sample textual study.
(3) Read ch. 1 Philippi.

Week 5 (Oct 12-16): READING WEEK - NO CLASSES

Week 6 (Oct 22):


B. What is the central message vs. the occasion for Paul’s Letter to the Philippians? What are the difficulties at Philippi? (small groups) Opportunity for questions on final paper.

Assignments: (1) Continue intensive exegetical study of one text in Philippians.
(2) Translate 2:19-3:1.
(3) Find clauses and do sentence flow of Phil. 2:5-8.

Week 7 (Oct 29):

A. Complete translation of Phil. 2:5-18. Is 2:6-11 a hymn?

B. Exposition of Phil. 2:5-11.

Assignments: (1) Read Paul’s Literary Style, 67-84, especially 75-81.
(2) Translate half of 3:2-4:3.
(3) Redone papers (assign. #4) need to be given to professor by next class. All exegesis papers due Week 8.

Week 8 (Nov 5):

A. Translate Phil. 2:19-3:1a. Who to esteem and imitate.

B. Discuss 3:11 ff. Is Philippians a composite of several letters?

C. Application. Paul’s opponents at Philippi (3:2-4:1).

Assignments: (1) Complete translation of 3:2-4:3 (23 verses). Prepare for quiz.
(2) Read ch.9 “Foot-race” in Gardiner, Athletics and also one additional book or several articles (at least 200 pp. of text) not used in exegesis paper. Write one page summary and analysis of the book(s) by last class.

Week 9 (Nov 9-13): READING WEEK - NO CLASSES

Week 10 (Nov 19):

A. Quiz on 3:2-4:3.

A. Translate Phil. 3:1b - 4:3.


Assignments: (1) Read Paul’s Literary Style, chs. 2, 4 & 5. Bring to class.
(2) Translate 4:4-23.
(3) Final (assign. # 5) redone paper due next class.
(4) Read “Literary Criticism” in N.T. Criticism and Interpretation.
(5) Bring self-evaluation sheets to class. Complete all reading.

Week 11: Thanksgiving- No classes Nov 26-27

Week 12 (Dec 3):

A. Translate Phil. 4:4-23. Rejoice. Conclusion.

B. What are “images” and what are some in Philippians?

C. The style of Philippians and the implications.

D. Review. Evaluation.
RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Commentaries


Maurice Jones. *The Epistle to the Philippians*. Westminster Commentaries. London: Methuen, 1918. BS 2705.166


Other Books


* Highly Recommended for purchase ** Required reading ^Potential book review