

JOHN
NT 640
Instructor: Harry O. Maier
Spring 2010

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Office Hours: Wednesday 12-2 PM

Purpose

To introduce students to the major themes of the Gospel of John and issues entailed in the critical study of it and, where possible, Johannine literature generally. To learn to recognize the distinctive vocabulary of John's Gospel and to begin to gain an understanding of its semantic domain. To situate the theologies of the Fourth Gospel writer in the social matrix of antiquity and to identify the cultural and historical influences on Johannine theology, especially with reference to Johannine anti-Judaism and sectarianism. To assess the relevance of these theologies for Christian existence in society and the critical issues entailed in their contemporary appropriation. To explore a wide breadth of non-historical-critical approaches to Johannine literature and to assess their relative strengths and weaknesses. To assess critically the place of John's Gospel in the Christian Year and the Revised Common Lectionary and to engage in a close reading of Johannine texts from the perspective of exegetical, liturgical, and lectionary vantage points. To gain an acquaintance with a variety of exegetical commentaries on John's Gospel from a variety of historical periods as well as differing critical vantage points.

Competence Objectives:

1. To demonstrate a level of expertise consistent with an intermediate level of biblical study in the analysis, exegetical discussion, and contemporary interpretation of the Gospel of John and related New Testament Johannine literature.
2. An ability to identify and discuss the elements of Johannine theological syntax, to relate that syntax to the critical exegetical study of a Johannine pericope, to place a Johannine pericope in the narrative of John's Gospel and to discuss its function in promoting the Johannine theology and communal identity.
3. To describe the development of Johannine theology in the Gospel of John and the way different texts reflect an unfolding historical identity in the Johannine community.
4. To write a critical abstract of a cross-section of scholarly articles on the Gospel of John, to discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of Johannine studies.
5. Through close reading of a series of texts, to demonstrate skill in exegetical study, the application of the basic elements of Greek grammar and syntax, and an intermediate ability in relating the tools of narrative and literary criticism to the interpretation of Johannine texts.
6. To show an understanding of the literary design of John's Gospel.
7. To locate Johannine theology within the currents of INtertestamental sapiential literature and emerging Judaism in the first century of the Common Era.
8. To assess critically currents of alleged anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John, the challenges of the uses of John to promote anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, and to consider ways John's Gospel urges attention to Jewish-Christian conversation in our contemporary context.
9. To demonstrate a critical appraisal of the Revised Common Lectionary's division and treatment of John's Gospel.

10. For students taking the course for advanced exegetical credit, to use the resources of the course as an aid in the composition of the advanced exegetical paper. A separate list of competences will be furnished with the advanced exegetical paper description.

Format: One 3 hour class weekly, which will include time for group discussion of assigned readings. Roughly the first 5 weeks of class will be given over to a literary investigation of the narrative strategies of John's Gospel as whole. During this time, 2 hrs/class will be lecture in format and 1 hr/class will be devoted to small group discussion of critical articles from assigned reading packs. The second part of the course will entail focussed discussion of Johannine pericopes as they appear in the Revised Common Lectionary with students picking from a series of commentaries and expositions of John's Gospel on reserve in the library as exegetical companions in the preparation of exegetical worksheets to be completed in preparation for class. Students will be responsible for taking up one of the assigned two pericopes/class.

Content

- I. The authorship of John and historical critical reconstructions of the history of "the Johannine Community"
- II. The Prologue, Epilogue, Signs Stories and their Redaction
- III. Narrative Time and Time of Narration in John's Gospel Especially as These Relate to Plot, Jewish Festivals, Cosmic Time, and Remembered Time
- III. The Johannine Passion Narrative as Political Exposé and Resurrection Narratives
- IV. The Final Discourse
- V. An Orientation to John's Gospel as it appears in the liturgical calendar, in the Revised Common Lectionary, and as a narrative in its own right
- VI. Revised Common Lectionary Johannine pericopes as time permits; 2/class.

Prerequisites

NT 500; if taken for exegetical credit, BIB 500

Evaluation

***If you don't bring your Bible, do not come to class!**

1. 80% class attendance and participation. Students absent for any lecture are required to meet with the instructor to determine appropriate make-up work.
2. For the first part of the course, a weekly reflection journal on an article in an assigned group of readings on reserve in the library. The substance of the reflection is as follows: in one paragraph, describe the methodology used by the author of the article (no more than 50 words); the rest of the reflection is to be a critical discussion of the method used, its strengths and weaknesses, and a critical appraisal of its value for exegesis. **In order to gain credit for this course assigned exercises must be handed in on each meeting date and any missed assignments must be completed by the last day of class.** E-mail submissions are welcome. Please attend to the rubrics outlined in the guide to email submissions, which will be distributed early in the term.
3. **Either** a word John Text-to-Interpretation paper (paper description to be distributed in class) **or** a paper that compares a Johannine and synoptic pericope on the same theme or motif. The paper will entail, first, locating each pericope in its historical, social and literary setting, and second, comparing/contrasting the theology of each pericope as it relates to and attests to John and the synoptic gospel under consideration. The paper will address

the implications of the Johannine text/motif/theme for contemporary theology and life, especially, where relevant, in reference to sectarian Christian identity, the place of pluralism in contemporary society, and questions of anti-Judaism.

Paper length: MDiv: 3750-5000 words/ 15-20 page words that uses 10 bibliographical entries beyond the course texts as research resources; **MA:** 5000-6250 words/ 20-25 pages. . **Papers that exceed the word limit by 10% will be returned for resubmission. The paper is due Friday, March 26. This is a strict deadline and only in exceptional cases will there be extensions beyond this date. Students are encouraged to begin their work on their papers early in the term and to familiarize themselves with the Academic Calendar in requesting extensions.** Email submissions are welcome so long as they conform to protocol regulations defined by the instructor. Only RTF or Microsoft Word versions will be accepted

4. An annotated bibliography due the last meeting of term of 5 commentaries, books, or articles the student found useful in preparing for class exercises and exegetical discussion.

Texts

Required:

A Bible. Students are invited to bring a translation of choice, but no paraphrases or pocket-sized versions, and preferably a critical study edition. (Oxford Study; HarperCollins; NIV Study Bible; etc). If the King James Version is preferred, students are obliged to bring an additional translation.

Kysar, Robert. *John: the Maverick Gospel*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1993).

Rheinhartz, Adele. *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of John* (New York: Continuum, 2002).

John Reading Pack on reserve in the library.

Recommended:

Culpepper, R. Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

O'Day, Gail. *The World Disclosed: Preaching the Gospel of John* (Collegeville: Chalice, 2002, rev. ed.).

