

McMaster Divinity College

Find God in Your Time of Need

NT /TH 3XH3/6XH6
Hebrews and the Early Church

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Fall 2013 (Term 1)
Wednesdays 7-9 p.m.

I. Course Description

Hebrews is written to help a first century Christian community in a time of crisis, equipping them as the possibly faced homelessness and forced immigration. Therefore, when understood in its context, Hebrews is not only a book that helps us to encounter Jesus at a deeper level, but it models spiritual disciplines and theological skills.

An exegetical and interpretative study of the Book of Hebrews in English translation. This class involves an acquaintance with structure, content, message, context and other interpretive issues of Hebrews as well as its meaning for today in discipleship, community and ministry.

Specializations:

Biblical Studies
Church and Culture
Christian Thought and History

II. Course Objectives

Specific Objectives – Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments the student will:

Knowing

1. Know how to draw closer to God through a new understanding of person of Jesus Christ and the our partnership with him
2. Understand Hebrews in its social, historical, literary and religious Jewish Hellenistic context
3. Become familiar with critical views concerning introductory questions (i.e. authorship, date, settings, etc.) and identify the features in the text that illuminate the options

Being

4. Become spiritually challenged by message of Hebrews
5. Appreciate the distinctive theology and goal(s) of the author
6. Experience a fuller partnership with Jesus in his heavenly calling

Doing

7. Examine and evaluate an issue or interpretive problem in the text
8. Develop a strategy for the re-presentation of a passage in Hebrews in a contemporary context. Apply it to discipleship, community and/or ministry formation.

III. Course Requirements

A. Class Participation (10%)

Student participation in interactive lectures and class and group discussions is expected, based on your readings for the week.

B. Reading (10%)

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

1. Read the pages for the required reading prior to class on the due dates (see Daily Schedule at the end), as well as the passage that will be covered. Be prepared to interact with the main issues in group discussions.
2. Read Hebrews three times in its entirety in three different translations.
3. Each week read an additional commentary in the assigned passage that is being written by Professor Westfall distributed via the course Dropbox.
4. At the final class, the student will be asked to summarize the percentage of reading that was completed.

C. Written Assignments:

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

1. Research Paper (30%)

- a. Each student will write a short research paper on one of the major interpretive issues concerning the book of Hebrews. **It will be due October 23, 7 p.m.** turned in through the course DropBox or by e-mail. Late papers lose 2% each day.
- b. Length & style: It should be approximately 1,500 words (about 5-6 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guide at: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf>
- c. Approach: Choose one of the major interpretive issues concerning the book of Hebrews, research the options, draw your conclusions and explain the significance of the issue and your position. Interpretive issues may include introductory topics such as author, recipients, dating and setting, textual issues such as the use of the LXX, structural issues, exegetical issues (not the same passage as #2), and theological issues.

2. Re-presentation of the text (30%)

- a. Each student will complete a paper or project designed to make the discourse, a section or a significant passage accessible in a specific

contemporary context, and present the project in class. **It will be due December 11, 7 p.m.** in hard copy or turned in through the course DropBox or by e-mail. Late papers or projects lose 10% immediately and 2% each day following (Saturdays and Sundays excluded) up to a maximum of 30%.

- b. Length & style: If written, it should be no more than 3000 words (about 12 pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guide (above). If it is a project, it should involve somewhat comparable in time and effort to a 12 pg. research paper.
- c. Each project should be discussed in advance with the professor and a written statement describing the specific contemporary context targeted, the passage that is being re-presented, the goal of the project and the approach. Choose mediums other than the traditional letters or sermons. Some suggestions include:
 - Write a study guide that will assist young adult learners in exploring or understanding all or part of Hebrews. Include questions, explanations, directions and other material that both enlightens the text in its historical context and helps learners to connect the text with life today.
 - Design a movie presentation, critical review and discussion which encapsulates a theme of Hebrews with a modern metaphor.
 - Write a parable or allegory that utilizes significant or powerful contemporary imagery, symbols or metaphors that express the message and content of Hebrews.
 - Write a collection of poetry or songs that explore thought, themes and/or emotions in Hebrews.
 - Design an experience for a small group that simulates the situation of the recipients and the achievement of the goal(s) of the author.
 - Describe connections between the characters, contexts and themes in your life story and Hebrews.

F. Grading Summary

1.	Reading	10%
2.	Participation	10%
3.	Research Paper	35%
4.	Project	35%
5.	Presentation	10%

IV. Textbooks and Materials

A. Required

1. deSilva, David A. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*

- on the Epistle "to the Hebrews."* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
2. Three New Testament modern versions such as NRSV, NIV/TNIV, CEB, New Living Bible, Message
 3. The Greek New Testament (for those with Greek competence). Students with facility in Greek or who are beginning Greek are encouraged to use their Greek Bible. Hebrews has the best Greek style in the New Testament.

B. Recommended

1. Bruce, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
2. Guthrie, George. *Hebrews*. NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
3. Cockerill, Gareth. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT; Eerdmans, 2012.

C. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book store.

D. Additional Materials

Handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available during class and/or through the course DropBox.

V. Classroom Behavior

A. Attendance

1. Students should be on time to class or be prepared to offer an explanation to the professor.
2. Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.
3. More than 2 absences may result in a penalty. More than 4 absences will result in a failure of the course.

B. Participation

1. 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.
2. Students are not expected to be doing work on any other subject except that which is appropriate in the course outline.
3. Students are not to carry on off-topic conversations in class.
4. Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up their desks.

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

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C. Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations> and the McMaster University Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3: www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm

D. Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Appointments:

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via E-mail: westfal@mcmaster.ca
Phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 23605

Office hours:

Monday 5:30-6:30
Tuesday 12:30-1:30, 3:30-4:30
 Wednesday 1-3
Other times by appointment

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*****Disclaimer on Syllabi posted on the web:**

Please Note: 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 until the first day of class.

Weekly Schedule

DATE	CLASS SESSION	DeSilva	New Testament Reading
Sept 11	Introduction to the course The critical introductory issues	1-80	
Sept 18	Pay attention to what the son said— Hang on!	83-108	1:1-2:4
Sept 25	Think of Jesus as an apostle and high priest	108-130	2:5-3:1
Oct 2	Let's not be like the Israelites—let's enter the rest—Move forward!	131-151	3:1-4:1 1st reading of Hebrews in its entirety
Oct 9	Since the promise of rest is open, let's enter the rest—Move forward! Themes: Move forward! Hold on! Draw near!	151-286	4:1-4:16
Oct 16	Let's press on to maturity with the new teaching about Jesus' priesthood— Move forward!	286-219	5:1-6:3
Oct 23	The new teaching results in access to God Research paper due at 7 p.m.	219-59	6:1-7:4
Oct 30	Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek	261-79	7:4-28 2nd reading of Hebrews in its entirety
Nov 6	Jesus' priesthood Part 1	279-303	8:1-9:14
Nov 13	Jesus' priesthood Part 2—Draw near! Themes: Draw near! Hold on! Move forward!	303-75	9:15-10:25
Nov 20	ETS/SBL (no class)		
Nov 27	Let's run the race—Move forward!	377-441	10:26-12:2
Dec 4	Climax: Let's serve God as priests in heavenly Jerusalem—Draw near!	445-527	12:1-13:25 3rd reading of Hebrews in its entirety
Dec 11	Project due at 7 p.m. Short presentations & discussion		

Selected Bibliography on the Book of Hebrews

- Attridge, Harold W. *Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Hebrews*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984.
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- Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Glaze, R. E. *No Easy Salvation: A Careful Examination of the Question of Apostasy in Hebrews*. Nashville: Broadman, 1966.
- Gromacki, Robert G. *Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984.
- Guthrie, Donald. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Guthrie, George H. *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*. Biblical Studies Library. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
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- Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, 2 Volumes. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993.
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- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Hebrews: A Commentary*. The New Testament Library. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knowx Press, 2006.
- Käsemann, Ernst. *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation into the Letter of Hebrews*. Translated by R. A. Harrisville and I. L. Sandberg. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.

- Koester, Craig. *Hebrews*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Lane, William L. *Hebrews 1-8*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1991.
- _____. *Hebrews 9-13*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1991.
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- Lea, Thomas D. *Hebrews and James*. Holman New Testament Commentary 10. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999.
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- Stedman, Ray C. *Hebrews*. IVP New Testament Commentary. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Thompson, James W. *Hebrews*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008.
- Westcott, B. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 3d ed. New York: Macmillan, 1903.