

**HIST 9401 STUDIES IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY
NTGK9404 THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
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NOBTS MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries.

COURSE PURPOSE, CORE VALUE FOCUS, AND CURRICULUM COMPETENCIES:

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has five core values: Doctrinal Integrity, Spiritual Vitality, Mission Focus, Characteristic Excellence, and Servant Leadership. These values shape both the context and manner in which all curricula are taught, with “doctrinal integrity” and “academic excellence” especially highlighted in this course. The seminary’s emphasis this year is on “spiritual vitality,” with that core value especially being emphasized in this course.

The Ph.D. degree requires a research-intensive program that emphasizes specialization in the area of the degree major. This seminar is offered within the New Testament Ph.D. program as a specialized study of the textual background to the Greek New Testament.

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

This seminar involves a critical examination of the Christian movement during the first six centuries of its development, from the close of the apostolic period (A. D. 65+) to the pontificate of Gregory I (590-604). Attention is given to the political, social, philosophical and religious milieu of the Greco-Roman world, as well as to the institutional, theological, and literary development of Christianity in this environment. The study of the development of the NT canon will encompass such topics as the motives which led to the New Testament Canon; the collection, use, and canonization of the various sections of the NT; the use of other non-canonical books by the early church; and the early witnesses to the development of the canon.

SEMINAR OBJECTIVES

Students successfully completing the seminar will demonstrate:

- 1) Appreciation of the nature and values of the historical study of early Christianity and the development of the NT canon;
- 2) Knowledge of pertinent primary and secondary sources in this area of study;
- 3) Grasp of foundational information regarding the historical development of early Christianity and the NT canon;
- 4) Perception of the dynamic and developmental nature of history and the reciprocal influence of early Christianity and its cultural settings;
- 5) Awareness of social and psychological as well as moral and theological forces that shaped early Christianity;
- 6) Perception of the enduring ecclesial tensions of authority and freedom, unity and diversity, structure and vitality, Scripture and tradition, catholicity and reform;
- 7) Commitment to developing sound research techniques and writing skills.

COURSE TEACHING METHODS:

This course is taught via a combination of pedagogical methods, including but not limited to the following: lectures, intensive individual reading and research, seminar discussions and presentations, and the presentation of research papers by the seminar participants.

TEXTBOOKS

W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984)

D. H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999)

Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, reprint edition, 1997)

Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995)

Roderic Mullen, *The Expansion of Christianity: A Gazetteer of Its First Three Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004)

Hubertus Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007)

Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*

Hill, Charles, *Who Chose the Gospels?*

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

A. Readings. All seminar members are to read the required texts and bring a brief review of the text to class on the day set for discussion of the book. The review should include the following items: bibliographic data, statement of the purpose and thesis of the book, and a list of topics that can serve as a basis for discussion in class, and a listing of at least 3 reviews of the book (from journals, etc.). Students will be expected to dialogue on the basis of the reviews as well as their own reading. (2 pages, single spaced)

B. Book Review. Each student shall write a critical review of a book selected in consultation with the instructors. The review should be written in an acceptable style and be 7-10 double-spaced typewritten pages in length not counting the book review lists (see below). The review should include: 1) a biographical sketch of the author, 2) a summary of contents (4-6 pages), 3) a statement of the author's purpose and the extent to which the purpose was realized, 4) a consideration of the uniqueness of the book, 5) a description of the author's style and biases, 6) a concluding evaluation including a statement about the book's contribution to early Christianity studies/NT Canon, and 7) a list of 3 to 4 critical book reviews that are available in various journals with a 1 paragraph/brief summary of each review. An oral summary of the review will be presented to the seminar on the date indicated on the seminar schedule. The presentation should be 5 to 8 minutes in duration. It will be followed by discussion. Copies of the review should be distributed to seminar members at the time of the presentation.

C. Minor Paper & Lecture. Each student will be responsible for presenting a review on a historical work, major figure, movement, or event in the early church, with the specific topic either being approved or assigned by the professors (see the list below for suggestions/options).

Also, each student shall prepare a 10-minute academic lecture suitable for a college classroom on a historical work, major figure, movement, or event in the early church, with the specific topic either being approved or assigned by the professors (normally the same topic as chosen above).

Copies of the teaching outlines and working bibliography shall be distributed to the members of the seminar. The review must include reference to the original sources.

D. Paper. Each student shall write and submit a critical paper on one of the topics listed below. The paper should be written in an acceptable style and reflect serious study, critical thought, independent research, and careful use of source materials. It should include a title page, outline, main text composed of 20-30 double-spaced typewritten pages, footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography. Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (current edition) is the guide for all matters pertaining to form and style. For NT students, the SBL Style Guide should be consulted for references to original sources.

An oral summary of the paper will be presented on the date indicated on the seminar schedule, with a 10-15-minute time allowed for this. A formal response will be given by 1 seminar member for 5 minutes, followed by a period for general seminar response. Copies of the paper should be distributed to the seminar members one week prior to the oral presentation.

Suggested Topics

Faith and Culture in Early Christianity	The Antiochian School
Transformation of Hope in Early Christianity	The Martyrological Literature
Christianity and the Roman State	Constantine and the Church
The Early Apologists	The Council of Nicea
Gnosticism	The Council of Constantinople (381)
Marcionism	The Council of Ephesus
Montanism	The Council of Chalcedon
The Ministry in Early Christianity	Schism in the Early Church
The "Rule of Faith" and the NT Canon	Views on Orthodoxy & Heresy in Early Church
Early Christian Missionary Advance	The OT Canon and the Early Church
Early Christian Historians	Collection & Canonization of the Pauline Ltrs
Early Christian Theology	Collection & Canonization of the Gospels
Early Christian Worship	Canonization of the General Epistles & Rev.
Institutional Development of the Early Church	Use of Outside Books by the Early Church
The Monarchian Controversy	Emerging Canon in the Second Century
The Asia Minor Tradition	Emerging Canon in the 3 rd and Early 4 th c.
The North African Fathers	The Finalization of the Canon in the East
The Alexandrian School	Canons of the Syriac and Ethiopian Churches

Biographies and writings

Clement of Rome	Clement of Alexandria	Augustine
The Shepherd of Hermas	Origen	Jerome
Justin Martyr & Tatian	Apostolic Constitutions	The Cappadocian Fathers
Irenaeus	Athanasius	Chrysostom
Tertullian	Arius	Desert Fathers
Cyprian	Eusebius of Caesarea	Pelagius

V. SEMINAR GRADING: The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Lecture & Outline	20%	Research Paper	40%
Book Review	10%	Readings & Seminar Participation	20%
Primary Source Review	10%		

VI. SEMINAR SCHEDULE

- Aug. 19 Introduction
Assignment: Read Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition & Renewing Evangelicalism*
- Sept. 2 Introduction to Early Christian Writers
Assignment: Read Michael Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*
Assignment: Read Hubertus Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction*
- Sept. 16 Introduction to NT Canon Studies
Assignment: Read Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*
- Sept. 30 Introduction to NT Canon Studies
Assignment: Read Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*
Assignment: Read Charles Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels?*
- Oct. 7 Assignment: Read Roderic Mullen, *The Expansion of Christianity: A Gazetteer of Its First Three Centuries*
- Oct. 28 Book Reviews
- Nov. 11 Book Reviews & 3 Major Papers
- Dec. 2 Major Papers (Note, this is an extended session for the presentation of papers)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY: NT CANON DEVELOPMENT

Books

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- Barnard, L. W. *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967. See especially chapter 5.
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