

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—Jacksonville, FL
NT 502, Interpreting the New Testament Syllabus (Spring 2012) (rev. 11.23.2011)

Professor: James P. Sweeney, Ph.D.
Dates: February 24-25; March 23-24; April 27-28
Times: Fridays: 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Chapel is 6:30–6:50 p.m.)
Saturdays: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Final paper: To be mailed and postmarked no later than May 25
Contact info: j.i.m_s@hotmail.com

I. Course Description

This course introduces students to interpretive principles, methods of interpretation (historical, literary, textual, lexical, grammatical, syntactical), and bibliographic resources for doing informed, biblically-faithful exegesis. Students prepare exegesis papers on the basis of the Greek text. Students must complete GL 502 before or during this course.

II. Course Relationship to the Curriculum

NT 502 is a required course for M. Div. students as well as students who are pursuing an M.A. in New Testament. This class serves as a prerequisite for Greek exegesis classes.

III. Course Objectives

Students who complete this class will:

- A. Learn a general method of interpretation applicable to the whole of the New Testament (henceforth NT), including how to
 - 1. Establish the historical and logical contexts of NT books
 - 2. Establish the original wording of specific texts of the NT through textual criticism
 - 3. Perform lexical, grammatical, semantic, and syntactical analysis on NT texts
 - 4. Draw upon historical and cultural backgrounds for illuminating the social, religious, and historical background assumed in the NT texts

- B. Be introduced to central issues related to interpreting specific portions of the NT, including
 - 1. Narrative portions of the NT, including the Gospels and the book of Acts
 - 2. Epistolary literature, including Paul's letters and the general letters
 - 3. The Apocalypse (i.e., book of Revelation)

- C. Be introduced to significant, broader interpretive issues that inform NT interpretation, including

1. The use of the Old Testament in the NT
2. The unity and diversity in the NT and the viability of NT theology
3. NT exposition and the contemporary church

D. Cultivate a greater ability to evaluate, in a discerning, critical, and yet charitable manner, the work of others who are formally engaged in the field of NT studies

These multifaceted objectives will be facilitated through in class instruction, assigned reading, homework projects, and formal written assignments.

IV. Course Texts

It is assumed that students own a copy of the following edition the Greek New Testament:

- E. Nestle, et al., (Nestle-Aland) *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). Commonly abbreviated as NA²⁷.

{Also helpful is Kurt Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament* (Fourth Revised Edition; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / New York: United Bible Society, 1993). Commonly abbreviated as UBS⁴.}

It is further assumed that students either own or have ready access to *both* of the following:

- W. Bauer, et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Commonly abbreviated as BDAG.

{Also helpful is B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994). A selection of readings will be taken from this volume. Abbreviated below as Metzger, *Textual Commentary*.}

A. Required texts:

As no one text covers adequately all the issues related to New Testament interpretation, the following texts are required for this course:

- Scot McKnight, ed., *Introducing New Testament Interpretation* (Guides to New Testament Exegesis; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990). Abbreviated below as McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*.
- Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2d ed.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006). Abbreviated below as Osborne, *Spiral*. Note that I'm assuming the 2d ed. below.
- Scot McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* (Guides to New Testament Exegesis; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988). Abbreviated below as McKnight, *Gospels*.

- D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (Sixth Edition; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic/Leicester: InterVarsity, 2007). Abbreviated as Carson, *Survey*.
- David Alan Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism: A Concise Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994). Abbreviated below as Black, *Textual Criticism*.

B. Texts and Software Useful for “Library Building”

- Donald A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996). Abbreviated below as Carson, *Fallacies*.
- J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992). Abbreviated as *DJG*.
- G. F. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993). Abbreviated as *DPL*.
- R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997). Abbreviated as *DLNT*.
- Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000). Abbreviated as *DNTB*.
- NOTE: The four InterVarsity volumes listed above are available electronically along with many other useful volumes as an affordable price in a package entitled *The Essential IVP Reference Collection 3.0* (<http://www.rejoicesoftware.com/ivp.htm>)

V. Course Requirements and Grading

A. *Reading* (11% of the course grade): Read the *assigned portions* of the course texts (McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*; McKnight, *Gospels*; Osborne, *Spiral*, 2d ed.; Black, *Textual Criticism*; and Metzger, *Textual Commentary*). See the attached reading report below. A report on the assigned reading is to be mailed to me with your final exegesis paper (see below).

B. Class Attendance, Class Preparedness and Quality of Interaction (9%)

C. *Completion and Submission of the Assigned Homework Projects ON THE DATE DUE* (40% of the course grade):

There are four homework projects (40% of the course grade collectively; 10% for each assignment). Unless a student’s work is totally unacceptable (for which no points can be given), each of the homework projects will receive a mark on a scale of 10 points: e.g. 10/10; 9.75/10; 9.5/10; 9.25/10; 9/10; 8.75/10; 8.5/10; 8.25/10; 8/10; 7.75/10; 7.5/10; 7.25/10; 7/10; etc.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE:

- [*TARDINESS*:] Failure to turn in any homework project by the date requested will result in *an automatic penalty*, to be assessed on the basis of the degree of tardiness in turning in the assignment (*ONE POINT PER DAY LATE*). *No assignment will be accepted that is more than one week late (seven days inclusive)*.
- [*CONSEQUENCES OF NOT SUBMITTING WORK*:] Failure to turn in any homework project will result in *no points* for the assignment.

The homework assignments are as follows:

1. Write up a two-page historical and logical contexts study, plus a one-page “charting” project on 1 Thessalonians (3 pages total along with cover page and bibliography), following the method set forth in class, and in the assigned reading of Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 36–45. Due the beginning of the second weekend. *A guide sheet will be posted on CAMS just prior to the first weekend.*
 2. Completion of a textual criticism exercise on 1 Thessalonians 2:7, determining which of the two variants—whether *ēpioi* (‘gentle’: e.g., NIV 1984) or *nēpioi* (‘young children’: e.g., TNIV and NIV 2011)—is more likely to be original, following the guidelines set forth in class and in the assigned readings in McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*; Metzger; and Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism*. Due the beginning of the second weekend. *A guide sheet will be posted on CAMS just prior to the first weekend.*
 3. Produce a Greek sentence flow of 1 Thess 5:16–22, following the guidelines set forth in McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 75–95. Due the beginning of the third weekend. *A guide sheet will be posted on CAMS just prior to the second weekend.*
 4. Perform a Gospel underlining assignment, following the guidelines set forth in McKnight, *Gospels*, 40–44. Due the beginning of the third weekend. *A guide sheet will be posted on CAMS just prior to the second weekend.*
- D. Term Exegesis Paper (40%): Produce an exegesis paper on 1 Thess 5:16–22, prepared in accordance with the methodology learned in our class sessions, reinforced in the required reading, and in strict adherence with the guidelines spelled out in the assignment guide sheet. *A guide sheet will be posted on CAMS approximately two weeks before the third weekend.* The completed exegesis is to be mailed to me, *postmarked no later than May 25* (The mailing address will be available in the posted guide sheet posted on CAMS).

THINGS TO NOTE: As with the homework projects (sec. V.C. above), failure to mail the term exegesis paper bearing a postmark no later than the date requested will result in a penalty assessed at a rate of three points deduction per day late. *Failure to turn in the term exegesis paper at all will disqualify a student from receiving a*

passing grade for NT 502 because the exegesis paper is central to evaluating a student's readiness to proceed to exegesis courses.

E. Grading Parameters: At the completion of the course students will receive a letter grade signifying the quality of his or her work. Grading designations will be as follows:

- A+, A, or A- = signifying degrees (+ to -) of *conspicuously excellent work*
- B+, B, or B- = signifying degrees (+ to -) of *more than adequate work*
- C+, C, or C- = signifying degrees (+ to -) of *adequate work*
- D+, D, or D- = signifying degrees (+ to -) of *unsatisfactory work*
- F = did not meet the *necessary requirements* of the course

VI. Course Administration

- A. *Class Attendance*: Given the foundational nature of this class, the limited class meetings, and the duration of each class session, it is *required* that students attend *each class portion* (i.e., Friday evening, Saturday a.m., Saturday p.m.). Students will not receive credit toward section V.B for any class portions missed.
- B. *Due Dates for Work and Late Penalties*: It is assumed that students will turn in their work at the time and on the dates requested. Penalties for failure to meet this expectation are spelled out in section V.
- C. *Assistance*: Electronic mail may be directed to me at j.i.m_s@hotmail.com

VII. Course Schedule

In our three weekends together we will cover approximately eleven (11) course segments. They are outlined below under the respective weekends.

- A. Weekend One (February 24-25, 2012): General Issues of Interpretation Applicable to the Whole of the NT
- *Segment 1*: Brief introduction to the course: hermeneutics and the interpretive process; introducing the New Testament—its nature, contents and relationship to the OT
 - *Segment 2*: The NT and contextual analysis—establishing the historical and logical contexts of NT books
 - *Segments 3 & 4*: From the general historical and logical contexts of NT books to the narrower context of a given passage—establishing the text the NT (NT textual criticism)

- B. Weekend Two (March 23-24, 2012): General Issues of Interpretation Applicable to the Whole of the NT continued // Introduction to Significant Issues Applicable to Specific Portions of the NT
- *Segment 5*: From the general historical and logical contexts to the narrower context of a given passage continued: An introduction to exegetical analysis—lexical, grammatical, semantic, and syntactical analysis
 - *Segment 6*: From the narrower exegetical context of a given passage to the broader historical-cultural context of a given passage—an introduction to the role of historical and cultural backgrounds for the study of the NT
 - *Segment 7*: NT interpretation and the Gospels; the Gospels and critical methods; special issues of debate—Gospel *genre*, the Synoptic problem, the relationship between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels, and the interpretation of Jesus' parables
- C. Weekend Three (April 27-28, 2012). Introduction to Central Issues Applicable to Specific Portions of the NT continued // Introduction to Synthetic Issues of the NT Interpretation
- *Segments 8*: NT interpretation and the book of Acts; special problems: the structure and purpose of Acts; the text of Acts; the speeches of Acts; the historicity of Acts.
 - *Segment 9*: NT interpretation and the Letters; issues of focus: the nature and purpose of letter writing in the ancient world; epistolary analysis of the NT letters; rhetorical analysis of the NT letters; the authenticity vs. pseudepigraphy of the NT letters
 - *Segment 10*: NT interpretation and the Letters continued; NT interpretation and the book of Revelation; the tri-fold literary nature of Revelation; discerning the book's structure; Revelation and the contemporary church
 - *Segment 11*: The use of the OT in the NT; Unity and diversity in the NT and the viability of NT theology; NT exposition and the contemporary church

VIII. Required Reading Related to the Class Segments

A. Required Reading Related to Class Segments Covered During Weekend One

- Regarding General Issues of Interpretation (Segment 1): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, Introduction; McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 15–19; and Carson, *Survey*, 33–37.
- Regarding Historical and Logical Analysis (Segment (2): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, ch. 1.

- Regarding Textual Criticism (Segments 3 & 4): Required reading: Black, *Textual Criticism*; McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 53–74; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 2d ed., 1–16 (posted on CAMS).

B. Required Reading Related to Class Segments Covered During Weekend Two

- Regarding lexical, grammatical, semantic, and syntactical analysis (Segment 5): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, chs. 2–4; McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 75–113.
- Regarding the role of historical and cultural backgrounds to the study of the NT (Segment 6): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, ch. 5; McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 21–51, 115–32.
- Regarding the interpretation of the Gospels (Segment 7): Required reading: McKnight, *Gospels*, 13–137; Osborne, *Spiral*, ch. 12, on “Parable”; and Carson, *Survey*, 41–68.
- Regarding the Book of Acts (Segment 8): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, ch. 7, on “Narrative”; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 2d ed., 222–36 (posted on CAMS); and Carson, *Survey*, 68–72.

C. Required Reading Related to Class Segments Covered During Weekend Three

- Regarding the Letters (Pauline and General) (Segment 9): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, ch. 13; and Carson, *Survey*, 15–32, 72–126.
- Regarding the Book of Revelation (Segment 10): Required reading: Osborne, *Spiral*, chs. 10 and 11, on “Prophecy” and “Apocalyptic”; Carson, *Survey*, 127–34.
- Regarding the use of the OT in the NT, the unity and diversity in the NT, and the viability of NT theology; NT exposition and the contemporary church (Segment 11): Required reading: McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 133–93; Osborne, *Spiral*, chs. 14, 15, 17 & 18, on “The Old Testament in the New Testament,” “Biblical Theology,” “Homiletics I: Contextualization,” & Homiletics II: The Sermon”; and Carson, *Survey*, 37–40.

Assignment Check Sheet: To Keep Track of
Assignments and Assignment Due Dates

A. Assignments Due the Beginning of Weekend *Two* (Mar. 23, 2012) (10% each):

- _____ 1. Write up a two-page historical and logical contexts study, plus a one-page “charting” project on 1 Thessalonians (3 pages total along with cover page and bibliography), following the method set forth in class, and in the assigned reading of Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 36–45.
- _____ 2. Completion of a textual criticism exercise on 1 Thessalonians 2:7, determining which of the two variants—*ēpioi* (‘gentle’: e.g., NIV 1984) or *nēpioi* (‘young children’: e.g., TNIV and NIV 2011)—is more likely to be original, following the guidelines set forth in class and in the assigned readings in McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*; Metzger; and Black, *New Testament Textual Criticism*.

B. Assignments Due the Beginning of Weekend *Three* (April 27, 2012) (10% each):

- _____ 3. Produce a Greek sentence flow of 1 Thess 5:16–22, following the guidelines set forth in McKnight, ed., *Interpretation*, 75–95.
- _____ 4. Perform a Gospel underlining assignment, following the guidelines set forth in McKnight, *Gospels*, 40–44.

C. Term Exegesis Paper (40%):

- _____ Produce an exegesis paper on 1 Thess 5:16–22, prepared in accordance with the methodology learned in our class sessions, reinforced in the required reading, and in strict adherence with the guidelines spelled out in the assignment guide sheet. *A guide sheet will be posted on CAMS approximately two weeks before the third weekend.*

The completed exegesis paper is to be mailed to me, *postmarked no later than May 25* (The mailing address will be available in the guide sheet posted on CAMS).

REPORT on Assigned Reading (11 class points)

(To be mailed to me along with your exegesis paper)

(*Circle* Yes *ONLY* if you completed the assigned reading listed in each section)

1. Did you complete the assigned reading of Scot McKnight, ed., *Introducing New Testament Interpretation?* (ALL) (2.5 pts.)
Yes If NOT, what percentage of the reading did you complete? _____ %

2. Did you complete the assigned reading of Scot McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels?* (ALL) (2 pts.)
Yes If NOT, what percentage of the reading did you complete? _____ %

3. Did you complete the assigned reading of David Alan Black, *Textual Criticism?* (ALL) (1 pt.)
Yes If NOT, what percentage of the reading did you complete? _____ %

4. Did you complete the assigned reading of D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey* (15–134)? (2 pts.)
Yes If NOT, what percentage of the reading did you complete? _____ %

5. Did you complete the assigned reading of Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 2d ed., 1–16 and 222–36 (this portion of the assigned reading will be posted on CAMS). (.5 pt.)
Yes If NOT, what percentage of the reading did you complete? _____ %

6. Did you complete the assigned reading of Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral?* (2d ed.): Introduction, chs. 1–5, 7, 10–13, 14–15, 17–18. (3 pts.)
Yes If NOT, what percentage of the reading did you complete? _____ %