



McMaster Divinity
College

Devotional Practices in the New Testament

NT 3P1170 (BS/PS)

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Cynthia Long Westfall, Ph.D
Email: westfal@mcmaster.ca

Winter 2027
Wednesdays 4–5:50

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation



Course Description

Devotional practices, or spiritual disciplines, are fundamental ways that we enter the sphere of grace and foster our love for God. The devotional actions of the first Christians with which they worshipped Jesus Christ as God were stunningly innovative in their contexts. Understanding those actions anew in those contexts provides a repertoire that moves us beyond our typical traditional and our popular devotional practices. This course combines the *study* of the devotional practices in the New Testament with *interactive experiences* in which we explore the application of early Christian devotional practices together.

Specializations

This course is an elective for specializations in Biblical Studies (BS) Pastoral Studies (PS).

Biblical Studies (BW)

Students who specialize in Biblical Studies will benefit from the study of a breadth of spiritual disciplines in their Second Temple and Greco-Roman contexts as well as their literary contexts (Old Testament, Gospels, General Epistles, Pauline Corpus and Johannine Literature). We'll work at making the relevant texts come alive!

Pastoral Studies (PS)

Students who specialize in Pastoral Studies will find fresh and practical approaches to biblical practices of devotion and worship that will enrich them personally and equip them for ministry. Come to class with an open mind and a willingness to step out of our twenty-first century comfort zones.

Course Objectives

Specific Objectives—through reading, lectures, discussion and interactive participation the student will...

Knowing

- Describe the spectrum of devotional practices in the New Testament and early Christianity
- Explain the social, historical, literary and religious cultural contexts in which the early church developed its devotional practices
- Grasp the nature of devotion to Jesus within exclusive monotheism

Being

- Be open to diverse biblical practices and experiences of devotion and worship
- Grow in radical commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ
- Become a multi-faceted worshipper of the triune God

Doing

- Participate in interactive practices of devotion and worship
- Research and write a paper on an aspect of early Christian devotion that is suitable for the student's area of specialization.
- Utilize the research and course resources to develop a project in the area of the student's specialization that speaks to the contemporary context.

Course Requirements

Class Participation (15%)

Student attendance and participation in interactive lectures and class and group discussions and activities is expected. Participation in online discussions is voluntary but encouraged and counts as participation. See Classroom Behavior: Attendance for a full explanation of the class policy.

Reading (10%)

See the Daily Schedule at the end for the precise dates and pages.

- Read the pages for the required reading prior to class on the due dates (see Daily Schedule at the end). Be prepared to interact with the main issues in group discussions.
- At the end of the term, each student will submit a reading report to Avenue to Learn **April 16** indicating the percentage of the reading that has been completed (such as 100%--that's it!).

Textbooks and Materials

Required

Hurtado, Larry W. *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

A modern version of the NT

Recommended

Hurtado, Larry W. *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Hurtado, Larry W. *How on Earth Did Jesus Become A God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Additional materials will be distributed on A2L or accessed on DTL.

Written Assignments

In order to pass the course, all assignments must be completed

Research Paper (40%)

Each student will write a research paper on an aspect of early Christian devotion that concerns Biblical Studies, Christ and Culture or Pastoral Studies. **Each student will submit a PDF copy to A2L Friday, February 26, 11:59 p.m. Late papers will lose 2% a day for a week, then 5% a day**

Length & style: It should be approximately 4,000 words (about fifteen pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. There should be a minimum of 15 sources consulted (not counting the course text), and documentation, using the sources in the paper. For instructions on how to write a research paper, see the video and links under the introductory material under content. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Press Style Guide at:

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Approach: Choose an aspect or topic of early Christian devotion that reflects your specialization. Utilize a minimum of fifteen academic resources.

See the Rubric on A2L for marking.

Portfolio Project & Presentation (35%)

Each student will complete a paper or project designed to apply their research in a contemporary context. **Submit a PDF copy to A2L by Wednesday, April 14, 4 p.m. Each student will present their projects in class in a 10 min. presentation.**

If your project is a type of paper—Length & style: It should be approximately 3000 words (about twelve pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For instructions on how to write a research paper, see the video and links under the introductory material under content. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guide (above).

If your project is an artifact, it should be somewhat comparable in time and effort to a 12 pg. research paper submitted in PDF copy to Avenue. The student must provide an exegetical explanation (approximately 2–5 pages) of how the artifact aligns with the course together with footnotes and a bibliography that demonstrate the research behind the project). Marking will be based on:

- The expression of the biblical message/content, the content and focus of the course, and depth of research
- The quality of the medium
- Appropriateness for the target groups
- The calculated effort expended

Some suggestions for a project include:

- A sermon on devotional practices
- A study guide that will assist young adult learners in exploring or understanding biblical practices of devotion. Include questions, explanations, directions and other material that both enlightens the theme in its historical context and helps learners to connect the text with life today
- A movie presentation, critical review and discussion which encapsulates the practice of devotion in a modern context*

- A parable, allegory or practice that utilizes significant or powerful contemporary imagery, symbols or metaphors for the practice of devotion*
- A collection of poetry or songs that explore thought, themes and/or emotions in devotional practice*
- A devotional experience for a church or small groups that simulates the situation of the early church and the devotional practices*
- A description of connections between the characters, contexts and themes in your life story and the theme of devotion in the NT*

A project proposal will be submitted to A2L **on Friday, March 5**. For the project, specify the audience and context targeted, the goal and the approach.

Grading Summary

Reading	10%
Participation	15%
Research Paper	40%
Profile Project	35%

Classroom Behavior

In Class Attendance

- Students who are registered to be in-person do not have the option to livestream. The only exceptions will be in cases of illness or emergency with the professor's permission.
- Students should be on time to class or on site. If there are any issues, e-mail an explanation to the professor (copy GA Namhyo Kim: kimn34@mcmaster.ca in advance.
- Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance. Partial attendance will be counted as an absence.

Participation

- Please respect the opinions of others without disrespect or ridicule, even if you do not agree with them. However, feel free to respond logically and critically in an orderly manner.
- Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except what is appropriate in the course outline.
- Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class or while they are livestreaming.
- Students are not to access e-mail, take or make phone calls, send or receive text messages, surf the net, etc., while class is in session.
- Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

Academic Integrity & AI Usage

- All work submitted must be your own. Use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) is prohibited for all assignments, discussions, and assessments unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.
- Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct under institutional guidelines.

Privacy

- Class sessions may be recorded for educational purposes and shared only with enrolled students. Recordings must not be distributed outside the course.
- Respect the privacy of peers: do not share images, voices, or contributions outside the class environment.

Live Streaming

Attendance & Participation

- This course meets live online at the scheduled times. Attendance and active participation are required.
- Join the session on time; late arrivals disrupt the class and may affect your participation grade.
- Sessions may be recorded for review, but recordings do not replace live attendance.

Technology Requirements

- Ensure you have a reliable internet connection, a device with audio and video capability, and the course platform installed (e.g., Zoom, Teams).
- Test your connection before class.
- Keep your microphone muted unless speaking to reduce background noise.
- Use headphones when possible for better audio quality.

Webcam & Environment

- Unless otherwise instructed, enable your webcam for the duration of the class session.
- Dress in casual but appropriate attire.
- Minimize distractions in your background. Virtual backgrounds are acceptable if professional.

Netiquette

- Be respectful and courteous in all interactions.
- Use the “Raise Hand” feature before speaking; avoid interrupting others.
- Keep chat messages on-topic; avoid ALL CAPS, sarcasm, or humor that could be misinterpreted.
- Stay focused—do not multitask during class.

Communication

- Check your email and the LMS regularly for updates, schedule changes, and supplementary materials.
- Monitor any additional communication channels used for the course.

Absence Policy

General

More than 2 absences may result in a penalty. More than 4 absences will result in a failure of the course.

- 2 absences allow leeway in challenges due to issues such as illness, weather, and power outages. Students are expected to get the information they missed from A2L and peers.
- After 2 absences there will be a 5% penalty for the next absence. However, in special cases such as illness the penalty may be waived.
- 4 absences constitute more than 30% of the course and will result in the failure of the course regardless of the nature of the challenges.

Absence Due to Illness

If you must miss class due to an illness, you must contact me as soon as possible to let me know. Likewise, if I should become ill, I will communicate with you via A2L about how we will make up class sessions. Even if much of the course content will be made available via A2L, it would still be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible.

Students who fail to respect these guidelines may lose participation points impacting their grade and/or be dismissed from the class.

Late Assignments lose 2% each day for 7 days, and then 5% a day up to 30%. However, no assignments will be accepted after **11:59 p.m., April 16** .

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, students 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.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresenting the authorship or ownership of written work through deception or other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include copying or using unauthorized aids during tests or examinations; plagiarism, that is, presenting another person's (or generative AI's) words, ideas, data, or creative work as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement and citation; or submitting work for credit in more than one course without instructor permission.

A special note about Generative AI: Students are expected to do their own thinking and write their own papers and assignments. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work. The use of AI to produce content that is then submitted as though it were the student's own work constitutes plagiarism and is a violation of the Academic Honesty Policy. While AI tools may be used to correct errors in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI must not be used to translate assignments from a student's native language into English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in the English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to supporting a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations to participate fully in this course must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) of McMaster University. SAS will work directly with the MDC Registrar to ensure reasonably appropriate accommodations are in place. Students with accommodations must use the SAS portal to activate the accommodations relevant to each course at the start of each term in which they are enrolled. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be applied to coursework or activities that have already concluded.

Contact Information:

- **Student Accessibility Services General Inquiries:** sas@mcmaster.ca
- **Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC):** sobotar@mcmaster.ca
- **MDC Registrar:** mdcreg@mcmaster.ca

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 student will use inclusive language in all MDC assignments. When referencing biblical texts, students should preserve the integrity of

the original expressions and the names of God while using gender-inclusive language when referring to human beings. Biblical quotations should be taken from a gender-inclusive translation such as: NRSVue (2022), NIV (2011), CEB (2011), NLT (1996), or CEV (1995).

Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the **McMaster Divinity College Press Style Guide** <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

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Appointments & office hours

Tues: 12–2

Wed: 2–4

After class or appointments in person or on zoom can be arranged at other times

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

NT 3XD3 COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	CLASS SESSION	Hurtado	NT & Activities
Jan 13	Introduction to the course Specializations 1 st century vs. 21 st century worldview		
Jan 20	Greco-Roman & Jewish Contexts vs. our context	1–53	Table fellowship <i>practiced</i> in a common meal The dynamics of household worship
Jan 27	A relationship with the historical Jesus	53–78	
Feb 3	Jesus and the OT	563–602	Use of the OT
Feb 10	Stories about Jesus	217–348, 427–86	Mt, Mark, Luke, John Memorization, story telling
Feb 15-19	MDC Reading Week		
Feb 24	Jewish-Christian Devotion Research papers due Feb 26, 11:59 p.m.	155–216	Catholic Epistles Use of the calendar Symbolism Space/place
March 3	Paul & Worship Proposal for Project due March 5 at 11:59 p. m.	79–154	Pauline Epistles themes Exercising spiritual gifts, Dreams, prophecy
March 10	Johannine Worship	349–426	Themes in John, 1, 2, 3 John, Rev Confession
March 17	Forms of Worship		Experiencing multifaceted worship practices <i>Each student selects a practice and leads the class in that practice</i>
March 24	Meals, Seder and Love Feasts	606–19	Communion/Eucharist in the context of Seder <i>practiced</i>
March 31	Prayer, Fasting, Martyrdom	619–24	Sacrifice (lent), fasting
April 7	Doctrinal Developments & Diversity	519–562; 625–48	Role of theology
April 14	Projects Due class time Presentations during class Reading Reports due April 16 at 11:59 p.m.		Presentations

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