NT 6R1040—Papyrology and Textual Criticism

McMaster Divinity College Stanley E. Porter, PhD Winter 2025 (Term 2)

Monday 2:00–3:50 pm

(appointments through my assistant at: mcglynnm@mcmaster.ca)

Course Description

This course is a study of the characteristics, uses, and function of papyrology and related manuscripts from antiquity to the invention of printing. Special attention is given to biblical manuscripts and insights gained for study of the biblical texts, including textual criticism, which forms an important component of the course.

Course Objectives

Knowing: By the end of the course, participants should know about:

- 1. How ancient documents and books were physically manufactured
- 2. Ancient handwriting conventions and special conventions used in biblical manuscripts
- 3. The major discoveries of ancient manuscripts
- 4. The major figures in papyrology and textual criticism
- 5. The extant materials for reconstructing the earliest forms of the biblical texts
- 6. Various principles of textual criticism and the discussions surrounding them

Being: By the end of the course, participants should

- 1. Appreciate the value of knowing and being able to use ancient Greek manuscripts for study of the biblical text
- 2. Appreciate the challenges faced by anyone attempting to reconstruct the earliest form of the biblical text
- 3. Be sensitive to the range of issues and challenges faced by contemporary papyrological and text-critical studies

Doing: By the end of the course, participants should be able to

- 1. Edit an early manuscript
- 2. Discuss the history and development of papyrology and textual criticism, and their importance
- 2. Discuss the characteristics and dating of any particular manuscript
- 3. Discuss the evidence for the originality of variant readings in the New Testament

Course Prerequisites

Admission to the MA or PhD program in the area of Biblical Studies at McMaster Divinity College and at least two years of study of ancient Greek or Hebrew (as appropriate) for those in the PhD program, and at least one year of either ancient Greek or Hebrew for those in the MA. At least one course in Greek or Hebrew exegesis is highly recommended. A conversation with the professor is also recommended.

Course Requirements

This is a graduate research-level course in biblical studies and will be taught in this way. Therefore, it is assumed that students will perform as research degree students to facilitate learning. This means that students will be expected to do suitable academic work outside of the classroom.

The major requirements include demonstrated knowledge of: a range of topics in papyrology and textual criticism (as demonstrated through in class discussion), the process of editing a manuscript (as demonstrated in Paper 1), text-critical issues (Paper 2), a particular specialized topic within papyrology or textual criticism (Paper 3), and an appropriate formal critical response to the work of other students (Paper 4).

The design of this course is to encourage as much constructive thought and interaction on the topic of papyrology and textual criticism as is possible. In some ways, we hope to imitate the kind of dialogue found in academic conferences through classroom discussion. The required readings are just as important as the "living voice" of discussion. These readings are designed to generate constructive and insightful discussion of the topic (see further comments on the community of scholars below).

In research, the student is to do new (for the student and the discipline) work that goes well beyond summary of previous work and suggests and develops new ways of understanding (i.e. literature surveys are to be kept to a minimum in the major paper, Paper 3). Papers 2, 3, and 4 will be presented in seminar format during the course, Paper 2 in the middle of the term, and Papers 3 and 4 near the end of the term as a culminating scholarly work (see schedule below). The order for presentation will be set once the topics of the two sets of papers is decided. The expectation is that all students will be full participants throughout the term.

The course communication will rely primarily upon email for distribution of papers. The technology to be used in this course will be further specified closer to the time of need. Use of email—assuming that each student gives consent—will only be for the business of this course and for no other purpose. Please respect this requirement.

1. Reading and Participation

There will be an assigned set of readings for each week, with the individual student to make choices for further reading from the attached list or other pertinent sources. Each student is to read the required reading and as much of the other material as is feasible. The additional reading should total at least 1,000 further pages over the course of the term (excluding pages that contain only plates of manuscripts, etc.). It is helpful if sections that pertain to the topic of each session can be read ahead of the pertinent class meeting. Percentage: 0%—although failure to complete all reading will detract from the final grade up to 10%.

Participation in all sessions is required. Most class sessions will combine lecture and discussion, with some hands-on exercises involving manuscripts and related phenomena. Percentage: 0%—although failure to participate will detract from the final grade up to 10%.

2. Writing

Paper 1: Edit a manuscript. An electronic form of a manuscript is found at the following url: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4f/Egerton_Gospel___Egerton_Papyrus_2_-_fragments_1-3_-_recto.jpg. This edition is to provide a diplomatic and reading text of the top, large manuscript (these two types of editions will be discussed in the course, but you need to learn what they are), and appropriate critical apparatuses for each. The edition is to include an introduction to and description of the manuscript, patterned after those found in standard editions, such as the P.Oxy. collection or Porter and Porter, *New Testament Greek Papyri and Parchments*. The student is not to use any previously published version of this text even if it can be found on-line or elsewhere (and it can, as it is a well-known manuscript; the student will be honor bound to affirm that no previously published version has been accessed in any form). We will discuss the requirements of this paper and student progress in class but you should not wait to begin this project until then. This paper is due **February 24**. Percentage: **20%**.

Paper 2: Select a particular text-critical problem in the New Testament and produce a critical analysis of 2,500 words of the text-critical evidence, including attention to the manuscripts, their relationships, internal and external probabilities, and any other pertinent issues. Be sure to establish the significance of the variant and propose a resolution that accounts for the variants. Several of these past papers have been published. The text-critical topic is to be chosen by **January 27**. These papers will be presented and discussed during class on **March 3**, with the paper due on that day. Many of these papers by previous students have been published in various journals, so write with this possibility in mind. Papers are to be distributed four days in advance to all students (**February 27**). Percentage: **20%**.

Paper 3: Produce a research paper of about 8,000 words in length (total, including notes and bibliography) on some issue surrounding early manuscripts or producing an edition of further manuscript(s). The topic is to be discussed and approved by the professors by **January 27**, at which time assignments of respondents will be made. Several of the past papers have been published in respected journals, so consider the assignment in that light. Students will present their papers in a seminar format on **March 24** or **31**. For each presentation the student is required to distribute a draft of the paper (a substantial portion of the final paper) and any pertinent documents accompanying it one week before the presentation (**March 17** or **24**). The student will be given two minutes to present a summary of their paper, before the respondent then speaks. The final revised paper is due **April 11**. Percentage: **45%**.

Paper 4: Presentation of a formal, critical response of about 2,500 words to one of the major research projects (Paper 3). This paper is to be distributed to all members of the class three days before the presentation, so by **March 21** or **28**. For the presentation, the student will offer two minutes of formal response before the presenter responds and the topic is opened up to further discussion. This written response is meant to be its own contribution to knowledge and hence requires appropriate documentation. Students are able to revise their responses for final submission on **April 11**, taking into consideration revisions to the originally presented paper (students must communicate the gist of their revisions to their respondents no later than **April 7**). **15%**.

Required Texts

The two required texts should, if possible, be read before the beginning of the course, as a foundation for discussion.

Parker, D. C. An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. [PINT]

Porter, S. E. How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013. [PHWGNT]

Assigned Reading

The following books will be extensively read. Other readings to be used are mentioned on the respective days of treatment of the topics.

Bagnall, R. S. Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History. London: Routledge, 1995. [BRP]

Bagnall, R. S., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. [BOHP]

Deissmann, A. *Light from the Ancient East*, translated by L. R. M. Strachan. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927. [DLAE]

Porter, S. E., and A. W. Pitts. *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. [PPNT]

Turner, E. G. Greek Papyri: An Introduction. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. [TGP]

Hurlburt Family Bookstore

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Course Assessment

The grade will be determined by the quality of class participation, which includes evidence of having done the reading, by the quality of class presentations, and by the

quality of the written assignments. See percentages indicated above. A student must make a valid attempt at each component of the course in order to pass. Late assignments are penalized at 5% per day, including distribution of papers for discussion. The change of topic assignment once agreed results in an automatic penalty of 10% of the grade.

Building an Academic Community

The goal of this course is to build an academic community among a small body of scholars. We are all scholars seeking after greater understanding, and it is through our work together on a common topic that we are often able to make great strides forward in our knowledge. This course is designed to encourage such discussion. There are probably differing levels of knowledge of the topic held by members of our learning community, and so our goal is to help and encourage each one to develop to the point of being able to present publishable work that contributes to the field and enables others to benefit as well. We will only be able to do so if we offer each other helpful and meaningful comments, not designed to wound or denigrate but to refine and encourage and promote the development of better ideas. We must have the freedom to do so while respecting the integrity and beliefs of others. At times, we may find that we need to modify our ideas, but all of this is to gain greater understanding of our field of exploration, especially as it is focused upon greater understanding of the Greek New Testament or Hebrew Old Testament. We hope that you are also wanting to join us in this worthwhile academic and intellectual enterprise, so that we are able to look back at the end of the term and appreciate how far we have traveled in our journey.

Learning Community Standards

The following guidelines are presented to encourage all students to participate together in this learning community and should be kept in mind at all times.

- 1. Please do not hesitate to offer constructive criticism of the work of others in the class. Be sure to offer serious arguments and do so in ways that address the issues and do not attack the person.
- 2. Please do not be offended if criticism of your work is offered in the above spirit. Learning to give and accept criticism is part of scholarly development. Respect the right to disagree.
- 3. Please respect the opinions of others, even if you do not agree with them. Extend courtesy by not ridiculing others' ideas, but feel free to respond to them logically and critically and in an orderly manner.
- 4. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation after class to the professor.
 - 5. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session unless arranged in advance.
- 6. Students may eat and drink in class so long as they do not distract others or leave the remains of such activities behind for others to clean up. Cleanliness may not be next to godliness but it is nevertheless important.
- 7. Students are expected to devote their full attention to this course while in the classroom and not be doing work on any other subject.

- 8. Conversation and discussion are welcome, so long as all are able to participate. Students are not to carry on other conversations in class, especially with those seated immediately adjacent to them. If something being said or done in class is not clear, please ask the professor at an appropriate time and in an appropriate way.
- 9. Cell phones are not to be used in class, and computers may only be used on immediate and direct course business.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines will be dismissed from the class, with all the consequences implied.

Course Schedule

The following course schedule attempts to capture the major elements of the course and its content. There is a logic to the presentation, so please gauge your reading accordingly. There is basic reading required for each week as a minimum, but the student is to find other materials as appropriate to fill in other knowledge of these areas.

January 6: Introduction of Course

Discussion of objectives of course Introduction to papyrology

Read: BRP

Introduction to textual criticism

Read: PHWGNT, ch. 1; PPNT, chs. 1, 2

January 13: History of Papyrology

History of papyrology and major figures in papyrology

Read: BOHP, chs. 2, 3, TGP, chs. 2, 3

Recent developments in papyrology

Read: BOHP, ch. 27

January 20: History of Textual Criticism (1)

Origins of textual criticism

Major figures in textual criticism

Read: PHWGNT, ch. 2; PINT, chs. 5, 6

January 27: History of Textual Criticism (2)

Major editions of the Greek New Testament (Hebrew Bible)

Recent developments in textual criticism

Read: PPNT, ch. 11; Garrick V. Allen, ed. *The Future of New Testament Textual Scholarship*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019. Esp. chs. By Porter (pp. 131-54),

Kreinecker (pp. 181-200), Kraus (pp. 283-304).

Papers 2 and 3 topics and Paper 4 respondents chosen

February 3: Manuscripts and Their Characteristics

Papyrus, parchment, scrolls, codices and how they were made Ink and illumination, size, scoring, page and quire numbering Describing a manuscript

Read: BOHP, chs. 1, 4; PPNT, ch. 3; PINT, ch. 2

Handwriting and its evolution, punctuation, accents, spelling, and paragraphs

Eusebian canons and Ammonian sections, testimonia and colophons

Documentary versus literary manuscripts

Dating of manuscripts

Read: BOHP, chs. 5, 11, 16, 20, 25; TGP, chs. 1, 6

February 10: Editing Manuscripts

Discovery of ancient manuscripts Current collections of ancient manuscripts Editing task and procedure Work still to be done

Read: BOHP, chs. 8, 9; TGP, ch. 5

MDC Reading Week February 17-23. Class does not meet on February 17.

February 24: Textual Criticism in Practice

Evaluating individual manuscripts

Copying errors and other corruptions

Manuscript families, text types, and other organizational principles

Important New Testament manuscripts

Principles and methods of New Testament textual criticism

The *UBSGNT*5 and NA28

Read: PPNT, chs. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12; PINT, chs. 1, 4

Paper 1 due

March 3: Documentary Papyri and Paper on Textual Criticism Presentation Presentations of Papers on Textual Criticism (Paper 2)

Types of manuscripts: Petitions, letters, lists, receipts, censuses, etc.

Provenance and Dating

Value of studying documentary papyri

Grammatical, lexical, and cultural issues

Read: BOHP, chs. 6, 17, 21; TGP, chs. 4, 7, 8; DLAE, chs. 2, 3, 4

P. Arzt-Grabner, J. S. Kloppenborg, and C. M. Kreinecker. *More Light from the Ancient East: Understanding the New Testament through Papyri*. Leiden: Brill, 2023; P. Arzt-Grabner, *Letters and Letter Writing*. Leiden: Brill, 2023; S. Porter and M. B. O'Donnell. "Building and Examining Linguistic Phenomena in a Corpus of Representative Papyri." In *The Language of the Papyri*, edited by T. V. Evans and D. D. Obbink, 287-311. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Paper 2 due

March 10: Literary Papyri and Manuscripts for Biblical Textual Study

Classical texts

Biblical texts in Greek

Versions

Church Fathers

Non-canonical texts

Values and Cautions for use in New Testament study

Read: BOHP, ch. 12; TGP, ch. 7; PINT, ch. 3; PPNT, ch. 4

March 17: Recent Discussions in Textual Criticism and Papyrology

A papyrus mentioning Jesus's wife?

A first-century Mark fragment?

The Oxyrhynchus papyri and possible scandal

Is the CBGM the solution?

Paratextual features

Read: P.Oxy. 5345 (83 [2018] 4-7); S. E. Porter, C. S. Stevens, and D. I. Yoon, eds. *Studies on The Paratextual Features of Early New Testament Manuscripts: Texts and Editions of the New Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 2023. Esp. chs 1, 2, 11, 12, 13; T. Wasserman and P. J. Gurry. *A New Approach to Textual Criticism: An Introduction to the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.

March 24: Manuscripts in the Life of the Church and Presentations of Research Papers

Greek and other lectionaries

Textual notation for liturgical purposes

Read: W. J. Porter. "The Use of Ekphonetic Notation in Vienna New Testament Manuscripts." In *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Wien, 22.–28. Juli 2001*, edited by B. Palme, 559–72. Papyrologica Vindobonensia Bd. 1. Vienna: Verlag der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007.

Presentations of Research Paper 3 (and Paper 4 responses)

March 31: Presentations of Research Paper 3 (and Paper 4 responses)

April 7: Concluding Session

What have we learned?

Papers 3 and 4 due April 11

College Style for Submission of Written Work

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College website. This includes drafts and presubmission copies.

Statement on Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to

participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Please Note: This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the instructors. This syllabus is prepared with currently available information, but the instructors reserve the right to change the content, format and requirements of the course at any time.

Additional Bibliography for Papyrology and Manuscript Study

(See also separate bibliography for S. Porter below) Compiled by Stanley E. Porter

- Abel, F.-M. *Grammaire du grec biblique: Suivie d'un choix de papyrus*. Paris: Gabalda, 1927.
- Aland, K., and B. Aland. *The Text of the New Testament*, translated by E. F. Rhodes. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.
- Arzt-Grabner, P. *Philemon*. Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 1. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.
- Arzt-Grabner, P. 2. *Korinther*. Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 4. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014.
- Arzt-Grabner, P., R. E. Kritzer, A. Papathomas, and F. Winter. *1. Korinther*. Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 2. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.
- Arzt-Grabner, P., and C. M. Kreinecker, eds. *Light from the East: Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010.
- Bagnall, R. S. *Early Christian Books in Egypt*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
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- Barbour, R. Greek Literary Hands, A.D. 400–1600. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981.
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- Blumell, L. H., and T. A. Wayment, eds. *Christian Oxyrhynchus: Texts, Documents, and Sources*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015.
- Bowers, F. *Textual and Literary Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959.
- Bowman, A. K., et al., eds. *Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007.

- Cavallo, G., and H. Maehler. *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period, A.D. 300–800*. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1987.
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- Easterling, P., and C. Handley, ed. *Greek Scripts: An Illustrated Introduction*. London: Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, 2001.
- Ehrman, B. D., and M. W. Holmes, eds. *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995. Rev. ed. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Elliott, J. K. New Testament Textual Criticism: The Application of Thoroughgoing Principles. Essays on Manuscripts and Textual Variation. NovTSup 137. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Elliott, J. K., ed. *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*. NovTSup 13. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Elliott, J. K., ed. *Studies in New Testament Language and Text*. NovTSup 44. Leiden: Brill, 1976.
- Epp, E. J. Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays, 1962–2004. NovTSup 116. Atlanta: SBL, 2005.
- Epp, E. J., and G. D. Fee. *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Finegan, J. Encountering New Testament Manuscripts. London: SPCK, 1974.
- Foster, P. *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary*. TENTS 4. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

- Gallo, I. *Greek and Latin Papyrology*, translated by M. R. Falivene and J. R. March. London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1986.
- Gathercole, S. *The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction and Commentary*. TENTS 11. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Gignac, F. T. A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods. 2 vols. Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino—La Goliardica, 1976, 1981.
- Greenlee, J. H. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.
- Greetham, D. C. Textual Scholarship: An Introduction. New York: Garland, 1994.
- Gregory, C. R. Canon and Text of the New Testament. New York: Scribners, 1907.
- Haelst, J. van. *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires Juifs et Chrétiens*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1976.
- Hatch, W. H. P. *The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.
- Horsley, G. H. R., et al. *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. North Ryde, N.S.W., Australia: Macquarie University, 1981–.
- Hull, R. F., Jr. *The Story of the New Testament Text: Movers, Materials, Motives, Methods, and Models.* Atlanta: SBL, 2010.
- Jones, B. W., and R. D. Milns. *The Use of Documentary Evidence in the Study of Roman Imperial History*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
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- Kraus, T. J., M. J. Kruger, and T. Nicklas. *Gospel Fragments*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
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