



McMaster Divinity
College

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

NT 5XA5/6XA6

McMaster Divinity College
Dr. Christopher D. Land
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Fall 2023
Wednesday 11:00am–12:50pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The book of Acts tells the story of a bunch of people trying to make sense of what God is doing. The book has played (and continues to play) an important role in shaping the church's sense of its identity and mission. This course is primarily an exegetical study of the book of Acts. It will examine the book's historical, literary, and theological qualities, and will situate these within relevant first-century contexts. It will also involve a sustained discussion of how the message of Acts can be heard, considered, and integrated into the life of the church today.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

KNOWING

- Remember the story told in the book of Acts;
- Become familiar with introductory issues and scholarly debates concerning the book of Acts;
- Understand the major theological themes of the book of Acts;

BEING

- Appreciate the importance of participating in respectful discussions about biblical texts;
- Become self-aware as a modern reader of the Bible, recognizing both the antiquity of the texts and the various ways in which contemporary life influences our understanding of it;
- Embody the mission that is so central to the book of Acts;

DOING

- Have the ability to quickly locate reliable scholarly resources that discuss a particular NT passage;
- Have the ability to ask key questions in order to explore the meaning of a text;
- Have the ability to reflect canonically, theologically, and contextually so as to explore how people can/should understand the New Testament today;
- Engage in doctoral-level research that invokes the New Testament in a responsible manner.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: You are required to complete all of the following assignments. No unfinished assignments are permitted. *Written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn either as Word documents (.doc, .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf). A penalty of 2% per day will be applied to all late assignments, including assignments submitted in incorrect file formats. Assignments cannot be submitted after December 8th without written permission from the Office of the Registrar (mdcreg@mcmaster.ca).*

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to complete weekly readings and assignments on schedule, to attend class, and to participate in class discussions. No grades are allotted for this, but it is an essential part of the learning experience.

REFLECTION PAPERS (5% INITIAL + 10% CONCLUDING = 15% TOTAL)

At the beginning of the semester, each student will *briefly* describe how they view the Acts of the Apostles and how they understand the book's relevance today. Please note the first person is an integral part of these assignments. You should not just talk about Acts; the goal is to self-reflect on the state of *your understanding of Acts*.

At the end of the semester, the same assignment will be repeated. Your concluding reflection need not offer a totally changed perspective on Acts, but it should somehow convey the influence that the course has had on your understanding. To prepare for your concluding reflection, I suggest that you re-read or re-watch your original reflection. Then, take a moment to reflect on your own learning, to observe how you have matured in your understanding, and to ponder how you might continue your learning after the conclusion of the course. Please point to specific areas of (past, present, or future) growth in your understanding of the book of Acts and its implications for today.

Your reflections can be submitted either as written posts or as video posts. While your reflections must be thoughtful, they need not be long. **Your initial reflection must be no longer than 750 words or 5 minutes. The concluding reflection must be no longer than 1,500 words or 10 minutes.** Videos can be recorded in any format that can be posted to an A2L discussion forum (<https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/how-do-i-use-the-avenue-to-learn-macvideo-integration>).

NT 5XA5: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (20%)

DPT students will produce an annotated bibliography that surveys recent biblical scholarship regarding the book of Acts. This bibliography must include at least 15 resources (including at most three commentaries) for a total of around 3,000–4,000 pages of reading. The bibliography should manifest the wide range of New Testament studies, exemplifying a variety of different questions and approaches as well as different confessional and/or non-confessional perspectives. It can be tailored somewhat towards your own research interests, but it must nevertheless demonstrate a general knowledge regarding the book of Acts. Each annotation should, in approximately 100–150 words, summarize the content of a particular resource and its distinctive contribution to our understanding of Acts. It is due according to the Course Schedule below.

NT 5XA5: ACTS FOR NON-DUMMIES (25%)

Drawing upon the above annotated bibliography, DPT students will compose an introduction to the book of Acts such as would be suitable for a graduate student (or alum) seeking to think and speak about Acts without being ignorant of contemporary scholarship. This overview should touch on the main issues that impact our understanding of the book and/or its importance for subsequent Christian history and theology. While you need not attempt to be unbiased, it is not the focus of the assignment to advocate for a particular point of view. Instead, focus on laying a general foundation for more specialized research. The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It is due according to the Course Schedule below.

NT 6XA6: SURVEY PAPER (30%)

In lieu of a bibliography, PhD students will write an essay that surveys the primary ways in which the book of Acts has been engaged by NT scholarship. The essay need not advance innovative hypotheses or arguments, but it should demonstrate familiarity with contemporary scholarship as regards Acts and should assess this work (in very general terms) from the student's own perspective. If there are neglected areas of study, this can also be noted. The paper must be approximately 5,000 words in length. It is due according to the Course Schedule below.

NT 6XA6: COURSE SYLLABUS (15%)

PhD students will prepare a course syllabus designed for a college or seminary course. The course must deal with Acts and must be intended for a post-secondary institution. Although the format of the course and syllabus are not prescribed, your syllabus must clearly define not only the content and organization of the course but also its objectives. In a supplementary document, you must explain in brief paragraphs how each component of the course contributes the overall objectives. The syllabus and accompanying explanation are due according to the Course Schedule below.

RESEARCH PAPER (40%)

In consultation with both the professor and their doctoral supervisor, DPT students will define an area of intersection that involves both the book of Acts and the student's own practice-led research. A research paper will then be written in which the student explores this area of intersection and thereby advances scholarly understanding of his or her practice. For PhD students, this paper can pursue any line of inquiry that is relevant to Acts and that is potentially publishable as a piece of New Testament scholarship. Research papers must be approximately 8,000 words in length. They are due according to the Course Schedule below.

GRADING SUMMARY

NT 5XA5

Reflection Papers	15%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Acts for Non-Dummies	25%
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

NT 6XA6

Reflection Papers	15%
Survey Paper	30%
Course Syllabus	15%
<u>Research Paper</u>	<u>40%</u>
Total	100%

TEXTBOOKS

Students are required to possess the following:

An English translation of the New Testament.

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. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Class Meeting Topics	Assignments Due (Sunday @ 11:59pm)
Sept 11–17	Introduction to the Course	Initial Reflection
Sept 18–24	Introduction to Acts	
Sept 25–Oct 1	“The Beginning of the Church” (1:1–2:47)	
Oct 2–8	“The Church and the Jewish Authorities” (3:1–5:42)	
Oct 9– 15	Reading Week (No Class)	Annotated Bibliography (5XA5) / Course Syllabus (6XA6)

Oct 16– 22	“The Church Begins to Expand” (6:1–9:31)	
Oct 23– 29	“The Beginning of the Gentile Mission” (9:32–12:25)	Acts for Non-Dummies (5XA5) / Survey Paper (6XA6)
Oct 30– Nov 5	“The Mission to Asia Minor and Its Aftermath” (13:1– 15:35)	
Nov 6– 12	“Paul’s Missionary Campaign in Macedonia and Achaia” (15:36–18:17)	
Nov 13– 19	ETS/SBL Conferences (Optional Tutorial)	
Nov 20– 26	“Paul’s Missionary Campaign in Asia” (18:18–20:38)	
Nov 27– Dec 3	“Paul’s Arrest and Imprisonment” (21:1–28:31)	Research Paper
Dec 4–8	Summary and Implications for Theology, Life, and Ministry	Concluding Reflection

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barrett, C.K. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. 2 Volumes. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994–1998.

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Skinner, Matthew L. *Intrusive God, Disruptive Gospel: Encountering the Divine in the Book of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016.

Stott, John R. W. *The Message of Acts*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove: IVP, 1990.

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Winter, Bruce W., ed. *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*. 5 volumes. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993–1997.

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STATEMENT ON 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.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. For more information, please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

In this course, we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection and the student's continuation in the course represents his or her consent to the use of this service.

A useful guide to avoiding plagiarism is the Harvard Guide to Using Sources:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

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:

<https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

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).

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the respective professor. This syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.