



# McMaster Divinity College

## **Understanding John** *A Biblical Theology/NT Theology Course*

MA/PhD

Cynthia Long Westfall, Ph.D.  
Email: [westfal@mcmaster.ca](mailto:westfal@mcmaster.ca)

Fall 2023  
In Person + Livestream  
Wednesdays 4–5:50 p.m.  
Camelford

### **Course Description**

MA and PhD students should be well-founded in the gospels, as part of being a generalist in the New Testament. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is at the very core of our faith, and the gospels are the primary means of how we come to know him. Understanding the Gospel of John is particularly crucial, though it is often neglected. The Gospel of John is distinctive from the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke), in part because the author interprets and explains the meaning of what Jesus said and did more deeply, and therefore has had a major impact on Christology in the early church and throughout church history. This course is devoted to studying the theology of John, delving into the profound way that the story Jesus's life, death and resurrection shaped the theological tradition. While Christology is of central interest, we will look at how the Gospel of John shaped Christian life and thought in a number of areas.

### **Course Objectives**

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

#### ***Knowing***

- Be able to outline the major topics in the theology of the Gospel of John
- Identify the dominant and distinctive emphases in John's portrayal of Jesus
- Determine the context(s) out of which the theology of John developed

#### ***Being***

- Be an academic and teacher equipped to teach this subject
- Encounter Jesus in John
- Be spiritually transformed as you study

#### ***Doing***

- Construct a biblical theology of a topic in John
- Research John's portrayal of Jesus and contrast it with the Synoptics
- Compose a syllabus on Understanding the Gospel of John

## Course Requirements

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

Academic students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss their impressions of the theology of John studied for that day

- Key theological insights
- Items of particular exegetical interest or controversy
- Possible applications to contemporary Christian living

Academic students can function as a resource for the professional students.

### ***Reading*** (10%)

Students will read 4,000 pages from works on the theology of John. Submit the reading list to A2L by **11:59 p.m. on December 8** with a full bibliography, individuals pages and a total page count. In addition, read John in one sitting 3x.

### **Core Texts**

Bauckham, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Koester, Craig R. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

### **Additional Materials**

- Any handouts for lectures and class discussion will be made available before class online in Avenue or the course DropBox.
- Further procedures and guidance for assignments will be given in class and/or online.

### ***Written Assignments***

#### **Biblical Theology of a Topic in John** (30%)

The student will study a (non-Christological) topic in the Gospel of John for theological reflection, utilizing a biblical theological method, which the student will determine through research. However, the methodology should include hermeneutical, contextual, historical and theological foundations.

The paper will be 4-5,000 pages. It will be due **11:59 on Friday, October 27**.

#### **Christological Study of John** (30%)

Analyze the Christology in John in terms of Jesus's identity, and how John presents what Jesus says and does. Compare John's description of Jesus with the Jesus of the Synoptics. Theologically reflect on the questions raised and the answers to those questions.

The paper will be 4-5,000 pages. It will be due **11:59 on Friday, November 24**.

#### **Syllabus & Presentation** (20%)

Design 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

reading & papers. **The syllabus is due 4 p.m. December 6.** Since this has a presentation component, no late syllabi will be accepted.

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.

### **Grading Summary**

➤ Reading	10%
➤ Participation	10%
➤ Biblical Theology	30%
➤ Christology	30%
➤ Syllabus	20%

### **Classroom Behavior**

#### ***Attendance***

- Attendance is required to pass the course. Missing more than the equivalent of two weekly classes may result in the reduction of grade or failure.
- Students should be on time to class or notify the professor (preferably in advance).
- Students are expected to stay for the entire class session, unless arranged in advance.

#### ***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.
- Students are not to carry on off-topic (or online) conversations in class.
- Students may eat or drink in class if they do not distract others and they clean up.
- Students who fail to respect these guidelines will be dismissed from the class with consequences.

### **Late Assignments**

Lose 2% each day for 7 days, and then 4% a day up to 30%. However, the projects and all assignments must be turned in by December 8 to complete the course.

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student’s dishonesty; giving

false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

### **AODA**

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

### **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, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

### **Bookstore**

All required textbooks 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, you 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](mailto:books@readon.ca). The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

### **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.

### **Office hours:**

Tuesdays 12–2; Wednesday 2–4.

I am available by appointment in my office or for Zoom calls.

### **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.

## Class Schedule

DATE	CLASS SESSION	Koester	Bauckham
Sept 13	Syllabus Issues in Understanding John <b>Read John in one sitting</b>		9–31 Read 73–206 at your own pace during the semester
Sept 20	The Theological Story Framing the theology of John	1–24	
Sept 27	Knowing God	25–52	
Oct 4	The World and Being Human	53–81	
Oct 9–15	Intensive Hybrid/Reading Week		
Oct 18	The Identity of Jesus (Pt 1) <b>Read John in one sitting</b>	82–107	
Oct 23	The Identity of Jesus (Pt 2) <b>Biblical Theology due 11:59 p.m. Oct 27</b>		239–69
Nov 1	The Role of the Jews & Judaism		207–38 Additional posted readings
Nov 8	Crucifixion and Resurrection	108–132	
Nov 15	The Work of the Spirit Video on A2L (no class) <b>Read John in one sitting</b>	133–60	
Nov 22	Present and Future Faith <b>Christological Paper due 11:59 p.m., Nov 24</b>	161–86	
Nov 29	Discipleship in the Community & World	187–214	
Dec 6	Close & Presentation of Projects <b>Syllabus due 4:00 p.m. Nov 6 Presentation Nov 6</b>		
	<b>Reading Reports due 11:59 p.m., Dec 8</b>		

### Select Bibliography

- Akala, Adesola. "The Son-Father Relationship and Christological Symbolism in the Gospel of John," 2012.
- Ashton, John. *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Baffes, Melanie. *Love, Loss, and Abjection: The Journey of New Birth in the Gospel of John*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2016.
- Barrett, C. K. *The Gospel According to St. John*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1978.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- Bauckham, Richard and Carl Mosser. *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Beasley-Murray, George Raymond E. *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*. Leicester: Apollos, 2001.
- Blumhofer, Christopher. *The Gospel of John and the Future of Israel*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series. Cambridge: New York, NY, 2021.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John*. 2 vols. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Theology of the New Testament*. 2 vols. London: SCM Press, 1952–1953.
- Burge, Gary. *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Interpreting the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Byers, Andrew J. *Ecclesiology and Theosis in the Gospel of John*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 166. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017. I
- Caird, G. B. *New Testament Theology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Carson, D. A. *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension*. Atlanta: John Knox, 1981.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.
- Casey, Maurice. *Is John's Gospel True?* London: Routledge, 1996.
- Childs, Brevard S. *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Conzelmann, Hans. *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*. London: SCM Press, 1969.
- Crehan Joseph. *The Theology of St. John*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1965
- Culpepper, R. Alan. "The Theology of the Gospel of John." *Review and Expositor* 85 1988:3  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/003463738808500302?journalCode=raeb>
- Culpepper, R. A., et al. *The Johannine Literature*. Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 2000.
- Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
- Ford, J. Massyngberde. *Redeemer--Friend and Mother : Salvation in Antiquity and in the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.
- Forestell, J. Terence. *The Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*. London: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1974.
- Goppelt, Leonhard. *Theology of the New Testament*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981, 1982.
- Gruenler, Royce Gordon. *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.
- Gundry, Robert H. *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.
- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1981.
- Holwerda, D. E. *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John: A Critique of Rudolf Bultmann's Present Eschatology*. Kampen: Kok, 1959.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *New Testament Theology, Part One*. London: SCM Press, 1971.
- Johnston, George. *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John*. Society for New Testament Studies. Monograph Series, 12. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

- Jones, Larry Paul. *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*. Journal for the Society of New Testament Studies 145. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997.
- Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003.
- Klink, Edward W. *John*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.
- Koestenberger, Andreas J. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*. Biblical Theology of the New Testament Series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Köstenberger, Andreas and Scott Swain. *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 24. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008.
- Koester, Craig R, ed. *Portraits of Jesus in the Gospel of John : A Christological Spectrum*. Library of New Testament Studies, Volume 589. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Kummel, Werner G. *The Theology of the New Testament According to Its Major Witnesses*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1973.
- Kunene, Musa Victor Mdabuleni. *Communal Holiness in the Gospel of John: The Vine Metaphor As a Test Case with Lessons from African Hospitality and Trinitarian Theology*. Carlisle, Cumbria: Langham Creative Projects, 2012.
- Ladd, Eldon George. *A Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.
- Lincoln, Andrew T. *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Morris, Leon. *New Testament Theology*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1986.
- Motyer, Stephen. *Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and "the Jews."* Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997.
- Ng, Wai-ye. *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation*. Society for Biblical Literature 15. New York: Peter Lang, 2001.



- Numada, Jonathan. *John and Anti-Judaism: Reading the Gospel of John in Light of Greco-Roman Culture*. McMaster Biblical Studies Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021.
- Painter, John. *John: Witness and Theologian*. London: SPCK, 1975.
- Porter, Stanley E. *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
- Pryor, John W. *John: Evangelist of the Covenant People*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Reinhartz, Adele. *Befriending the Beloved Disciple : A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John*. New York: Continuum, 2001.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary*
- Schmithals, Walter. *The Theology of the First Christians*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. *The Gospel According to St. John*. 4 vols. London: Burnes Oates, 1968–1982.
- Schnelle, Udo. *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John : An Investigation of the Place of the Fourth Gospel in the Johannine School*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- Schweizer, Eduard. *A Theological Introduction to the New Testament*. London: SPCK, 1992.
- Smalley, Stephen S. *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*. 2nd ed. Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998.
- Smiga, George M. *The Gospel of John Set Free: Preaching Without Anti-Judaism*. Studies in Judaism and Christianity. New York: Paulist Press, 2008.
- Smith, D. Moody. *The Theology of the Gospel of John*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Stevens, George B. *The Johannine Theology: A Study of the Doctrinal Contents of the Gospel and Epistles of the Apostle John*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.
- Strecker, Georg. *Theology of the New Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- Thompson, Marianne Meye. *The God of the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001.

Turner, Max. "Atonement and the Death of Jesus in John: Some Questions to Bultmann and Forestell." *EQ* 62 (1990): 99–122.

Wijngaards, John. *The Spirit in John*. Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988.

Windisch, H. *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel*. Translated by J. W. Cox. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968.

Zuck, Roy B. *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1994.

Klink, Edward W. *John*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.