



McMaster Divinity  
College

## **The Book of Hebrews: How to Find God in your Time of Crisis**

PhD/MA 6XH6  
Modified Hybrid

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Fall 2021

Wednesdays 10–11:50 a.m.

On campus: Sept 15, 29, Oct 13, Nov 10, 24, Dec 8

Online: Sept 22, Oct 6, 20, Nov 3, 17, Dec 1

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### **Course Description**

Mystery, controversy, deep theology and extreme challenge, but most of all it's a guide to spirituality in a time of crisis! The Book of Hebrews is one of the least known books in the New Testament but has so much to offer every student. All will benefit from the exploration of its meaning for today in discipleship, community and ministry, and ultimately Hebrews carves a path straight into the presence of God. 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.

**Modified Hybrid courses** will meet in person and online in an alternating sequence. One week the course meets in person, on campus; the following week the course meets online (in either synchronous or asynchronous ways depending on the course objectives). This pattern allows for some on-campus community time for each course but also maximizes the benefits of hybrid with reduced trips to campus and the use of online learning strategies.

### **Course Objectives**

Specific Objectives – Through reading, lectures, discussion and assignments

#### ***Knowing***

- The student will perceive a coherent overview the Hebrews message/content.
- The student will understand Hebrews in its social, historical, literary and religious Jewish Hellenistic context
- The student will be familiar with key works and critical issues concerning introductory questions (i.e. authorship, date, settings, etc.) and identify the features in the text that illuminate the options

#### ***Being***

- The student will be spiritually challenged by message of Hebrews.
- The student will appreciate the distinctive content and theology of the text and goal(s) of the author.
- The student will enter into partnership with Jesus in his heavenly calling.

**Doing**

- The student will practice core academic skills including composing and presenting research and response papers
- The student will train and prepare for teaching by presenting a teaching unit to the class and by developing a syllabus for an undergraduate course in Hebrews.

**Core Reading**

Guthrie, George. *Hebrews*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

Attridge, Harold W. *Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.

Manuscript of Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Hebrews*. NCCS. Wipf & Stock, forthcoming.

Distributed by the professor on Avenue.

The Greek New Testament. Hebrews has the best Greek style in the New Testament.

**Recommended**

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

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****Class Participation (10%)**

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

**Reading (10%)**

Students will read 5,000 pages from works on the Book of Hebrews. The reading bibliography with pages read and total pages will be submitted on Avenue **due 11:59 pm on December 10**.

**Written Assignments****Research Paper (40%)**

- Each student will write a research paper on a passage or topic in the study of the Book of Hebrews.
- The paper will be 6,000–7,000 words, excluding notes and bibliography
- **The paper is due 11:59 pm on November 19**, submitted on A2L.
- In all matters the student must follow the MDC Style Guide (see Style below)

**Syllabus (20%)**

**The syllabus is due December 10 at 11:59 p.m.** A detailed syllabus and lecture outline for a college level course of a specific institution, preferably a course on Hebrews, but possibly an elective course that integrates insights from your reading & papers.

See “Developing a Syllabus.” In *Those Who Can, Teach: Teaching as a Christian Vocation*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, 89–106. McMaster Divinity College Press General. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013.

**Teaching Unit (20%)**

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

and student. The student will be expected to use effective teaching methods and presentation devices.

Late papers will lose 5% per day (including weekends). No papers will be accepted after Dec 10.

### **Grading Summary**

➤ Participation	10%
➤ Reading	10%
➤ Research Paper	40%
➤ Syllabus	20%
➤ Teaching Unit	20%

### **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 online) 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 [MDC Writing Style Guide \(Revised August 2019\)](#)

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](mailto:westfal@mcmaster.ca)

Friend me on Facebook and send me a message!

Phone: 905-525-9140 ext. 23605

**Office hours (Rm 242):**

Tuesday 12–2

Wednesday 12–2

**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	Guthrie	New Testament Reading
Sept 15 In class	Introduction to the course The critical introductory issues	17-40	
Sept 22 Online	Pay attention to what the son said— Hang on!	45-95	1:1-2:4
Sept 29 In class	Think of Jesus as an apostle and high priest	96-123	2:5-3:1
Oct 6 Online	Let's not be like the Israelites—let's enter the rest—Move forward!	124-47	3:1-4:1
Oct 13 In class	Since the promise of rest is open, let's enter the rest—Move forward! Themes: Move forward! Hold on! Draw near!	148-84	4:1-4:16
Oct 20 Online	Let's press on to maturity with the new teaching about Jesus' priesthood—Move forward!	185-215	5:1-6:3
Oct 27	<b>Intensive Hybrid/Reading Week</b>		
Nov 3 Online	The new teaching results in access to God	216-51	6:1-7:4
Nov 10 In class	Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek	252-76	7:4-28
Nov 17 Online	Jesus' priesthood Part 1 <b>Research Paper due 11:59 p.m. Nov 19</b>	277-307	8:1-9:14
Nov 24 In class	Jesus' priesthood Part 2—Draw near! Themes: Draw near! Hold on! Move forward!	308-53	9:15-10:25
Dec 1 Online	Let's run the race—Move forward!	354-94	10:26-12:2
Dec 8 In class	Climax: Let's serve God as priests in heavenly Jerusalem—Draw near!	395-452	12:1-13:25
	<b>Syllabus due 11:59 p.m. Dec 10 Reading Reports due 11:59 p.m., Dec 10</b>		

*Selected Bibliography on the Book of Hebrews*

- Attridge, Harold W. *Hebrews*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989.
- Bauckham, Richard et al. *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*. LNTS 387. London: T&T Clark, 2008.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Hebrews*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers 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.
- deSilva, David A. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Dyer, Bryan. *Suffering in the Face of Death: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Its Context of Situation*. LNTS 568. London: T&T Clark, 2017.
- 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, 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.
- Laansma, Jon C. *The Letter to the Hebrews: A Commentary for Preaching, Teaching, and Bible Study*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017.
- Laansma, Jon C., George H. Guthrie and Cynthia Long Westfall, editors. *So Great A Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*. LNTS 516. London: T&T Clark, 2019.
- Laansma, Jon C. and Daniel J. Trier. *Christology, Hermeneutics and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*. LNTS 423. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012.
- 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.
- Peeler, Amy L. B. *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. LNTS 486. Bloomsbury T&T Clark: 2014.
- Pierce, Madison N. *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture*. SNTS 178. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Robertson, O. Palmer. *God's People in the Wilderness: The Church in Hebrews*. Rev. ed. Fairm, UK: Mentor, 2009.

- Schreiner, Thomas R. *Commentary on Hebrews*. 36 Biblical Theology for Christian Proclamation; Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015.
- Stedman, Ray C. *Hebrews*. IVP New Testament Commentary. Downers 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*. LNTS. London: T&T Clark, 2005.