NT502: Interpretation of the New Testament

Spring 2013  
TTh 1:00-2:20  
3 credit hours

Instructor: Walter Wilson, CST264, wtwilso@emory.edu

Teaching assistants: John Boyles (john.boyles@emory.edu), Johann Choi (johann.choi@emory.edu), Mandy Hollman (mehollm@emory.edu), Chris Holmes (ctholme@emory.edu), Jonathan Potter (jonathan.potter@emory.edu), John Quant (jquant@emory.edu), Mike Suh (mksuh@emory.edu)

Description: This course is the second half of a two-semester introduction to the study of the New Testament, concentrating on historical, theological, and methodological issues. Our overall aim is to facilitate an engagement with Scripture that is not only critical and creative but also germane to Christian theology and ministry. Contributing to this aim are three complementary goals: (1) to achieve a working knowledge of the content and characteristics of the New Testament texts; (2) to develop skills for interpreting these texts as evidence for the beliefs and practices of early Christian communities; (3) to explore some of the issues involved when these texts are appropriated by contemporary Christian communities. In the second semester, we concentrate on the second and third goals, building on your work in the first semester. Of the seven general objectives identified for the M.Div. program in the Candler Catalog, this course relates most directly to the sixth, namely, to gain “skills in critical and imaginative thinking, responsible interpretation, and effective communication” (page 20). In developing these skills, we will be particularly attentive to issues of methodology, argumentation, and hermeneutics.

Structure: This year NT502 is being offered as a “blended” course, which means that it will combine traditional classroom instruction with an online learning component:

- All lectures will be available online at the course’s Blackboard site. Readings and handouts for the course can also be found at the site, as well as discussion boards, where students can post questions and comments about the lectures. Prof. Wilson will be monitoring the discussion boards on a regular basis. For technical support in accessing these course components, contact Bo Adams (rmadams@emory.edu).

- Each student in the course will be assigned to a colloquy group, which will meet for in-class sessions on either Tuesdays or Thursdays at 1:00-2:20. Each group will have about 12 students and be led by a graduate teaching assistant. Group and room assignments will be posted before the end of the Add-Drop period.
Textbooks:


All texts are available for purchase in the Candler bookstore; they can also be found on reserve in the Pitts Reserve Room. Students are also encouraged to consult Kate L. Turabian et al., *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (7th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) [Pitts Reference Room: LB2369.T8 2007]. This book, a standard reference work in the humanities and social sciences, includes basic information on citation practices (footnotes, bibliographies, etc.), academic style (punctuation, abbreviations, etc.), and – unique to the seventh edition – a major and systematic section on research and writing.

Requirements:

1. Students are responsible for all readings specified in the Course Schedule.

2. Attendance at all colloquy sessions is expected and will be recorded.

3. Given the interest in activating each student’s facility with the theory and practice of biblical interpretation, as well as our goal of learning better how to participate in interpretive communities, preparation and participation are essential for the success of the weekly colloquy sessions. In addition to the exercises listed below, your teaching assistant will assign several short written assignments designed to assist your work both on the exegetical exercises (e.g., leading discussion of a specific question) and on the exegesis papers (e.g., writing out a provisional thesis statement + outline and presenting it in class).

4. You will be asked to write six 1-page exegetical exercises (which will also provide material for colloquy discussion), each of which explores a different aspect of Luke 22:15-20. Papers should be single spaced, Times 12 point, 1" margins. Each paper should include both a **description** of the most important findings of the exercise and a critical **analysis** of the possible significance of these findings for the exegesis of the passage. Particular attention should be paid to the different interpretive perspectives and possibilities that emerge as a result of conducting the exercise, with a view to how these might inform the composition of an exegesis paper. Note that all materials necessary for completing the assignments can be found at the course’s Blackboard site.

**Exercise 1** (due 1/22 or 24): identify some of the major variations in the following modern translations of this passage and suggest what significance they may have for interpretation:
Exercise 2 (due 1/29 or 31): using an unabridged NRSV concordance, research three key words in the passage; report and evaluate the most significant of your findings.

Exercise 3 (due 2/5 or 7): using the Throckmorton synopsis, identify both major and minor differences between this passage and the version in Mark, and suggest what significance they may have for interpretation.


You are asked to write six 1-page exegetical exercises, each dealing with a different aspect of 1 Timothy 5:3-16. Papers should be single spaced, Times 12 point, 1” margins. Each paper should include both a description of the most important findings of the exercise and a critical analysis of the possible significance of these findings for the exegesis of the passage. Particular attention should be paid to the different interpretive perspectives and possibilities that emerge as a result of conducting the exercise, with a view to how these might inform the composition of an exegesis paper. Note that all materials necessary for completing the assignments can be found at the course’s Blackboard site.
Exercise 1 (due 3/19 or 21): review the parallels for this passage given in Wilson’s *Pauline Parallels*. Choose three of these parallels and discuss their significance for the interpretation of the passage.


(6) You will be responsible for writing two 7-page papers. These papers should be double spaced, Times 12 point, 1” margins. Please do not include a title page or bibliography; please use footnotes rather than endnotes. Each paper should draw on information drawn from relevant course readings, lectures, exercises, and discussions in a selective and strategic way, and should be organized around a well-crafted thesis statement, in support of which you marshal various exegetical arguments and observations.

Paper 2 (due 5/3): an exegesis of 1 Timothy 5:3-16, concentrating on how an understanding of its possible meaning for first-century Christians can inform its possible meaning for contemporary Christians.

Note that for the second paper you are expected to work more independently through the basic exegetical steps covered in the first half of the semester (e.g., concordance work). Toward this end, several commentaries on 1 Timothy have been placed on reserve for your use.

Preparing and submitting assignments: Each 1-page exegetical exercise should be submitted in class (hard copy) to your teaching assistant on the date on which it is due. The 7-page papers should be e-mailed to your teaching assistant before the deadlines specified using your Emory e-mail account so as to avoid spam filtering problems. Make sure that the paper attached to the e-mail is in Word format. Please use your last name as the title of the electronic document; also put your last name in the subject line of the e-mail.

An effort has been made to coordinate the assignments with the course readings and lectures. In order to get the most from the course, it is therefore recommended that you adhere to the following weekly steps:

1. **Read.** The first thing to do is to read the course readings and handouts (if any) assigned for the week. This will give you a basic orientation to the topics being covered.

2. **Listen.** Next, watch the online lectures. This will provide you with foundational information and tools for completing the assignments. Post any questions or comments you may have to the online discussion board. *Tip*: Print out the handouts (if any) and have them available when listening to the lecture.

3. **Write.** Write your 1-page exegetical exercise for the week. This offers you an opportunity to engage the material and express your own opinions.

4. **Discuss.** Come prepared to your colloquy session to discuss what you learned in writing the exercise, as well as any questions you might have regarding your work for the week. Think of the colloquy as both a consultation group and a venue for collaborative inquiry.

5. **Plan.** As you are writing and discussing the exegetical exercise for the week, think about how you will relate the content of the exercise to your 7-page exegesis paper. The sooner you start planning the paper the better it will be.
Grades: All written assignments will receive a letter grade. Grades will be determined as follows: colloquy participation (10%), exegetical exercises (30%), 7-page papers (30% each). In grading your assignments, the teaching assistants will be guided by the following general expectations:

- The paper is clearly written. The paper is reasonably free of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. There is a logical flow of thought from one sentence to the next.
- The paper is organized in a coherent fashion. It is apparent how different observations and arguments in the paper relate to one another.
- The paper responds fully and responsibly to the specific questions and directives given for the assignment, drawing on designated resources as necessary.
- The evidence supplied in support of the paper’s principal argument(s) is sufficient and relevant.
- The paper offers a balance of description (observational comments) and analysis (critical interpretation).
- The paper is written entirely or almost entirely in the student’s own words. Long quotations and extensive paraphrasing are avoided. When engagement with secondary sources is in order, complete and consistent documentation is provided.

Additional specific expectations for the 7-page papers will be circulated and discussed later in the semester. Note also the following:

(1) All exercises and papers submitted late for whatever reason will receive no comments and a one-point grade reduction (e.g., from a B+ to a B). All exercises and papers submitted more than one week late for whatever reason will receive no comments and a two-point grade reduction (e.g., from a B+ to a B-). All exercises and papers submitted more than two weeks late for whatever reason will receive no comments and a three-point grade reduction (e.g., from a B+ to a C+). Please let your teaching assistant know in advance if you will be submitting an assignment late.

(2) You must submit all exercises and papers by the end of the semester in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

(3) For policies regarding grades, incomplete work, inclusive language, and the school’s honor code, see pp. 83, 85, 100-3, and 130-31 of the Candler catalog.
Note: In order to comply with standards for institutional accreditation established by the Association of Theological Schools, electronic copies of your first exegesis paper will be made available to the registrar’s office. A select number of these papers will be reviewed by a committee of Candler faculty together with written assignments from other core courses. Because the purpose of this exercise is to assess the school’s curriculum and not individual student performance, student names will be removed from all papers before being reviewed by the committee, and no grades or evaluative comments will be included.

Course Schedule:

(Note: all readings are available on the course’s Blackboard site; all readings from books are also available in the Pitts Reserve Room)

I. The Practice of Scriptural Interpretation: Procedures, Methods, Tools

Week One

1/15 Plenary Session: Course Orientation (all students meet in CST252)


Reading: Douglas Bax, “The Bible and Apartheid,” Apartheid is a Heresy (ed. David Philip; Guildford: Lutterworth, 1983) 112-43

Online Lecture: The Rationale for Exegesis (3 parts)

Week Two

Reading: Throckmorton pp. v-xxvi

Reading: This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion, Part One (http://gatewayumc.org/pdf/hcfinal2.pdf)

Online Lecture: The Basics of Exegetical Research I (2 parts)

1/22 or 24 Colloquy Session: Exercise 1
Week Three


Online Lecture: The Basics of Exegetical Research II (3 parts)

1/29 or 31  Colloquy Session: Exercise 2

Week Four


Reading: O. Wesley Allen, “Theological Editing,” Reading the Synoptic Gospels (St. Louis: Chalice, 1999) 75-101

Online Lecture: Source Criticism

Online Lecture: Redaction Criticism

2/5 or 7  Colloquy Session: Exercise 3

Week Five

Reading: Pheme Perkins, “Form Criticism,” Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 96-121


Online Lecture: Form Criticism

Online Lecture: Narrative Criticism

2/12 or 14  Colloquy Session: Exercise 4
Week Six


Online Lecture: Sociological Criticism

Online Lecture: Final Recommendations for Writing an Exegesis Paper

2/19 or 21 Colloquy Session: Exercise 5

Week Seven


Online Lecture: Printed Resources for NT Study (2 parts)

2/26 or 28 Colloquy Session: Exercise 6

Week Eight


Online Lecture: Electronic Resources for NT Study

Online Lecture: The “Art” of Biblical Interpretation

3/7 Paper 1 Due (e-mailed to your TA no later than 5:00 pm)

No Colloquy Session This Week

3/11-15 No Class: Spring Break
II. The Contexts of Scriptural Interpretation: Theological, Historical, and Cultural Issues

Week Nine


Online Lecture: Reading 1 Timothy 5 in Context (3 parts)

3/19 or 21 Colloquy Session: **Exercise 1**

Week Ten


Online Lecture: Hermeneutics: Philosophical and Theological Priorities (2 parts)

3/26 or 28 Colloquy Session: **Exercise 2** (please bring your Bibles to class)

Week Eleven


Online Lecture: Biblical Hermeneutics: Models of Scripture (2 parts)

4/2 or 4 Colloquy Session: **Exercise 3**
Week Twelve

**Reading**: Kling, Introduction, chapters 1-2

**Online Lecture**: Patristic Hermeneutics

**Online Lecture**: Roman Catholic Hermeneutics

4/9 or 11  Colloquy Session: **Exercise 4**

Week Thirteen

**Reading**: Kling, chapters 3-5

**Online Lecture**: Medieval Hermeneutics

**Online Lecture**: Lutheran Hermeneutics

**Online Lecture**: Anabaptist Hermeneutics

4/16 or 18  Colloquy Session: **Exercise 5**

Week Fourteen

**Reading**: Kling, chapters 6-8

**Online Lecture**: African American Hermeneutics

**Online Lecture**: Pentecostal Hermeneutics

**Online Lecture**: Feminist Hermeneutics

4/23 or 25  Colloquy Session: **Exercise 6**

*complete course evaluation forms*

5/3  **Paper 2 Due** (e-mailed to your TA no later than 5:00 pm)