



**McMaster Divinity College**  
**The Book of Hebrews:**  
**How to Find God in your Time of Crisis**

DPT Course 5XT5  
The Book of Hebrews  
How to Find God in your Time of Crisis

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Mondays 4–5:50 p.m.

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### **Biography**

Dr. Cindy Westfall is the Associate Professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College. Her research interests are wide-ranging including the Book of Hebrews, Greek, linguistics, discourse analysis, Revelation and the Catholic Epistles, Bible Translation, Gender and Ministry, and Biblical Social Justice. She is the author of *A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* and *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* and co-edited *The Bible and Social Justice: Old Testament and New Testament Foundations for the Church's Urgent Call*. She has been committed to crossing the boundaries in church planting and participation in the growth of urban church ministry. She is married to Glenn and lives in Dundas, ON.

### **Course Description**

DPT students will benefit from reading the text of Hebrews in first century contexts of crisis including genocide and forced migration. In fact, the professor understands the book as a model of practice-led theology! The DPT student will also benefit from the exploration of the meaning of Hebrews for today in discipleship, community and ministry, and ultimately Hebrews carves a path straight into the presence of God. Beyond that, Hebrews is a book of mystery, controversy, deep theology and extreme challenge! The Book of Hebrews is one of the least known books in the New Testament but has so much to offer every student. 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.

### **Specializations**

#### **Course Objectives**

Specific Objectives – Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments

#### ***Knowing***

- The student recognize the practice-lead theology and message of Hebrews
- The student will understand Hebrews in its social, historical, literary and religious Jewish Hellenistic context and know the connections with current issues & culture

- The student will be familiar with content and critical views concerning introductory questions (i.e. authorship, date, settings, etc.).

### ***Being***

- The student will be spiritually challenged by message of Hebrews and cultivate empathy the recipients.
- The student will appreciate the distinctive content and theology of the text and goal(s) of the author.
- The student will view their ministry, academic work. etc, as partnership with Jesus in his heavenly calling.

### ***Doing***

- The student will develop their own bibliography on the book of Hebrews that will serve as a biblical basis for their theology and practice.
- The student will research and write a paper on an aspect of Hebrews in the area of their specialization with a focus on a re-presentation of a passage, theme or issue in Hebrews as practice-led research in the area of their specialization in a contemporary context.

### **Core Texts to be Included in the Reading**

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Hebrews: A Commentary*. NTL; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2006.  
Manuscript of Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Hebrews*. NCCS. Wipf & Stock, forthcoming.

Distributed by the professor on Avenue.

### **Recommended**

Bruce, F.F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

Guthrie, George. *Hebrews*. NIABC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Koester, Craig. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Anchor; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

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

### **Course Requirements**

#### ***Reading (25%)***

The student will read 4,000 pages of resources related to Hebrews and develop an annotated bibliography (see written assignments)

#### ***Written Assignments***

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

##### **1. Annotated Bibliography (25%)**

The student will read 15-20 resources related to the book of Hebrews (4,000 pages) and develop an annotated bibliography by writing a 100-150 word annotation for each one

with a total of approximately 2,000. The required texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. **The reading report will be due 11:59 pm on November 29.**

**2. Theological Foundation (25%)**

The student will appropriate key content from the annotated bibliography and provides a cogent foundation for a theology and practice of the message of Hebrews in contemporary context(s). **The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It is due 11:59 pm December 9.**

**3. Major Paper & Presentation (40%)**

The student will write a major paper of 8,000 words that integrates the content of the Book of Hebrews with a practice-led approach.

The paper should include four key sections.

- A brief, but clear explanation of how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach
- An exploration of spiritual or ministry challenges and problems that provoke this study that are relevant to the Book of Hebrews (such as issues of homelessness/loss of place/alienation from others, genocide, shame, crisis such as forced migration and facing threat of imminent death, and the spiritual struggles that accompany such issues). Consider: What are the problems that you want to identify for research? Or How could you use that author's model as an approach to practice-led theology?
- A consideration of how the content and message of Hebrews leads to a deep consideration of how new approaches to these problems can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area.
- Some reflection on the application of these ideas to the students own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church.

**The paper will be due 11:59 pm, November 15. The presentation of the paper will be due Dec 9.**

**Grading Summary**

➤ Reading	10%
➤ Annotated book review	25%
➤ Theological Foundation	25%
➤ Major Paper	40%

**Classroom Behavior**

***Attendance***

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

**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 that which is appropriate in the course outline.
- Students are not to carry on off-topic (or on-line) conversations in class.
- Students are not to access e-mail, 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.

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

**Textbook Purchase**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

**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/>

**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).

**Style**

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>  
Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

**Appointments**

Contact me if I can assist you in any way via E-mail (most effective): westfal@mcmaster.ca  
Friend me on Facebook and send me a message!  
Phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 23605

**Office hours (Rm 242):**

Monday 1–2  
Tuesday 1–3  
Wednesday 1–3

**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.

### –Weekly Schedule

DATE	CLASS SESSION	Johnson	New Testament Reading
Sept 9	Introduction to the course Specializations The critical introductory issues	1–60	
Sept 16	Pay attention to what the son said— Hang on!	63–84	1:1-2:4
Sept 23	Think of Jesus as an apostle and high priest	84–104	2:5-3:1
Sept 30	Let’s not be like the Israelites—let’s enter the rest—Move forward!	104–22	3:1-4:1
Oct 7	Since the promise of rest is open, let’s enter the rest—Move forward! Themes: Move forward! Hold on! Draw near!	122–37	4:1-4:16
Oct 14	Thanksgiving		
Oct 21	Let’s press on to maturity with the new teaching about Jesus’ priesthood—Move forward!	137–52	5:1-6:3
Oct 28	The new teaching results in access to God	152–73	6:1-7:4
Nov 4	Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek	173–90	7:4-28
Nov 11	Jesus’ priesthood Part 1 <b>Major paper due 11:59 p.m., Friday, Nov 15</b>	190–215	8:1-9:14
Nov 18	Jesus’ priesthood Part 2—Draw near! Themes: Draw near! Hold on! Move forward!	215–67	9:15-10:25
Nov 25* SBL*	Let’s run the race—Move forward! <b>Reading Reports due 11:59 p.m., Nov 29</b>	267–312	10:26-12:2
Dec 2	Climax: Let’s serve God as priests in heavenly Jerusalem—Draw near!	312–59	12:1-13:25
Dec 9	<b>Presentation of Paper Summarization of readings and foundation for theology due 11:59 pm, Dec 9</b>		



*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.
- 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.
- deSilva, David A. *The Letter to the Hebrews in Social Scientific Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- 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.