



McMaster Divinity College The Book of Hebrews

NT 3XT3/5XT5/6XT6
Hebrews and the Early Church

Cynthia Long Westfall, Ph.D.
Phone: ext 23605
Email: westfal@mcmaster.ca

Winter 2018 (Term 2)
Wednesdays 2–3:50 p.m.

I. Course Description

The study of the book of Hebrews will provide an excellent resource for students who specialize in Biblical Studies, Church and Culture or Pastoral Studies as well as DPT & PhD students. The student who specializes in Biblical studies will find right insight into its argument and theology, its hermeneutics in its use of the Old Testament, key passages, and classic interpretive problems. The student who specializes in Church and Culture will find the corresponding relevance of ancient literature, thought symbols and stories to our contemporary worldview. The student who specializes in Pastoral Studies will encounter a text that is written to help a first century Christian community in a time of crisis, equipping them to find the face of God as they faced suffering, 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 exegetical and theological skills spiritual disciplines and the development of vision and mission.

The core of this course is 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. However, all will benefit from the exploration of its meaning for today in discipleship, community and ministry.

Specializations: Biblical Studies, Church and Culture, Pastoral Studies

II. Course Objectives

Specific Objectives – Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments

Knowing

1. The student will know the Hebrews teaching on how to draw closer to God and its use in preaching, teaching and Bible Study.
2. The student will understand Hebrews in its social, historical, literary and religious Jewish Hellenistic context
3. The student will be 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. The student will be spiritually challenged by message of Hebrews.

5. The student will appreciate the distinctive content and theology of the text and goal(s) of the author.
6. The student will enter into partnership with Jesus in his heavenly calling.

Doing

7. The student will review the manuscript of the NCCS Commentary on the Book of Hebrews, and read other studies on Hebrews.
8. The student will research and write a paper on an aspect of Hebrews in the area of their specialization.
9. The student will utilize their research and the course resources to develop a strategy for the re-presentation of a passage, theme or issue in Hebrews in the area of their specialization in a contemporary context.

III. Course Requirements for NT 3XT3

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 of the syllabus for dates and pages.

1. Weekly: read the scheduled material or passage in Laansma.
2. Weekly: read the scheduled material or passage in the NCCS Commentary on the Book of Hebrews.
3. Weekly read the scheduled passage in Hebrews in a modern translation.
4. The student will summarize the percentage of reading completed on **April 10, 2 p.m.**

C. Written Assignments

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

1. Book Reviews (10%)

Each week at class time the student will submit a paragraph by e-mail or Avenue that reviews the chapter from the NCCS Commentary on Hebrews, interacting with the material from another commentary selected by the student.

2. Research Paper (30%)

- a. Each student will write a research paper on an aspect of Hebrews that concerns biblical studies, church and culture or pastoral studies. **It will be due March 1, at midnight.** It will be submitted in PDF form by e-mail to westfal@mcmaster.ca. Late papers will be docked at the rate of 1% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that.
- b. Length & style: It should be approximately 4,000 words (about fifteen pages) of text, excluding footnotes and bibliography. For all matters of style and form, consult the McMaster Divinity College Style Guide at: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>
Approach: Choose an aspect of Hebrews that reflects your specialization, and do the appropriate research that effectively interacts with the text and with pertinent factors in your specialization. Utilize a minimum of twelve academic

sources.

3. Profile Project & Presentation (30% + 10%)

- a. Each student will complete a paper or project designed to make the research accessible in a specific contemporary context, and present the project in class. **A hard copy will be due at 2 p.m. on April 10** (at the time of the scheduled exam). No late projects will be accepted.
- b. Length & style: If written, it should be approximately 3000 words (about twelve 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 be 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, **due on March 13**.
Some suggestions include:
 - A sermon on a passage in Hebrews
 - 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.
 - A movie presentation, critical review and discussion which encapsulates a theme of Hebrews with a modern metaphor.
 - A parable or allegory that utilizes significant or powerful contemporary imagery, symbols or metaphors that express the message and content of Hebrews.
 - A collection of poetry or songs that explore thought, themes and/or emotions in Hebrews.
 - An experience for a small group that simulates the situation of the recipients and the achievement of the goal(s) of the author.
 - A description of the connections between the characters, contexts and themes in your life story and Hebrews.

D. Grading Summary

1.	Reading	10%
2.	Books reviews	10%
2.	Participation	10%
3.	Research Paper	35%
4.	Profile Project	25%
5.	Presentation of project	10%

IV. Requirements for 5XT5

Each DPT student will compose a syllabus that is suitable for practice-led research, their professional approach and objectives and meet the general requirements for DPT courses as outlined on the “Application for A Doctor of Practical Theology Advanced Elective.”

V. Requirements for NT 6XT6

This is a graduate research level course. It is assumed that students will perform as graduate research students to facilitate learning. Students will be expected to do suitable academic work outside of the classroom.

Successful completion of the course requires satisfactory completion of the course requirements. Failure to make a valid attempt to complete the requirements may constitute grounds for failure of the course.

A. Participation (10%)

The student is expected to come to class having prepared sufficiently to make a contribution to the topic of discussion and raise significant questions by reading primary and secondary material and by reading all seminar papers in advance. A general introduction to the course subject is required and a short bibliography is included for further reference; each student will want to build a more extensive bibliography.

B. Reading (10%)

Students will read 5,000 pages from works on the Book of Hebrews. The reading list is due on **April 10** with a total page count⁰.

C. Written Assignments

1. Research Paper (35%)

The paper is due midnight Friday March 22. Late papers will be docked at the rate of 1% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that.

6,000 words, excluding notes and bibliography on an issue, methodology, or text in the study of the book of Hebrews.

The professor assumes that students already know the basics about how to research, write and orally present papers. However, we will work at further developing skills that are utilized in scholarly discourse and publication. Both content (research, analysis, organization of material) and presentation (mechanics and style) are important. Each student must utilize the MDC style guide <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>. The general guidelines are that the paper should be 12 pt. font, double-spaced, with 1” margins and utilize footnotes (not endnotes). The paper should include a title page, numbering and a staple cover (not fancy). Each paper should include a formal introduction and conclusion as well as implications for contemporary hermeneutics and any applications for contemporary ministry.

2. Syllabus & Presentation (20% + 5%)

The syllabus is due 2 p.m. April 10, at the time of the scheduled final. Since this has a presentation component, no late syllabi will be accepted.

A detailed syllabus and lecture outline for a college level course of a specific institution, either a general introduction to Hebrews, or an elective course that integrates insights from your papers.

D. Teaching Unit (20%)

The student will prepare and teach 1 hour of the course, covering a passage determined by the professor and student.

E. Grading Summary

1.	Paper	35%
2.	Syllabus	25%
3.	Teaching Unit	20%
4.	Reading	10%
5.	Participation	10%

VI. Textbooks and Materials

A. Required

1. Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Hebrews: A Commentary*. NTL; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2006)
2. New Testament in a modern version such as NRSV, NIV/TNIV, CEB, New Living Bible, Message. 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.
3. Manuscript of Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Hebrews*. NCCS. Wipf & Stock, forthcoming. Distributed by the professor.

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.
4. deSilva, David A. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews."* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

C. Textbook Purchase

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

D. Additional Materials

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

VII. Classroom Behaviour

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 are not to access e-mail, send or receive text messages, surf the net, etc., while class is in session
5. 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.

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:

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/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 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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

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 3:30–5

Tuesday 1–2

Wednesday 1–2, 4–5 _____

Other times by appointment ~~9–10 a.m.~~

~~Thursday 3:30–5:30 p.m.~~

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 until the first day of class.

Weekly Schedule

DATE	CLASS SESSION	Laansma	New Testament Reading
Jan 9	Introduction to the course Specializations The critical introductory issues	1-48	
Jan 16	Pay attention to what the son said— Hang on!	49-69	1:1-2:4
Jan 23	Think of Jesus as an apostle and high priest	70-86	2:5-3:1
Jan 30	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
Feb 6	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
Feb 13	Let's press on to maturity with the new teaching about Jesus' priesthood— Move forward!	286-219	5:1-6:3
Feb 20	Book Week		
Feb 27	The new teaching results in access to God Research paper due midnight, Friday, March 1	219-59	6:1-7:4
March 6	Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek	261-79	7:4-28 2nd reading of Hebrews in its entirety
Mar 13	Jesus' priesthood Part 1 Proposal for project due	279-303	8:1-9:14
Mar 20	Jesus' priesthood Part 2—Draw near! Themes: Draw near! Hold on! Move forward! 6XT6 Paper due midnight, Friday Mar 22.	303-75	9:15-10:25
Mar 27	Let's run the race—Move forward!	377-441	10:26-12:2
Apr 3	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
Apr 10	Projects & presentations Syllabi (6XT6) Reading Reports.		

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.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 2d ed. NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Buchanan, G. W. *To The Hebrews*. Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972.
- deSilva, David A. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Cockerill, Gareth. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT; Eerdmans, 2012.
- Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NIGTC. 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.
- _____. *Hebrews*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Hagner, Donald A. *Hebrews*. Good News Commentaries. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983.
- _____. *Hebrews*. New International Biblical Commentary 14. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990.
- _____. *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition*. Encountering Biblical Studies. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul*, 2 Volumes. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993.
- Hurst, L. D. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- 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.

Lindars, Barnabas. *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. New Testament Theology. Edited by James D. G. Dunn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Lea, Thomas D. *Hebrews and James*. Holman New Testament Commentary 10. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999.

Manson, William. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Historical and Theological Reconsideration*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951.

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.

Westfall, Cynthia Long. *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews*. London: T&T Clark, 2005.