



BIGK9401 Interpreting the Gospels: John

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Biblical Studies Division
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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 “academic excellence” especially highlighted in this course. **Mission Focus** is the Core Value for this academic year.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

BIGK9401 Interpreting the Gospels (4 hours) Faculty This seminar is designed for intensive exegetical work in the text of the four Gospels of the New Testament. Attention is given to introductory and background matters as well as the current scholarly literature on the Gospel genre. Special focus is given to exegetical issues in the history of interpretation, genre considerations, social setting, theological issues, and historical issues of the Jewish and Roman worlds that impact the interpretation. Exegesis and interpretation of the Greek text is made with the help of the best critical literature available.

OBJECTIVES:

Well-rounded New Testament scholars must be familiar with significant works in the field of New Testament Gospel studies. They must also be able to translate the Greek text and work with textual variants, as well. This breadth of knowledge is necessary to equip students for teaching at the university and seminary levels and prepares them to make important contributions through research and publication. In light of this overarching

reality, the objectives of this course include the following:

- Students should understand the various historical backgrounds & sources for the NT Gospels.
- Students should demonstrate the ability to translate the Greek text and work with textual variants found in the text of the Gospels for interpretation and exegesis.
- Students should acquire the ability to utilize and analyze the background data for both the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John for research purposes.
- Students should demonstrate the ability to perform exegesis upon a passage in the Gospels.
- Students should appreciate the complexities of working with Gospel texts for exegesis and interpretation.

COURSE TEACHING METHODS:

This course will be taught via a combination of pedagogical methods, including but not limited to the following: group discussion, student papers and reviews, and student presentations.

Course Requirements:

The student will:

1. Read All Required Texts and Prepare Book Reviews for Sessions 1-2.

Read and review the required texts as stipulated in the schedule below.

The **Book Reviews** should be 4-5 pages single-spaced and consist of the following standard book review elements (see handout at the end of the syllabus):

- Bibliographic data about the author
- The thesis/purpose of the book
- A summary of the development of the thesis
- A critique of the book citing strengths and weaknesses, including significance for NT studies
- A synopsis of 3 reviews of the book from scholarly journals.

2. Participate actively in the discussion of the readings.

Each student will participate in the discussion of selected texts for each session.

3. Attend every meeting.

Because of the nature of the course, no absences are allowed. If emergency situations dictate an absence, the student will schedule a make-up session with the professor and Division Chairman. Work is still due the day scheduled even if the student is absent. Any student missing more than one meeting must repeat the seminar.

Session 1: Overview of NT Gospels - September 3

Gospel Texts to Translate

Translate the following passages. These will be potential passages for your Oral Exam Greek text readings. Please have these prepared to turn in on the first day of seminars. The student should be able to locate/parse any of the verbal parts of speech for any of the passages. The translation should include the Greek text with the translation below.

Translate by Session 1: Matthew 5-7; Mark 11-16. Selected parables in Luke 10:25-37; 11:1-13; 15-16; 18:1-14. John 1-4 (John 5-21 translations will be due later in the semester). These passages, plus all of John, will be potential Oral Exam passages later.

Gospel Overview (Required)

Each seminar member will read and prepare a Book Review for each of the following required texts:

Blomberg, Craig. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. 2nd ed. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2009.

deSilva, David. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004. (covering the sections on the Gospels: Chapters 1-7, 9 and Excursus on Pseudepigraphy and the NT)

Dunn, James D. G. *Jesus Remembered*. Christianity in the Making, vol. 1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003.

Synoptic Problem (Required)

Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*. 2nd Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Read Anchor Bible Dictionary article on “Synoptic Problem”

Gospel Overview (Book Reviews)

Each seminar member will be responsible for one Book Review on one of the following texts below. Please follow the format for Book Reviews described above and see a Book Review help at the end of the syllabus. Each seminar member will have about 8-10 minutes to present your Book Review to the seminar members. Please upload your review to Drop Box at least 24 hours prior to the seminar so members will have your paper for the presentations.

Malina, Bruce and Rohrbaugh, Richard. *A Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*.

Pennington, Jonathan T. *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2012.

Snodgrass, Klyne. *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Vol. 2, Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1994.

OR

Prepare 4 reviews of recent research in scholarly periodicals on Gospel studies. Each reviews will be 3-4 pages single-spaced. The format will be as follows:

- Bibliographic data about the author and periodical info
- The thesis/purpose of the article
- A summary of the development of the thesis
- A critique of the book citing strengths and weaknesses, including significance for NT studies

Session 2: Interpretation and Overview of the Gospel of John - Oct 1

Gospel of John (Required)

Read and prepare a Book Review for each of the following required texts:

Bauckham, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Baker Academic, 2007.

Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*. Ed. Francis J. Moloney. Doubleday, 2003.

Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2 vols. Hendrickson, 2003. (review the Introduction; Use the commentary for your paper)

Thatcher, Tom ed. *What We Have Heard From the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*. Baylor Press, 2007.

Anchor Bible Dictionary article on “John, Gospel of.”

Hermeneutics and Interpretation of Gospels (Required)

Write a Book Review for each of the following:

Osborn, Grant, R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. IVP, 2006. (Introduction, Chapters 1-5; 7, 12,14 and appendices).

Culpepper, R. Alan and Black, Clifton, C. *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*. John Knox Press, 1996.

Sessions 3-4: Paper Presentations - Nov 5 & Dec 3

Gospel Texts to Translate

Translate the remainder of the Gospel of John (Chapters 5-21). This entire Gospel will be a potential source for your Oral Exam Greek text readings. Please have the remaining chapters (1-4 were translated for Session 1) prepared to turn in on the day of the Session 3 seminar.

Paper Presentations

The final two sessions of the seminar will be dedicated to exegesis papers on the Gospel of John. Each student will write a major exegesis paper. Each student will also review a classmate’s paper on the class meeting in which he/she is not presenting a paper. Papers and respondents will be assigned when the seminar begins.

Papers are due one week prior to the seminar when they will be presented. Papers will be uploaded for the class and reviewers to read and reflect prior to the seminar.

Responses will be due **two days prior to the seminar** for other members to read. Late penalties will be assessed for late submissions and may result in a letter grade deduction.

Papers topics and passages will be chosen from the Gospel of John and turned into the professor for approval. The papers will reflect the Greek translations and passages should be phrased. The length of the papers should run from 25-35 pages, double-spaced and follow SBL or Turabian style. The selected commentaries for John should be reflected in the body of the papers and the bibliography.

Paper responses should reflect careful attention to the student's ability to translate and work with the Greek text. Preference for Greek text is preferable in the body of the paper. Details for uploading papers will be provided in the class sessions.

Bibliography for John

Bauckham, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Baker Academic, 2007.

Beasley-Murray, George R. *John* (WBC). 2nd Edition. Nashville: Nelson, 1999.

Borchert, Gerald L. *John*, 2 vols. (NAC). Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996-2002.

*Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John* (AB). , 2 vols. Garden City: New York: 1966-70.

_____. *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*. Ed. Francis J. Moloney. Doubleday, 2003.

*Burge, Gary M. *John* (NIVAC). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

*Carson, D. A. *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

Culpepper, R. Alan. *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Fortress Press, 1983.

Culpepper, R. Alan and Black, Clifton, C. *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*. John Knox Press, 1996.

*Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003.

*Köstenberger, Andreas. *John* (BECNT). Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.

Kanagaraj, Jay J. *John* (NCCS). Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012.

Kruse, Colin G. *The Gospel according to John* (TNTC, rev.). Leicester: IVP, 2004.

Lightfoot, J. B., Still, Todd D. and Witherington III, Ben. *The Gospel of St. John: A Newly Discovered Commentary*. Lightfoot Legacy Series. IVP: Dec 6, 2015.

*Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel of John* (NICNT, rev.). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

Moloney, Francis J. *The Gospel of John* (SP). Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998.

Ridderbos, Herman L. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Thatcher, Tom ed. *What We Have Heard From the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*. Baylor Press, 2007.

Witherington III, Ben. *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

Whitacre, Rodney A. *John* (NTC). Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

Lexical

Danker, Frederick William. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000.

This lexicon is the current standard for Greek studies. It is thorough and helpful for the student. Most Greek software packages offer it as an add-on resource. It is very helpful and should be in every serious Greek student's library.

Text Critical

Metzger, Bruce M. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2nd ed. New York: American Bible Society, 1994.

This little commentary is expensive, but details Metzger's decisions for selecting many of the variant readings found in the Greek text. This book will assist you in answering many of the questions in the class workbook.

Greek Grammars

Mounce, W. D. *Basics of Biblical Greek*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

A standard among Greek grammars. Now in its third edition, this work is used for most college and seminary introductory Greek courses. This work is a great edition for every serious Greek student's library. The book is inductive in approach to learning Greek.

Stevens, Gerald L. *New Testament Greek Primer*, 2nd ed. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007.

This Greek grammar is published by NOBTS Greek guru, Dr. Jerry Stevens. The grammar is deductive in approach and is loaded with detailed information for using the Greek language. The exercises are systematically keyed for programmed learning of the language. It is a very helpful resource for serious Greek students.

_____. *New Testament Greek Intermediate*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008.

This intermediate grammar extends the process of the Primer above. This is also very helpful for Greek studies and should be in your library.

Wallace, Daniel B. *The Basics of New Testament Syntax: An Intermediate Greek*

Grammar. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Wallace's grammar is now a standard in the field. Although it does not replace Robertson's grammar, it is a working grammar that you will use regularly in advanced Greek studies. This is a must have for every serious Greek student's library.

Hermeneutics

*Beale, G. K. and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Bray, Gerald L. *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1996.

Brown, Jeannine. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2006.

*Klein, William W. *Handbook for Personal Bible Study*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2008.

*Klein, William W., Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*. 2nd Edition. Nashville: Nelson, 2004.

Köstenberger, Andreas and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*. Nashville: B & H, 2011.

*Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral*. 2nd Edition. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007.

Porter, Stanley E. and Jason C. Robinson. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.

Porter, Stanley E. and Beth M. Stovell, eds. *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2012.

Thiselton, Anthony C. *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

*Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There a Meaning in this Text?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Walton, John H. and D. Brent Sandy. *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2013.

Recommended Computer Software

The student is encouraged strongly to purchase Bible software for his/her use in biblical exegesis. At this level of Greek study a program capable of producing the text, performing sophisticated morphological searches, with available lexicons, commentaries, and other helpful supplemental works is an absolute necessity. The software packages listed below are capable of intense, complex searches required for biblical studies research purposes and/or sermon preparation. The purchase of this kind

of software is indispensable at this level of language study. The three major software packages below will run on either Mac or PC computers.

BibleWorks (bibleworks.com) provides discounts for our students when purchased in bulk orders (see your professor for more information). BibleWorks costs about \$350 for their basic software program which includes many supplemental works. Ordered in bundles of 10 or more, the price is reduced to \$250 for NOBTS seminary students. Bulk orders are placed through the local NOBTS LifeWay Store. Call their customer service for questions.

Accordance Bible Software (accordancebible .com) is a standard in the field of Biblical Studies. The basic Scholar's Level is around \$300 with many other add-on texts available and they offer student discounts. Call their customer service for questions. Call their customer service for questions about student discounts.

Logos 6.0 is offered at varied package prices, but we recommend that you consider a minimum of the Bronze Level package that has the Greek and Hebrew texts for NOBTS language courses. NOBTS offers a training course called PREA6230/6330 Technological Applications for Bible Study and Preaching. Students who take this course may purchase the software at a 50% discount. Students who purchase the software directly from Logos receive a 30% discount. Call their customer service for questions.

Writing Book Reviews¹

This handout offers a process and suggests some strategies for writing book reviews. The most important element of a review is that it is a commentary, not merely a summary. It allows you to enter into dialogue and discussion with the work's creator and with other audiences. You can offer agreement or disagreement and identify where you find the work exemplary or deficient in its knowledge, judgments, or organization. You should clearly state your opinion of the work in question, and that statement will probably resemble other types of academic writing, with a thesis statement, supporting body paragraphs, and a conclusion. See our [handout on argument](#).

Typically, reviews are brief. In newspapers and academic journals, they rarely exceed 1000 words, although you may encounter lengthier assignments and extended commentaries. In either case, reviews need to be succinct. While they vary in tone, subject, and style, they **share some common features:**

- First, a review gives the reader a concise summary of the content. This includes a relevant description of the topic as well as its overall perspective, argument, or purpose.

¹ Source for this handout: University of North Carolina Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/files/2012/09/Book-Reviews-The-Writing-Center.pdf>

- Second, and more importantly, a review offers a critical assessment of the content. This involves your reactions to the work under review: what strikes you as noteworthy, whether or not it was effective or persuasive, and how it enhanced your understanding of the issues at hand.
- Finally, in addition to analyzing the work, a review often suggests whether or not the audience would appreciate it.

Develop an Assessment *Before* You Write

There is no definitive method to writing a review, although some critical thinking about the work at hand is necessary before you actually begin writing. Thus, writing a review is a two-step process: developing an argument about the work under consideration, and making that argument as you write an organized and well-supported draft. See our [handout on argument](#). What follows is a **series of questions to focus your thinking** as you dig into the work at hand. While the questions specifically consider book reviews, you can easily transpose them to an analysis of performances, exhibitions, and other review subjects. Don't feel obligated to address each of the questions; some will be more relevant than others to the book in question.

- What is the thesis—or main argument—of the book? If the author wanted you to get one idea from the book, what would it be? How does it compare or contrast to the world you know? What has the book accomplished?
- What exactly is the subject or topic of the book? Does the author cover the subject adequately? Does the author cover all aspects of the subject in a balanced fashion? What is the approach to the subject (topical, analytical, chronological, descriptive)?
- How does the author support her argument? What evidence does she use to prove her point? Do you find that evidence convincing? Why or why not? Does any of the author's information (or conclusions) conflict with other books you've read, courses you've taken or just previous assumptions you had of the subject?
- How does the author structure her argument? What are the parts that make up the whole? Does the argument make sense? Does it persuade you? Why or why not?
- How has this book helped you understand the subject? Would you recommend the book to your reader? Beyond the internal workings of the book, you may also **consider some information about the author and the circumstances of the text's production:**

- Who is the author? Nationality, political persuasion, training, intellectual interests, personal history, and historical context may provide crucial details about how a work takes shape. Does it matter, for example, that the biographer was the subject's best friend? What difference would it make if the author participated in the events she writes about? Include a short paragraph on the background of the author.
- What is the book's genre? Out of what field does it emerge? Does it conform to or depart from the conventions of its genre? These questions can provide a historical or literary standard on which to base your evaluations. If you are reviewing the first book ever written on the subject, it will be important for your readers to know. Keep in mind, though, that naming "firsts"—alongside naming "bests" and "onlys"—can be a risky business unless you're absolutely certain.

Writing the Book Review

Once you have made your observations and assessments of the work under review, carefully survey your notes and attempt to unify your impressions into a statement that will describe the purpose or thesis of your review. Check out our [handout on thesis statements](#). Then, outline the arguments that support your thesis. Your arguments should develop the thesis in a logical manner. That logic, unlike more standard academic writing, may initially emphasize the author's argument while you develop your own in the course of the review. The relative emphasis depends on the nature of the review: if readers may be more interested in the work itself, you may want to make the work and the author more prominent; if you want the review to be about your perspective and opinions, then you may structure the review to privilege your observations over (but never separate from) those of the work under review. What follows is just one of many ways to organize a review.

A. Introduction

Since most reviews are brief, many writers begin with a catchy quip or anecdote that succinctly delivers their argument. But you can introduce your review differently depending on the argument and audience. The Writing Center's [handout on introductions](#) can help you find an approach that works. In general, **you should include:**

- The name of the author and the book title and the main theme.
- Relevant details about who the author is and where he/she stands in the genre or field of inquiry. You could also link the title to the subject to show how the title explains the subject matter.

- The context of the book and/or your review. Placing your review in a framework that makes sense to your audience alerts readers to your “take” on the book. Perhaps you want to situate a book about the Cuban revolution in the context of Cold War rivalries between the United States and the Soviet Union. Another reviewer might want to consider the book in the framework of Latin American social movements. Your choice of context informs your argument.
- The thesis of the book. If you are reviewing fiction, this may be difficult since novels, plays, and short stories rarely have explicit arguments. But identifying the book’s particular novelty, angle, or originality allows you to show what specific contribution the piece is trying to make.
- Your thesis about the book.

B. Summary of content

- This should be brief, as analysis takes priority. In the course of making your assessment, you’ll hopefully be backing up your assertions with concrete evidence from the book, so some summary will be dispersed throughout other parts of the review.
- The necessary amount of summary also depends on your audience. Graduate students, beware! If you are writing book reviews for colleagues—to prepare for comprehensive exams, for example—you may want to devote more attention to summarizing the book’s contents. If, on the other hand, your audience has already read the book—such as a class assignment on the same work—you may have more liberty to explore more subtle points and to emphasize your own argument. See our [handout on summary](#) for more tips.

C. Analysis and evaluation of the book

- Your analysis and evaluation should be organized into paragraphs that deal with single aspects of your argument. This arrangement can be challenging when your purpose is to consider the book as a whole, but it can help you differentiate elements of your criticism and pair assertions with evidence more clearly.
- You do not necessarily need to work chronologically through the book as you discuss it. Given the argument you want to make, you can organize your paragraphs more usefully by themes, methods, or other elements of the book.

- If you find it useful to include comparisons to other books, keep them brief so that the book under review remains in the spotlight.
- Avoid excessive quotation and give a specific page reference in parentheses when you do quote. Remember that you can state many of the author's points in your own words.

D. Conclusion

- Sum up or restate your thesis or make the final judgment regarding the book. You should not introduce new evidence for your argument in the conclusion. You can, however, introduce new ideas that go beyond the book if they extend the logic of your own thesis.
- This paragraph needs to balance the book's strengths and weaknesses in order to unify your evaluation. Did the body of your review have three negative paragraphs and one favorable one? What do they all add up to? The Writing Center's [handout on conclusions](#) can help you make a final assessment.

Finally, a few general considerations:

- Review the book in front of you, not the book you wish the author had written. You can and should point out shortcomings or failures, but don't criticize the book for not being something it was never intended to be.
- With any luck, the author of the book worked hard to find the right words to express her ideas. You should attempt to do the same. Precise language allows you to control the tone of your review.
- Never hesitate to challenge an assumption, approach, or argument. Be sure, however, to cite specific examples to back up your assertions carefully.
- Try to present a balanced argument about the value of the book for its audience. You're entitled—and sometimes obligated—to voice strong agreement or disagreement. But keep in mind that a bad book takes as long to write as a good one, and every author deserves fair treatment. Harsh judgments are difficult to prove and can give readers the sense that you were unfair in your assessment.

Further Reading on Writing Book Reviews:

A great place to learn about book reviews is to look at examples. *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* and *The New York Review of Books* can show you how professional writers review books. See also: Drewry, John. *Writing Book Reviews*. Boston: The Writer, 1974. *Literary Reviewing*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987.

Teitelbaum, Harry. *How to Write Book Reports*. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan, 1998.

Walford, A.J., ed. *Reviews and Reviewing: A Guide*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1986.

Source for this Book Review handout: University of North Carolina Writing Center:
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/files/2012/09/Book-Reviews-The-Writing-Center.pdf>