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NT 520 Introduction to the New Testament

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NT 520 Introduction to the New Testament
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Welcome to NT520Exl. I am looking forward to this course. We will have an opportunity to read the New Testament together, to explore the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts out of which the New Testament arose, and to examine the literary features of the text. It will be our goal to draw all of this together into a coherent way of understanding and proclaiming the New Testament in the contexts where we live and work.

Online Chats: There will be 2 online chats during the semester. These are synchronous chats that will occur on Monday evenings. There will be 2 time slots available, and I will do my best to accommodate students and their schedules. A week or two before the course begins, I will send out an email with the time slots and ask you to indicate which ones work best for you.

Office Hours: I will be keeping virtual office hours on Thursday mornings from about 9am to 11:30am Eastern Time. During this time I will be logged into the system and will be responding to all of your postings (in the order in which they were received). I will also be checking on the class periodically throughout the week. However, Monday is an administrative day at the seminary and Friday is my writing/grading day, so I am not generally available to students on those days. I will let you know if I am going to be away during my office hours or for any extended time during the semester. Please let me know if you will be away for any extended periods as well. We can also arrange times to chat or to speak via telephone either during my office hours or by special appointment. Just let me know if you would like to set that up. Note: If you have an urgent matter, please flag your email with the word Urgent in the subject line.
Virtual Support Contact Information

For technical support, library research support, library loans and virtual media contact Information Commons: Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the Virtual program, contact Dale Hale: ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2393

Accessing Information Commons Materials

1. General Questions:
   a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm

2. Materials Requests:
   a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm

   b. Virtual Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.

   c. Virtual students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:
   a. Virtual students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:
   a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to
http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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Description: This is an introduction to the New Testament, its content, its context, and its interpretation. In the course of the semester, we will examine many of the individual books of the New Testament; the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts out of which the New Testament arose; various types of interpretative methods used to study the New Testament; and theological themes in the New Testament. We will work to draw this knowledge together into a means for thinking about the New Testament in our contemporary context.

Objectives: By the end of this course the student will be able to:
• give a broad account of the content of the individual New Testament writings;
• articulate the social and historical background out of which the New Testament arose;
• articulate how one’s beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
• identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts;
• identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy
those sources critically in New Testament study;
• probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
• demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and
• integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutic.

What Will this Course Be Like?
It will stretch you. You will most likely hear theories and interpretations that are new to you. This may require you to think carefully as you interact with scholars from traditions that are different than your own.
It will require 1200-1500 pages of reading. This course covers a lot of ground. As part of the course, you will read the whole New Testament; although, we will not talk about every book. You will also read an introduction to the New Testament, books on the historical context of the New Testament times, and books on interpretation. A lot of the reading – particularly the historical and interpretive works will be read at the beginning of the class. This will form a foundation for our work together over the rest of the semester.
It will be interactive. You will have the opportunity to discuss questions from each module with your team mates and with the class.
It will be useful. As you study the New Testament, you will have new insights that you will be able to use in your preaching, teaching, and conversation.

Guidelines
1. Assignments: All assignments are due by the stated due dates. These are outlined below for your reference. Late assignments will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day late. For example, a B paper turned in one day late becomes a B-, etc.
2. Postings: Postings in the Discussion Center and in your team folder should be limited to between 75 and 100 words.
3. Grammar: I expect us (myself included) to use proper English grammar at all times. This includes complete sentences, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. For assistance in this area, consult a standard style guide such as Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, and Theses* (11th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Poor grammar will be reflected in the final grade.
4. Discussion: A crucial element of this course is the dialog that we enter into with each other. All discussions are to be in the vein of encouragement, gentleness, patience, persistence, and hope. This does not mean that we will not challenge, confront, or question each other. It does mean that these things will be undertaken for the purpose of growth and stimulation to think and understand the subject at hand more deeply and more intimately.
Course Requirements:

**Preparation and Participation:** (35%) Students should prepare for each module by completing the reading and participating in group discussions. Your participation grade will be based on both quality of thought, reflection, and questions contributed as well as on quantity of responsiveness to your class and team mates. The participation grade will also reflect your attendance and participation in our online chats.

1. Students will be assigned to a **Team** consisting of four or five students. The Team will be the primary venue for discussion. Students will submit to their Team folder **Interaction Papers** that will initiate discussions among their team members over required reading. Please write 1 single spaced page (about 250 words -- 500 words MAX). Interaction papers are always due on Wednesdays by midnight P.T. (This should allow me to grade and respond to them on Thursday during my online office hours) Please write these in the body of the email rather than posting them as attachments. The interaction papers will have three parts:
   a. In part one students will write a few sentences that identify the subject of a particular reading and what is the **writer's thesis** or concern in relation to that subject.
   b. In part two students will briefly **identify one or two specific issues** raised in the reading that are important to them and briefly (in a few sentences) indicate why they think the issue(s) is(are) important to them.
   c. In part three students will raise **one or two questions** prompted by the reading that they would like their team to discuss.

2. Students will each week submit to their Team folder their **thoughts on at least two of the questions** raised by their team members or professor (100 words or less per posting). This is a minimum expectation. I encourage all Team members to strive to respond to all members of their Team each week.

3. Students will participate in particular **“Team Projects”** that are laid out in some modules. These are opportunities for guided discussion around particular texts and topics raised by the professor.

**Interpretive Assignments:** (3 x 10% = 30%) For (at least) three of the seven interpretive assignments, the student will prepare an interpretive assignment. Each close reading should be 750-1,000 words (3-4 pages). Post the interpretive assignments to the Office. Interpretive Assignments are NEVER accepted late. If you do not have it in on time, then you will have to do a different one. Remember you have seven opportunities to complete the necessary three assignments. Guidelines for writing interpretive assignments can be found in the Course Center in the Guidelines Folder.
**Final Comprehensive Essay Exam:** (35%) Exams are due on the Wednesdays of Finals Week by noon ET.

Grading:
Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):

A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives  
B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives  
C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives  
D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives  
F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (-) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C– = slightly below acceptable, etc.).

**Important Notes on My Grading Policies:**
1. Interpretive Assignments are NEVER accepted late.
2. Other late papers are marked down 1/3 of a letter grade per day late.
3. Poor grammar figures into the final grade.
4. Papers that are too long (over the word limit) or too short (under the word limit) are marked down. (I don't count words, so if you are over or under by 50 words that isn't going to matter, but if you have many pages or almost no pages, then you need to rewrite your paper before you submit it.)
5. Participation grades are based on quality and quantity of contribution.
6. You may complete as many of the 7 interpretive assignments as you would like (I take the 3 highest grades to count towards your final grade).
7. You may consult with me before turning in papers and projects to see if you are on the right track.

**Required Reading:**
The New Testament (RSV or NRSV; however, multiple translations are recommended)  

**Recommended Reading:**

**Schedule**

Module One:

- **Introduction and Historical Background**
  - February 11-23
  - Required Reading: deSilva
  - Recommended Reading: Luke Timothy Johnson, pp. 1-91

**Online Meeting: September 13**

- Time: Plan to spend 1 hour watching the introductory video; Plan to spend approx. 8-9 hours per week on reading for this module; Plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to deSilva; Plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and class mates; Plan to spend 1 hour in an online discussion on the 13th of September.

Special Notes: This module and the next module have the heaviest reading of the semester. It may take you more time than the 8-9 allotted hours. This will be compensated by less required reading time towards the middle and end of the semester. The intense reading and discussion will help us to lay a good foundation for the rest of the class. I am aware that the material you are reading is difficult, and it is my job to help you work through and understand the reading to the best of your ability. So, feel free to raise questions in your teams or in the discussion center as you work through your reading.

Course Assignments Due:

- September 15- interaction paper, deSilva

Module Two:

- **The Art of Biblical Interpretation**
  - February 25- March 8
  - Required Reading: Joel B Green, *Hearing the New Testament* pp. 1-60; 90-126; 175-255; 278-427
  - Recommended Reading: The rest of Green's *Hearing the New Testament*
Team Project 1: Hermeneutics

Online Meeting: September 27

Time: Plan to spend 1 hour watching the introductory video; Plan to spend approximately 8-9 hours per week on reading for this module; Plan to spend approximately 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to your team project assignment; Plan to spend approximately 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and class mates; Plan to spend 1 hour in an online discussion on September 27.

Special Notes: This module and the previous module require intense and difficult reading. Struggle through. The material is worth grasping as it will give you many tools for your future study of the New Testament and it will form the basis for many of our discussions during the rest of the semester.

Course Assignments Due: Team Project 1

Module Three:

The Gospels and Acts
March 10 – April 12


Recommended Reading:
Team Project 2: Characters in Context (Luke 7)
Team Project 3: Plots and Times (John 1)
Interpretive Assignment 1: Mark 1:1-15,
Interpretive Assignment 2: Luke 19:1-10,
Interpretive Assignment 3: John 9:1-41,

Online Meeting: October 11

Time: Plan to spend 1 hour watching the introductory video; Plan to spend approximately 5-6 hours per week on reading for this module; Plan to spend approximately 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to your team project assignments; Plan to spend approximately 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and class mates; Plan to spend 1 hour in an online discussion on October 11; Plan to spend approximately 10 hours over the course of this module preparing for and writing your interpretive assignment/s; Plan to spend 4-5 hours over the course of this module writing and revising your Interaction Papers.

Special Notes: This module is the first opportunity to try out interpretive skills. I recommend doing an interpretive assignment as soon as possible to find out
what it is all about. Don't delay out of fear or uncertainty. It is better to turn something in and get feedback than to wait until there is no option because there are only 3 choices left. Remember, you can do as many of these assignments as you like, and the 3 highest scores are counted towards your final grade.

Course Assignments Due Oct 6: Interpretive Assignment 1, Due Oct 13: Interaction paper, Theissen, Due Oct 20; Interpretive Assignment 2; Oct 27: Interpretive Assignment 3 and Interaction Paper, Veyne

Module Four:
- Acts and the Pauline Epistles
  - April 14 - May 3
  - Recommended Reading:
    - Team Project 4: Historical Setting Worksheet
    - Team Project 5: Women in the New Testament
    - Interpretive Assignment 4: Philemon,
    - Interpretive Assignment 5: I Corinthians 11:17-34,
    - Interpretive Assignment 6: 1 Timothy 2:8-15,

**Online Meeting: November 8**
- Time: Plan to spend 1 hour watching the introductory video; 30 minutes watching the video on Corinth; Plan to spend approx. 4-5 hours per week on reading for this module; Plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to your team project assignments; Plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and classmates; Plan to spend 1 hour in an online discussion; Plan to spend approx. 10 hours over the course of this module writing and revising your interpretive assignment/s.

Special Notes: By this time you should have gained some practice with interpretive skills and methods. The Pauline epistles, despite their brevity in comparison with the Gospels and Acts, are complex documents requiring careful consideration and interpretation. There are 3 interpretive assignments in this module that you may complete. All offer various challenges; however, I would advise you NOT to do an interpretive assignment on 1 Timothy 2. If you really want to, you may; however, I do not advise it. The reason that I do not advise doing this passage is because many students get so caught up in either the emotions that the passage raises or the politics of the passage that they are not able to examine it well making use of the tools that we have studied over the course of the semester. However, if you are able to put aside reactions like this
to the passage and engage the text using the tools we have studied, then you should be able to do an adequate assignment on the passage.

Course Assignments Due: Nov 3: Interpretive Assignment 4; Nov 10: Interpretive Assignment 5; Nov 17: Interpretive Assignment 6; Dec 1: Interaction Paper, Longnecker

Module Five:
More Voices in the Canon
May 5-17
Required Reading: New Testament, Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, Revelation Johnson, chs. 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26
Recommended Reading: Gonzalez, Santa Biblia
Team Project 6: The Questions the Text Calls us to Ask (Revelation)
Interpretive Assignment 7: Revelation 13, Due December 8th by midnight

PT
Time: Plan to spend 45 minutes watching the introductory video; Plan to spend approx.3-4 hours per week on reading for this module; Plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week formulating and writing your responses to your team project assignments; Plan to spend approx. 1-1.5 hours per week reading and responding to your team and class mates; Plan to spend 1 hour in an online discussion on depending on your group; Plan to spend approx. 5 hours over the course of this module writing and revising your interpretive assignment. Plan to spend approx. 10 hours during the course of this module reading for and preparing to write your research paper.

Special Notes: These epistles and Revelation make a special contribution to the New Testament, and they are excellent places to try out the interpretive techniques you learned in the Gospels and Paul.

Course Assignments Due: Dec 8: Interpretive Assignment 7

Final — Due: Wednesday of Finals Week

Due Dates at a Glance: (Note: all assignments are due on Wednesdays by 3am P.T., so I can interact with them on Thursday morning).

Week One, Sept. 8
Week Two, Sept 15 — Interaction Paper on deSilva
Week Three, Sept 22 — Team Project 2: Hermeneutics
Week Four, Sept 29 — Team Project 2: Hermeneutics
Week Five, Oct 6 — IA # 1
Week Six, Oct 13 — Interaction Paper on Theissen
Week Seven, Oct 20 — IA # 2
Week Eight, Oct 27 — Interaction Paper on Veyne; IA # 3
Week Nine, Nov 3 — IA # 4
Week Ten, Nov 10 — IA # 5
Week Eleven Nov 17 — IA # 6
READING WEEK
Week Twelve Dec 1—Interaction Paper on Longenecker
Week Thirteen Dec 8 — IA # 7
Finals Week, Exam Due Dec 15
One of the goals of this course is to provide the student with the context of the New Testament, because a knowledge of its context enriches our understanding and appreciation of it. This statement is not as simple as it looks at first glance. The immediate context of a verse is the passage in which the verse is located, which of course will tell you a lot about what the verse is saying.