

NT 354: The Gospel of John
Methodist Theological School in Ohio
Spring 2008

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this seminar we will discuss the Fourth Gospel in detail in its literary, social and cultural context. We will also explore the many unique dimensions of the Gospel in order to determine John's understanding of Jesus, God, the disciples and Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

COURSE GOALS:

1. To examine the Gospel of John as a complete narrative that communicates to its audience as such.
2. To examine the Gospel of John in its ancient literary, social and cultural context.
3. To examine individual stories within the Gospel to determine how they fit into the larger narrative.
4. To employ various critical methods of biblical interpretation in order to help understand the narrative in its ancient context and in today's North American context.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To describe the basic narrative flow of the Gospel of John.
2. To be able to articulate a critical interpretation of any passage in the Gospel of John.
3. To articulate the main themes and possible social issues that John is trying to communicate.
4. To articulate John's perspective on the relationship among Jesus' advent, suffering, death and resurrection and the role they play in salvation.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

1. Attendance at all class sessions. See the MTSO Student Handbook for the school's absentee policy.
2. Careful preparation of all assigned reading with an **EMPHASIS ON THE PRIMARY TEXTS** (i.e., the reading from the particular passage from John for that session). The primary literature should be prepared first and foremost *before* reading the secondary material.
3. Attentive and active participation in all class sessions. This is a seminar, which means that you must come ready to participate in class discussion in order for this class to be a success.

GRADING:

Your grade will consist of the following assignments:

1. Active preparation and participation in the course (40%)
2. Proposal for the term paper or project (15%)
3. 3600-4500 word term paper or project (35%)
4. Oral Performance in the beginning of each class and during the last class (10%).

FORMAT OF EACH CLASS SESSION:

This class will be conducted as a seminar, which is basically one long discussion facilitated by the professor. There will be occasional mini-lectures, but the majority of the meetings will be discussion of the material at hand. You should come to each class session with the following completed in this order:

1. You should read carefully and critically the section from John assigned for the class. By carefully, I mean you should read with attention to literary context, to characterization, and to details of how the story is told. By critically, I mean you should not take anything for granted. You should ask difficult questions of the text (e.g., “Why does Jesus say that the devil is the father of the Jews in ch. 8?” “Why are there no parables in John?” “Why does Jesus die on a different day in John than he does in the Synoptic Gospels?”), and try to think of as many answers to these questions as possible. You should also read the text through the lens of the social and cultural realities of the ancient world (e.g., social setting of the story, social location of the characters, what people thought about exorcism and healing, what people understood about blood, etc.). The other ancient readings will help you do that.
2. You should formulate, preferably in writing (a paragraph or two) your understanding of what the passage means.
3. You should then, and only then, read the other readings assigned for the class, including the sections of the commentary corresponding to assigned passage. Use the commentary primarily for informational purposes and not to adopt uncritically the interpretation of the author. Ask critical questions of the author whenever you disagree with what he/she thinks. Try to figure out his/her perspective, why he/she might be arguing what he/she does, and then critique it.
4. Read the selection from Thatcher’s book *What We have Heard from the Beginning*.
5. Formulate at least two questions or issues you wish to discuss in class and bring them to class.

After two people orally perform the passage for the day, we will begin each class in small groups where you will share your questions with each other, try to come up with preliminary answers, and formulate two questions per group to discuss with the large group. Then we will begin the discussion, which will be based upon your questions. I, of course, will also bring issues to class that I think are important to raise.

TERM PAPER OR PROJECT:

On May 15th (May 12th for graduating seniors) a term paper OR project is due that must demonstrate critical engagement with the Gospel of John and with respected secondary sources. **On March 13th**, you must hand in a proposal for your paper or project, which should include (1) a description of the paper/project; (2) an initial thesis statement for the paper or the main emphasis for the project; and (3) an initial bibliography, which should include a mixture of books, essays, journal articles, and dictionary/encyclopedia entries. **CONSULT KEENER FOR AN EXTENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY THROUGH 2002 AND ATLA/ATLAS, OTHER ELECTRONIC DATABASES, AND NT ABSTRACTS FOR MORE RECENT WORKS.** The proposal should be no longer than 500 words, **NOT INCLUDING** the bibliography. **Please save as “yourlastname.Johnproposal.doc” or “yourlastname.Johnproposal.docx” and upload to your folder on the Sharepoint site (see below).**

1. **Project:** For this option, you can do anything of your choosing that clearly demonstrates critical engagement with the Gospel of John. Use your imagination to create something that will directly or indirectly impact your future ministry, speak to a cultural situation that you think can be informed by some aspect of the Gospel, or inform your own thinking and acting in response to the Gospel. **Please save as “yourlastname.Johnproject.doc” or “yourlastname.Johnproject.docx” and upload to your folder on the Sharepoint (see below).** Whatever you choose to do, you must submit a final report of the project that meets the following minimal requirements:
 - a. The report must be 3600-4500 words, double-spaced.
 - b. The report must describe the nature of the project in detail.
 - c. The report must **CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE CRITICAL AND CONSISTENT ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**; in other words, you must ground your project in the Gospel,

justify the nature and structure of your project as related to something in the Gospel, and use secondary sources from critical biblical or theological studies to inform your project.

2. **Term Paper (required for MTS students):** The 3600-4500 word paper can be on any topic dealing with the Gospel of John. You can do a close exegetical reading of one passage, a discussion of one section of the Gospel, or a thematic study of one theme that runs through a large portion, or the whole, of the Gospel. You can also do a social or historical study on one aspect of the Gospel that might illuminate a passage or section of the Gospel as a whole. This is a research paper, so you should consult a variety of solid secondary sources (e.g., critical dictionaries, commentaries, monographs, essays in books, and articles in peer reviewed journals; CONSULT KEENER FOR AN EXTENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY THROUGH 2002 AND ATLA/ATLAS, OTHER ELECTRONIC DATABASES, AND *NT ABSTRACTS* FOR MORE RECENT WORKS) and incorporate them into your argument in a careful and critical way. Remember, however, that this is a paper on John, not a book report on the secondary sources. You must argue your opinion about John. The use of secondary sources should aid you in effective argumentation of your opinion. If you simply report what other people say about your topic, then you will not have successfully completed the assignment. PLEASE BE MINDFUL THAT THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WILL NEED THE SAME SOURCES THAT YOU ARE USING. IF POSSIBLE, WORK AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN THE LIBRARY WITHOUT TAKING OUT ALL THE BOOKS ON JOHN. Use ATLA's online religion index. Many journals are now on line in electronic form. You can now print out many articles directly from the computer rather than having to make copies. Use this valuable resource! **Please save as "yourlastname.Johnpaper.doc" or "yourlastname.Johnpaper.docx" and upload to your folder on the Sharepoint site (see below).**

Your essay **must** contain:

- (a) A well-formed thesis statement placed somewhere in the introductory section;
- (b) A main body that demonstrates your thesis in a clear and logical way that makes regular reference to John;
- (c) A conclusion that summarizes your argument and offers the implications of your thesis for further study of John.

Grading of the project and essay will be based upon the three elements just mentioned as well as:

- (a) Clarity of presentation, which includes well-formed sentences and paragraphs that hang together throughout the essay to communicate your points well;
- (b) Level of knowledge of the topic you chose to write about;
- (c) Comprehension of the Gospel's articulation of the topic you chose to write about;
- (d) Proper use of the English language (spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation and usage). **BEWARE: I WILL TAKE OFF 0.25 POINTS FOR EACH OF THESE TYPES OF ERRORS; THESE POINTS ADD UP QUICKLY SO PROOFREAD YOUR PAPERS VERY CAREFULLY.**

ORAL PERFORMANCE:

Public oral communication skills are extremely important for all students who plan to be public figures, especially those preparing for ministry. In particular, congregations have a right to hear the Bible proclaimed in a clear, compelling, genuine, and articulate manner. In addition, one of the principles of Oral Performance is that every oral performance of the text is an interpretation of the text. So each proclamation is not a neutral reading of the text but it is your embodiment of it and, therefore, your interpretation of it. To this end, we will work toward obtaining and improving your skills of public proclamation of the text. This will take place in two parts:

1. *Oral performance of the text at the beginning of each class session:* Each student will sign up for two segments of John to perform (proclaim); at the beginning of each class session, four students will perform their segments. The class as a whole will critique each performance by offering constructive feedback via email. At the end of the second round of performances, I will choose which students need more practice and assign additional passages for them to do in the remaining time.
2. *Oral performance of the text on the last day of class:* On the final day of class, we will perform the text from beginning to end. Each student will perform at least two non-consecutive sections of the text.

Grading Criteria:

1. Improvement of performance based upon the class' constructive feedback.
2. Clarity and smoothness of diction.
3. Genuineness of persona.
4. Quality of projection.
5. Communication of important narrative and theological elements of the text.
6. Consistency of interpretation of the text.

COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS:

The primary way that I will communicate with the class is through email. Therefore, it is very important that you **CHECK YOUR EMAIL EVERY DAY** for notices regarding the class. If there is a change of assignment that I communicate through email, it is the student's responsibility to complete this assignment on time.

SHAREPOINT SITE:

The class website is found on the school's Sharepoint site (academics.mtso.edu). Faculty with this site is imperative for the successful completion of this course because some of the readings not from the required books will be on this site and you will be submitting all assignments through this site. All course materials will be posted on this site in various sections. **IMPORTANT: Although I have the capability of opening most document formats, please submit your assignments in MSWord format (either 1997-2003 [.doc] or the newest 2007 [.docx]).**

YOUR FOLDER: Each student has a folder under the "Submit Assignments" link. Unless there is a problem with the Sharepoint site, you will be expected to submit all your assignments (short papers, reviews, and essays) by uploading them into your folder.

To upload an assignment:

- a. click on your name on the folder
- b. click on the "Upload" button on the blue bar
- c. click on the "Browse" button on the right side of the screen
- d. choose the document you want to upload
- e. click on the "Open", "Choose", or other such button at the bottom of your browsing window
- f. click on "OK" at the bottom of the "Upload Document" window

No one but you and I will be able to see your documents. Once the document is uploaded, I will read it, insert any comments using the MSWord "Comments" function and assign a grade at the bottom of the page. I will then upload it into your folder. When my name replaces yours under "Modified By" then you will know that I have graded the assignment. **You will only submit two assignments to your folders, your project/paper proposal and your final paper. For the proposal, please save and upload into your folder as "yourlastname.Johnproposal.doc" or "yourlastname.Johnproposal.docx". If you are doing a project, please save and upload it into your folder as "yourlastname.Johnproject.doc" or "yourlastname.Johnproject.docx". If you are doing a paper, please save and upload into your folder as**

“yourlastname.Johnpaper.doc” or “yourlastname.Johnpaper.docx”. NO PROPOSALS OR PAPERS SHOULD BE EMAILED TO ME UNLESS THERE ARE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

To access an electronic reading or other document posted on the Sharepoint site:

- a. click on the appropriate link in the menu on the left side of the page
- b. click on the document or folder for the particular week
- c. choose your download option (I would recommend the “Save” option)

Note: You must have Adobe Reader or some similar PDF viewing software installed on your computer to read most of the documents available on the Sharepoint site. This is standard in most computers purchased in the last five years.

COURSE BOOKS:

Required Books:

1. Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 volumes; Hendrickson, 2003) ISBN: 1565633784.
2. Thatcher, Tom, ed. *What We have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (Baylor University Press, 2007) ISBN 9781602580107.

Books Worth Owning but Not Required for This Course:

1. Ashton, John. *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: 1991).
2. Bieringer, Reimund, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, eds. *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2001).
3. Culpepper, R. Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Fortress, 1983).
4. Culpepper, R. Alan and C. Clifton Black, eds., *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith* (Louisville: WJK Press, 1996).
5. Donahue, John R. ed., *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005).
6. Moloney, Francis J. *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina 4; Liturgical Press, 1998).
7. Painter, John, R. Alan Culpepper, and Fernando Segovia, *Word, Theology and Community in John* (Chalice Press: 2002).
8. Schneiders, Sandra M. *Written that You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Revised and Expanded Edition; Herder and Herder, 2003).
9. Schneiders, Sandra M. *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (2nd edition; Michael Glazier Books, 1999).
10. Smith, D. Moody. *John* (Abingdon NT Commentaries; Abingdon Press, 1998).
11. Soulen, Richard N. and R. Kendall Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd edition; WJK Press, 2001).

COURSE SCHEDULE:

January 31st

Introduction to the course and initial issues in John.

Reading: J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 36-53.

February 7th

Primary Reading: John 1-2

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Wisdom of Solomon 6:1-12:2
2. Ben Sira (Sirach) 24
3. 1QS 1-4
4. Selections from Middle Platonist philosophers
5. Selections from Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*
6. Orpheus fragment and Aratus fragment in Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica*, Book 13, ch. 12 (http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_13_book13.htm)
7. Thomas H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 252-269 (Found on ATLA/ATLAS on the library drop down menu at MTSO home page [user name: mtsoatla, password: password])

Thatcher: p. 1-38.

Supplementary Reading: Sandra Schneiders, "Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel," in *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroads, 1999), 63-77; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (4, 1999): 393-408; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2, 2000): 85-100.

February 14th

Primary Reading: John 3-4

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Plato, *Meno* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/meno.html>)
2. Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* (http://www.utexas.edu/courses/citylife/readings/cleanthes_hymn.html)
3. *PGM* IV. 475-829
4. Gen 24:10-61; 29:1-20; Exod 2:16-22
5. Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 12, chs. 1 and 5; Book 13, chs. 6 and 10; Book 18, ch. 2 (<http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>)
6. Josephus, *Jewish War*, Book 2, ch. 12; (<http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>)

Thatcher: p. 63-108

Supplementary Reading: Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 43-64; John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First Century Judaism," *New Testament Studies* 38 (1992): 448-66.

February 21st

Primary Reading: John 5-6

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Selections about Catiline
2. Josephus, *Jewish War*, Book 4, ch. 3:4-5 (<http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>)
3. Homer, *Odyssey*, Book 11 (<http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.html>)
4. Plutarch, *Aristides*, 21 (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~vandersp/Courses/texts/plutarch/plutaris.html#XXI>)
5. Aristobulus excerpted in Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica*, Book 13, ch. 12 (http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_13_book13.htm)

6. Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book II.40 (<http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/apion-2.htm>)
7. Philo, *Life of Moses*, Book 2, III-IV. (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book25.html>)
8. Isaiah 54-55; Psalm 78
9. Plato, *Euthyphro* (<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/euthyphro.htm>)

Thatcher: p. 39-62

Supplementary Reading: Wayne A. Meeks, "Equal to God," in Robert T. Fortna and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, eds., *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John: In Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 309-321; Gail R. O'Day, "John 6:15-21: Jesus Walking on the Water as Narrative Embodiment of Johannine Christology," in R. Alan Culpepper, ed., *Critical Readings of John 6* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 149-160.

February 28th

Primary Reading: John 7-8

Other Ancient Reading:

1. For a reconstruction of the Feast of Tabernacles, Francis J. Moloney, (1998), *The Gospel of John*, p. 232-236.
2. Nehemiah 7:73-8:18
3. Ezekiel 39:21-47:12 (skim 39:48-42:20 and 45-46)
4. Revelation 21-22
5. Zechariah 14
6. Deuteronomy 6, 15, 24:17-22
7. Epictetus, *Discourses*, II.14-15 (<http://www.davemckay.co.uk/philosophy/epictetus/>)

Thatcher: p. 109-126

Supplementary Reading: J. Lieu, "Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel," **Bieringer**, 101-120; M. C. de Boer, "The Depiction of 'the Jews' in John's Gospel: Matters of Behavior and Identity," **Bieringer**, 141-157; A. Reinhartz, "'Jews' and Jews in the Fourth Gospel," **Bieringer** 213-227; Joel Marcus, "Rivers of Living Water from Jesus' Belly (John 7:38)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 328-330 (Available on ATLA/ATLAS database)

March 6th

Primary Reading: John 9-10

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Philo, *On the Creation*, 26-35 (<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/book1.html>)
2. Plato, *Republic*, Book VII (Allegory of the Cave)
3. Hyperides, *Epitaphios*
4. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book II, 34-46 (Pericles' funeral oration) (<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GREECE/PERICLES.HTM>)
5. Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book VII, chs. 8-9 (<http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-7.htm>)

Thatcher: p. 127-148; 183-194

Supplementary Reading: Jerome Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd' in John 10: Cultural and Rhetorical Background," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120 (2001): 267-291 (Available on ATLA/ATLAS database);

Sandra M. Schneiders, "To See or Not to See: John 9 as a Synthesis of the Theology and Spirituality of Discipleship," in **Painter**, 189-210.

March 13th

Primary Reading: John 11-12

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, Book I (*On Death*) (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14988/14988-h/14988-h.htm>)
2. Cicero, *The Republic*, Book VI (*Scipio's Dream*) (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14988/14988-h/14988-h.htm>)
3. Daniel 7-12
4. Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-1; Luke 7:36-50

Thatcher: p. 149-162; 195-214

Supplementary Reading: William Wuellner, "Putting Life Back into the Lazarus Story and Its Reading: The Narrative Rhetoric of John 11 as the Narration of Faith," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 113-132; Judith Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out': Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1995): 227-247. (Both available on ATLA/ATLAS database)

Paper/Project Proposal Due

March 20th Holy Week: No Classes

March 27th

Primary Reading: John 13-14

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Plato, *Symposium* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/symposium.html>)
2. Epictetus, *Discourses*, III.22 (<http://www.davemckay.co.uk/philosophy/epictetus/>)

Thatcher: p. 233-260

Supplementary Reading: Mary L. Coloe, "Sources in the Shadows: John 13 and the Johannine Community," in eds. Francisco Lozada, Jr. and Tom Thatcher, *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 69-82.

April 3rd

Primary Reading: John 15-17

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Isis_and_Osiris*/home.html)
2. Harold Attridge, "The Cubist Principle in Johannine Imagery: John and the Reading of Images in Contemporary Platonism," pp. 47-60 in eds. Jörg Frey, Jan G. Van Der Watt, and Ruben Zimmerman, *Imagery in the Gospel of John* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006]

Thatcher: p. 215-234

Supplementary Reading: C. Clifton Black, “‘The Words That You Gave to Me I Have Given to Them’: The Grandeur of Johannine Rhetoric,” **Culpepper and Black**, 220-239; Beth M. Sheppard, “Another Look: Johannine ‘Subordinationist Christology’ and the Roman Family,” in eds. Francisco Lozada, Jr. and Tom Thatcher, *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 101-119;

April 10th

Primary Reading: John 18-19

Other Ancient Reading: Mark 14:32-15:47; Matthew 26:36-27:66; Luke 22:39-23:56

Thatcher: p. 163-182

Supplementary Reading: Craig R. Koester, “The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John’s Gospel,” **Donahue**, 141-157; Gail R. O’Day, “The Love of God Incarnate: The Life of Jesus in the Gospel of John,” **Donahue**, 158-167.

April 17th

Primary Reading: John 18-19

Other Ancient Reading: Mark 14:32-15:47; Matthew 26:36-27:66; Luke 22:39-23:56

Thatcher: p. 311-358

Supplementary Reading: Jouette Bassler, “Mixed Signals: Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989):635-636; Jennifer Glancy, “Torture: Flesh, Truth and the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblical Interpretation* 13 (2005): 107-136. (Both available on ATLA/ATLAS database)

April 24th “Midterm” Break: No Class

May 1st

Primary Reading: John 20-21

Other Ancient Reading:

1. Mark 16:1-8; Matthew 28; Luke 24; Acts 1:1-14
2. Gitte Buch-Hansen, “A Stoic Understanding of Pneu=ma [Pneuma] in John”

Thatcher: p. 261-310

Supplementary Reading: Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel: A Key to Johannine Spirituality,” **Donahue**, 168-198; Carsten Claussen, “The Role of John 21: Discipleship in Retrospect and Redefinition,” in eds. Francisco Lozada, Jr. and Tom Thatcher, *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 55-68.

May 8th

Performance of the Gospel of John