

## READING THE NEW TESTAMENT (NT 6301)

Tuesday 4–6:40 PM

### MATS Educational Goals Supported by the Course

1. The student will identify and offer informed discussion of major issues in the interpretation of representative books of the New Testament (Gospels and Acts, Pauline letters, General Letters, Apocalypse).
2. The student will prepare papers, sermons, classes, and other assignments demonstrating familiarity with methods and principles of exegesis of the Old and New Testaments.

### Course Objectives

1. Students will increase their familiarity with the contents and literary structure of the Scriptures of the New Testament, the founding documents of the Christian Church.
2. Students will acquire the essential information needed to profit from the literary, historical, and theological exegesis of Scripture available in English.
3. Students will compile a bibliography of works useful for the interpretation of Scripture in personal study and in the preparation of sermons and classes.

### Required Texts

1. A recent translation of the Bible (e.g., ESV, NRSV, RSV, NASB, REB, NIV, NJB). Two excellent tools for study are the *HarperCollins Study Bible* and the *NIV Study Bible*, which give the reader rapid access to current mainline Protestant/academic and evangelical lines of interpretation, respectively.
2. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (3d ed., Fortress)
3. Jerry L. Sumney, *Steward of God's Mysteries: Paul and Early Church Tradition* (Eerdmans)
4. Recommended reading:
  - a. Jonathan Reed, *HarperCollins Visual Guide to the New Testament: What Archaeology Reveals about the First Christians* (HarperCollins)
  - b. A collection of essays available for individual duplication in the David Worley Library. (See the detailed list on the reading schedule below.)
5. Recommended tools for study:
  - a. The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> ed.), for consultation of both the Greek text of the New Testament (if applicable) and the full marginal references to parallel passages.
  - b. Kurt Aland, *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (American Bible Society); also available in Greek and Greek-English editions as *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*.
  - c. For definition of various terms introduced in the course, a general dictionary (Webster's, American Heritage, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, etc.) or a specialized dictionary such as Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*.

## Course Requirements

1. Prompt attendance at all scheduled meetings of the class, completion of assigned reading, and informed participation in class discussion. The student should note that the reading assignment includes consultation of the Scripture references in the secondary discussion. Each student is allowed one free absence in the course of the semester without grade penalty. Absence beyond this may result in the reduction of the course grade by one letter per additional absence; in this connection, three tardies will be treated as one absence.

2. Each week, *no later than the midnight preceding each class meeting*, each student will email to the instructor at least **two (2) quotations** from the reading assignment in Johnson, each quotation conveying a *point significant for the interpretation of the NT book under consideration that week*. The student may also include in the email comments or questions raised by the week's preparation, which the instructor will consider for discussion in class.

3. Preparation of two (2) brief **essays** (2 pp. double-spaced) identifying the aim/thesis of a book of the NT and showing how each section of the book contributes to or develops this aim/thesis, and two (2) **oral presentation** of ten (10) minutes each based on these essays to the class during the week the NT book is scheduled for consideration (see the Schedule below). In preparation for this assignment, the student should plan to carefully review the reading assigned for this NT book and reread the NT book itself as many times as needed to discern its principal aim/or thesis and see how each of its parts furthers this. The list of "Focal NT Texts" provided in course may be used as a starting point for the student's attempt to identify the thesis that provides coherence to the NT book. The student will prepare and present:

- one (1) essay and oral presentation on a Gospel; and
- one (1) essay and oral presentation on another book of the NT (except Philemon, 2 Peter, 2 or 3 John, or Jude).

To satisfy the requirement, a student must submit via email a draft of the paper one (1) week in advance of the session at which the NT book is scheduled to be discussed and prepare the oral presentation in the intervening week.

4. A semester writing assignment to be completed and turned in during the week scheduled for final examinations (i.e., by 4:30 PM on Thursday, May 10). The assignment is a critical review (7–9 pp. in length) of Jerry L. Sumney's book *Steward of God's Mysteries* (Eerdmans). The review must cite at least three (3) of the other works assigned for the class and employ a substantive point from them in the evaluation of one of the book's principal theses. The general sort of reading appropriate to a critical review is fully discussed in Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren, *How to Read a Book*. Michael Gorman's *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* is a useful guide to interpreting biblical literature specifically. Helpful models for the assignment can be found by consulting the reviews and review essays appearing in the journals *First Things*, *Pro Ecclesia*, and *Touchstone*, or in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* and other specialized journals available for consultation in the David Worley Library.

5. Plagiarism and Citation of Sources: Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work as your own and is a form of theft. This includes material composed by other students, purchased from an online paper mill, or copied from published books and articles or from the Internet. If in any assignment you employ material written by

someone else, you must give the author proper credit, documenting the source with an appropriate citation and marking any words directly quoted with quotation marks (or with indentation if four or more lines are quoted). Failure to appropriately credit the sources you use will result in a reduction in your grade for the assignment in question and/or the requirement that you revise the assignment. Intentionally representing another person's work as your own will be grounds for academic discipline, including your possible dismissal from the School. For more information on how to acknowledge sources properly and avoid plagiarism, refer to the School's "Guide to Written Work" ([http://www.austingrad.edu/images/Resources/student/guide\\_for\\_written\\_work.htm](http://www.austingrad.edu/images/Resources/student/guide_for_written_work.htm)).

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Required reading is in **bold type**, recommended reading in plain type. Collections of essays by Nils Dahl are abbreviated as follows:

JMEC	=	<i>Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church</i> (1976)
SP	=	<i>Studies in Paul</i> (1977)
JTC	=	<i>Jesus the Christ</i> (1991); this collection incorporates Dahl's <i>Crucified Messiah</i> (1974)

Tuesday, January 16: **NO CLASS MEETING** (campus closed due to inclement weather)

Tuesday, January 23: **How to Read the New Testament**

The New Testament as Literary Composition, as Historical Source, and as Norm for Christian Faith, Preaching, and Discipleship

**Johnson 1–136, 547–52**

Tuesday, January 30: **The Pauline Mission and the Pauline Corpus; Philemon**

**Johnson 227–48, 337–46**

Tuesday, February 6: **Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians and Philippians**

**Johnson 249–88, 325–36**

Tuesday, February 13: **Paul's Letters to the Corinthians**

**Johnson 249–88, 325–36**; Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth," SP 40–61

Tuesday, February 20: **Paul's Letters to the Galatians and Romans**

**Johnson 289–324**

Recommended: John Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians as a Test Case," *Journal for the Study of the NT* 31 (1987): 73-93; Dahl, "Missionary Theology in the Letter to the Romans," SP 70–94

Tuesday, February 27: **Paul's Letters to Colossians, "Ephesians," 1–2 Timothy, Titus**

**Johnson 347–402**

Tuesday, March 6: **Paul, the Fourfold Gospel, and Jesus**

**Johnson 553–56**

Recommended: Dahl, "Anamnesis: Memory and Commemoration in Early Christianity," JMEC 11–29; Dahl, "The Crucified Messiah," JTC 27–47; E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993)

Tuesday, March 13: **NO CLASS MEETING** (Spring Break)

Tuesday, March 20: **The Gospel: According to Mark**

**Johnson 143–164**; Dahl, "The Purpose of Mark's Gospel," JMEC 52–65

Tuesday, March 27: **The Gospel: According to Matthew**

**Johnson 165–186**

Recommended: Krister Stendahl, “*Quis et Unde?* An Analysis of Matthew 1–2,” *The Interpretation of Matthew* (ed. Graham Stanton), 56–66; Dale Allison, “Structure, Biographical Impulse, and the *Imitatio Christi*,” *Studies in Matthew*, 135–155

Tuesday, April 3: **The Gospel: According to Luke, and Acts**

**Johnson 187–226**; Dahl, “The Purpose of Luke–Acts,” JMEC 87–98

Tuesday, April 10: **The Synoptic Question (a.k.a. “Synoptic Problem”)**

**Mark Goodacre, “Fatigue in the Synoptics,” *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998): 45-58**

Recommended: Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze* (2001), [www.archive.org/details/synopticproblemw00good](http://www.archive.org/details/synopticproblemw00good)

Tuesday, April 17: **The Letters and Gospel of John**

**Johnson 465–506**

Recommended: Paul Minear, “The Original Functions of John 21,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 (1983): 85–98; Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple* (2007), esp. 9–124, 207–270

Tuesday, April 24: **Hebrews and General Letters** (except Johannine Letters); **The Apocalypse/Book of Revelation**

**Johnson 405–460, 507–24**

Recommended: Richard Bauckham, “Pseudo-Apostolic Letters,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988): 469–494

Tuesday, May 2: **The New Testament Canon and the Faith of the Christian Church**

**Johnson, 525–546**

**Eugene Lemcio, “The Unifying Kerygma of the NT,” *Journal for the Study of the NT* 33 (1988): 3–17; 38 (1990): 3–11 (reprinted in Lemcio, *The Past of Jesus in the Gospels* [1991]: 115–131, 158–162)**

Thursday, May 10

Critical review of Jerry L. Sumney’s book *Steward of God’s Mysteries* due, emailed as attachment to [peterston@austingrad.edu](mailto:peterston@austingrad.edu).