

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

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NT 213-3 Exegesis of Colossians and Philemon Fall 2012

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the study and interpretation of the Greek text of Paul's letter to the Colossians and Philemon. In addition to the careful translation of the text, this exegetical study will cover the question of Pauline authorship of Colossians, the similarities between Colossians and Ephesians, the question of religious syncretism or heresy in Colossians, cosmological language in Colossians, slavery in the New Testament, the slave flight interpretation of Philemon, and the interpretation of Philemon in Christian history. The format of the course will be classroom presentations by the professor, combined with reading and translation from the Greek text, discussion of readings and a group presentation.

Each class session will be held in Schlegel 121 from 6:00 to 8:50 pm.

Course Textbooks

Primary

Dunn, James D. G., *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Thompson, Marianne Meye. *Colossians and Philemon*, The Two Horizons Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Glancy, Jennifer. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. New York: Oxford, 2002.

Johnson, Matthew V., James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams. *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

Secondary

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Letter to Philemon*, Anchor Bible Commentary. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Harrill, J. Albert. *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.

Hendriksen, William. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.

Intended Major Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, each student will be able to:

- Discuss the linguistic, literary, cultural, and historical background of the letter
- Summarize the content of Colossians and Philemon and its theological significance
- Review the current debate on the message of Colossians and Philemon
- Examine slavery in the Greco-Roman world and interpretive problems related to slave texts in the New Testament

Course Requirements

1. Perfect or near perfect attendance, full and careful preparation for each class meeting, participation in class discussion and reading both the Dunn and Thompson commentaries. (worth 10% of final grade).
2. Critical book review (five to seven pages double-spaced) of Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*. See guide to writing a critical book review at end of syllabus. Due Nov 20 (worth 25% of final grade).
3. Students are required to maintain an exegetical notebook (preferably in a three ring binder) for the course that contains the following sections: (a) translations of assigned passages in Colossians and Philemon. The student should be prepared to read and translate the text in class on the date on which it appears on the syllabus; (b) one paragraph summaries of commentary reading for each class session. I will check these at the beginning of each class; and (c) a section of notes taken from class lectures and discussion. Due on Oct 23 and Dec 4. (Notebook worth 40% of final grade).
4. Exegetical paper @ 8 to 10 pages in length (@ 2400 words). Due Dec 12. Text to be selected in consultation with the professor (worth 25% of final grade). See attached guide to writing an exegesis paper.

Course Schedule

Please note: Students should come to class having already read carefully through the material to be introduced in a given class session. Schedule subject to adjustment as circumstances require.

September

11 Introduction to Colossians

- Read Dunn 19-42; Thompson 1-12; Hendriksen 5-32

18 Col 1:3-23

- Read Dunn 43-112; Thompson 13-39 and translate verses 10-20

25 Col 1:24-2:5

- Read Dunn 113-135; Thompson 40-68 and translate 1:24-2:4

October

2 Col 2:6-15

- Read Dunn 136-170 and translate verses 6-15

9 Col 2:16-23

- Read Dunn 171-198 and translate verses 16-23

16 Research and Study (no class)

23 Col 3:1-17

- Read Dunn pgs 199-241; Thompson pgs 68-87 and translate verses 1-10

30 Col 3:18-4:18

- Read Dunn pgs 242-290; Thompson pgs 88-109 and translate 4:1-10

November

6 Slavery in the New Testament

- Read Scott Bartchy, “Slavery in the New Testament” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 65-73
- Group 1 presentation: Slavery and the Book of Colossians

13 Slavery in the New Testament

- Read Johnson et al., 47-90, 101-120; Harrill 165-192

20 Introduction to Philemon

- Read Dunn 299-309; Johnson et al., 11-45, 121-156
- Group 2 Presentation: Slavery and the Book of Philemon

27 Phlm 1-12

- Read Dunn 310-330; Thompson 205-227 and translate verses 2-12

December

4 Phlm 13-25

- Read Dunn 330-349; Fitzmyer 110-127 and translate verses 13-22

LPTS Policy Statements

Please refer to the following policy statements that govern academic life at Louisville Seminary.

1. Use of Inclusive Language

Inclusive Language:

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible’s images for God. See for further assistance,

http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

2. Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another’s language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can

find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

3. Special Accommodations

Special Accommodations:

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

4. Use of Electronic Devices

All cell phones should be turned off during class unless waiting for an important call, in which case you should let the professor know ahead of time. When using computers in class do not access the Internet unless specifically for purposes relevant to the course. Checking of email or Facebook will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will adversely affect one's class participation grade.

Course Bibliography

- Arnold, Clinton. *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Bartchy, S. Scott. *First-Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:21*. Dissertation Series, Society of Biblical Literature, no. 2. Missoula, MT: The Society of Biblical Literature, 1973.
- _____. "Slavery." in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Barth, Markus and Helmut Blanke. *The Letter to Philemon*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Blount, Brian, Clarice Martin, Emerson Powery, and Cain Hope Felder. *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007.
- Brown, Raymond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1997.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984.
- Callahan, Allen D. *Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1997.
- DeMaris, Richard E.. *The Colossian Controversy: Wisdom in Dispute at Colossae*. JSOT Series, 96. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994.
- Dunn, James D. G., *The Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Felder, Cain Hope. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph. *Philemon*. The Anchor Bible Commentary. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Glancy, Jennifer. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. New York: Oxford, 2002.

- Johnson, Matthew V., James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams. *Onesimus Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.
- Keck, Leander et al., eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. 11, *Second Corinthians - Philemon*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Lohse, Eduard. *Colossians and Philemon: A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*. Translated by William Poehlmann and Robert J. Harris. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971.
- Moule, C. F. D. *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*. Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- Nordling, John G. *Philemon*. Concordia Commentary. St Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2004.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *Colossians and Philemon*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word Books, 1982.
- Thompson, Marianne Meye. *Colossians and Philemon*, The Two Horizons Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Critical Book Review Format

The critical book review provides an assessment of a text and an interaction of the ideas of that text with the ideas of others in the field and with your own analysis. The review should be five to six pages, typed (10-12 point text) and double-spaced. Divide the review into the following sections:

1. Finding the golden thread: Summarize the argument in about two pages. Focus on the main thesis of the book and how the author proceeds to argue for that thesis as the book progresses. Lengthy summaries are unnecessary. Look for the links between ideas and how those ideas move the argument along and result in a conclusion. In the case of an edited book, discover the rationale for grouping these articles together and show how, taken together, they provide a perspective or contrasting perspective on a particular topic. While you may compare points of view in your account, do not summarize each article individually.
2. Internal critique: Show how the book holds together. Is it well-organized? Is the argument sound? Is it well-researched and documented? Are the conclusions warranted? Does the writing style fit the content? Internal analysis of the text should be done in one to two pages.
3. External critique: What are others in the field saying about this topic? Bring into dialogue the argument of the book with other voices. A book review off the web might be helpful. This section should take about one page.
4. Your critique: On the basis of your knowledge and experience, what is your opinion of this work? How will the understanding this text has given you aid in your own thinking and action? Use about one page for this analysis.
5. Questions for discussion. Compose five questions that will stimulate discussion on the issues raised in the readings. (Frances S. Adeney)