Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Charlotte  
OT/NT 795 Biblical Theology Seminar  
Spring 2011 Syllabus (Learning Covenant)

Course Instructor: Dr. Timothy S. Laniak

Class Meeting Times/Dates: Fridays: 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.; Saturdays: 8:30 – 4:30  
Feb. 18-19; Mar. 18-19; April 15-16

Syllabus Date: December, 2010

I. Course Description

A seminar on the primary themes and fundamental issues shared by the Old and New Testaments. After learning the scope and methodologies associated with the discipline, students produce a biblical theology paper on a ministry topic for formal critique.

II. Course Objectives

For students to:
1. Value the importance of understanding biblical concepts from a diachronic, developmental perspective.  
2. Understand the primary biblical themes that span biblical revelation.  
3. Understand the issues that dominate the secondary literature of the discipline of Biblical Theology.  
4. Produce a well-researched biblical theology paper—one that integrates and synthesizes historical and exegetical research.  
5. Bring their exegetical expertise to bear on significant ministry topics and themes.

These objectives follow directly from the first article in the GCTS Mission Statement, “to encourage students to become … competent in [Biblical] interpretation.”

III. Course Textbooks and Reading

Required textbook (read complete):
T. Laniak  
_Shepherds After My Own Heart_ (InterVarsity, 2006)

[If this book has been read for another course, please read  
Clarke, A. D., _Serve the Community of the Church._ (Eerdmans, 2000).]

Students will read from among the following five resources (see below):

J. Bright  
_The Kingdom of God_ (1953)  

W. Bruegemman  
_A Theology of the Old Testament_ (1997)  

G. E. Ladd  

N. T. Wright  
_Jesus and the Victory of God_ (1992)  

G. Vos  
_Biblical Theology of Old and New Testaments_ (1975)

Recommended resources:

G. Hasel  

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IV. Course Requirements and Grading

Requirements and Grading
The primary requirement for OT/NT 795 is a 25-page (maximum, excluding bibliography; 1” margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font) biblical-theology paper, due (electronically sent to all students) at midnight on Friday, April 8. All topics should be related to the Sacred Community (topic suggestions below; samples are in the library). The paper grade is worth 70% of the final grade for the course. This paper develops a biblical topic with exegetical depth (using Hebrew and Greek) from a diachronic perspective, including both Old and New Testament passages. Topics may be handled in a comprehensive nature (covering the whole Bible) or be limited to specific texts that are related by shared vocabulary, tradition, theme, or typology. Papers should demonstrate attention to lines of both continuity and discontinuity (especially across OT/NT). During the final class each paper will be reviewed by another student and the professor. The writer will respond to critique and general discussion of the topic. Limit contemporary issue/application to introductory page and final two pages maximum.

Please add a one page abstract of the paper’s content, summarizing the argument, noting the primary texts and secondary sources.

Papers for OT/NT 795 must demonstrate exegetical skill with sensitivity to the historical and literary contexts of cited passages; mature interpretive judgment with attention to the larger canonical context; clear thought, organization, and writing style; accurate grammar, syntax, and spelling. The SBL Handbook of Style is the authoritative guide for this paper. Please submit your paper to all students through CAMS. Title your Word or pdf document with your name first and the paper title following (Sample: NickLeone-circumcisionofheart-Sp11.doc).

A 2-3 page review of another student’s paper (assigned after the second weekend) along with an oral critique is worth 10% of the final grade. Students are also expected to engage with other students’ topics and read their papers for discussion prior to the final class.

15% of the final grade is for reading and reviewing books in the field of Biblical Theology. Read Laniak’s book (or alternative) completely and at least 500 pages from among the five sources listed before April 21 (including some from each). The more that can be read prior to the first class, the better. The grade for this portion of the course will reflect the amount and the timeliness of the reading. Please split your reading between OT and NT authors (preferably 100 pages from each). Students should keep a reading log (with pages and dates). A reading log will be turned in at the final class along with a one page critique of each source read. (The review for Shepherds After My Own Heart can be posted at www.shepherdleader.com/forums. Register with GCTS as part of your login name.)

5% of the final grade is for thoughtful participation in class.

Letter grades for all work assume the following standard guidelines:
A Excellent Work
B Good Work
C Satisfactory Work
D Inferior Work
F Failure

Note: All incompletes (I) and withdrawals (W) must meet the deadlines and guidelines of the Registrar’s office and the school catalogue.

(Pluses and minuses are given except in the case of A+)
V. Course Administration

Due Dates and Late Penalties
Because papers are being reviewed by faculty and students, it is extremely important that they be turned in on time. In light of this arrangement, a late penalty of a full letter grade per day will be assessed on a paper after April 8. Papers are to be submitted by email to the professor and all students.

Hard copy peer reviews are due with the oral critique and the reading reports on the final weekend of class, April 15-16. Late reviews and reading reports will be penalized one letter grade per week. Papers exceeding the page limit will be penalized 1/3 letter grade per page.

Assistance
I am available for interaction by email at tlaniak@gcts.edu and can see students by appointments made with Patricia Nielsen (pnielsen@gcts.edu).

VI. Course Outline

Reading due prior to Weekend 1:
Read 500 pages from the five general books on biblical theology

Weekend 1: Orientation to Biblical Theology
A Metaphor
Orientation to the field of Biblical Theology
Orientation to the course
Orientation to paper topic options

Reading due prior to Weekend 2: required: Laniak (complete); recommended: Hasel (both)

Weekend 2: Paper Topics on the Sacred Community*
Discussion of student proposals (student/professor led)
Presentation of models (developed by professor)

Weekend 3: Student Presentations and Critiques
Format: student critique -- faculty critique -- response and discussion

Written critique and reading report/review due during final class.

* Sample Paper Topics (ideas from previous seminars)
Metaphors for the Church: family/household, temple, priesthood, bride, vine, army, body
Nature/Mission of the Church (identity issues): election, remnant, light to the nations,
   Israel/church, church and new creation, status of backsliders, circumcision of the heart …
Issues in Church life: discipline, division, tithe, Sabbath/Sunday, elements of worship,
   gifts, rest, food, warfare, education, the place of aliens/outsiders, the poor …
Metaphors for leadership: image of God, shepherd, servant, steward, son …
Leadership roles: elder, prophet/evangelist, priest, king/ruler, sage/teacher,
   false prophets/teachers, warrior…
Leadership issues: plurality, gender, integrity, opposition, calling, vindication, compromise/concession, …
Leadership prototypes: Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, Jeroboam