

The Gospel of John
Biblical Studies 5202b

January—April 2012

St. Peter's Seminary, London, Ontario

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Office hours by prior appointment

A. COURSE DESCRIPTION (from St. Peter's Seminary Academic Calendar):

"The course encourages students to apply methods of interpretation learned in the introductory course, exploring the meaning of the text for the modern reader, an examination of the original setting, structure, and content of each section of the gospel. (3 hours; antirequisites: the former Biblical Studies 238B and 201A)."

B. GOALS:

This course will assist students to grow in the following knowledge, skills and attitudes:

Knowledge

Familiarity with the literary and theological distinctiveness of John's Gospel and some of the major theories proposed to address it.

Being conversant with the major discussions about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel.

Familiarity with some reliable commentators and commentaries on the Gospel of John, which could be employed in future pastoral ministry.

Familiarity with some basic issues in the debate about the historicity of the Fourth Gospel.

Awareness of some useful and worthwhile Internet sites for study of the Gospels.

Skills:

Growing comfort in analyzing and explaining Biblical passages, using the tools and insights provided by contemporary Scripture study.

The ability to present a coherent, thoughtful argument in the form of written assignments, using standard academic citation formats (footnotes and bibliographies) where required.

The ability to translate exegetical information into a format accessible to the average educated parishioner in a ministry setting.

Attitudes:

A love for the Sacred Scriptures, as interpreted in the life and mission of the Church.

A sensitivity to the challenges of interpreting some Gospel passages, and a suitably nuanced approach to them.

A respect for, and understanding of, the work of exegetes and other Biblical scholars.

A desire to make appropriate use of Scripture, and contemporary scholarship, in the service of evangelization.

C. ASSESSMENT:

There are three required assignments for this course:

- 1) The Prologue to John's Gospel (1:1-14) is one of the greatest theological and literary treasures in the Bible and, for nearly 400 years, was read at the conclusion of every Mass, as "the Last Gospel". It is also traditionally the Gospel assigned for Masses on Christmas Day. It is a *spiritually rich* text, but also a *dense* one, and sometimes difficult to preach well on. Prepare a two-page homily for Christmas Day, drawing upon the insights and commentaries of at least two patristic sources on the Prologue, as included in the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture volume on the first half of John's Gospel (**BS2615.53.J64 2006 Oversize**; on reserve in the SPS library for this course). These homilies will be marked on: (1) their level of rootedness in the Gospel text itself; (2) their ability to draw pastorally-relevant conclusions appropriate to an average Catholic congregation today; (3) the subtle integration of the patristic insights in a way that will not sound "pedantic" to your listeners. **(30%; due on or before Friday, February 10, 2012).**
- 2) The dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in Chapter 4 of John is brilliant on many levels—theological, psychological, etc. It is also one of the most extensive interactions between Jesus and a woman in the New Testament, and so it has sparked considerable reflection and commentary on the part of women Biblical scholars (both feminist and not-so-feminist!). Consult **at least two** of the following sources, and write a 2½-page short essay highlighting some of the valuable insights you gleaned from these interpreters, which would help you to preach or teach on this text, specifically in light of issues it might raise for women, or how it might be heard by them:
 - * *A Feminist Companion to John* (Vol. 1): BS2615.52 F46 2003 (On reserve)
 - * *The Women's Bible Commentary*: BS491.2.W66 1998 (Reference section)
 - * *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*: BS521.4 I97 2002 (Reference section)
 - * *Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels*: BT590 W6 G46 2004 (On reserve)
 - * *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* **(30%; due on or before Friday, March 16, 2012)**
- 3) A final take-home exam, which will be handed out at the final class, and will be due during the April exam period. **(40%; due on or before Wednesday, April 18, 2012)**

Written assignments should be submitted single-spaced, in a 12-point font, with 1-inch margins on all sides. Either MLA or SBL [REF PN147 S26 1999] styles may be followed—and must include full citations for each source consulted.

These assignments can be submitted directly to the instructor, or can be handed in at the seminary's reception desk before the office closes at 4:30 p.m. on the day they are due.

D. READINGS OR TEXTBOOKS

There is no required textbook for this course. Additional course materials will be provided in class, and some will be placed on reserve in the A.P. Mahoney Library, where they may be consulted and/or photocopied by students.

Each student must have a copy of a modern scholarly translation of the Bible in English; acceptable translations for class use include the New Revised Standard Version, the New Jerusalem Bible or the New American Bible (for any others, please consult the instructor). Bibles must be brought to each class.

E. STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The unique and special place of the Fourth Gospel in the Christian Church
 John in the *Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities*

The Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels
 Similarities and Relationships
 Differences and Contrasts (especially regarding chronology)

Authorship of the Fourth Gospel: Traditional and Contemporary Views
 Internal Evidence
 External Evidence

Structure and Textual Integrity/Issues
Literary and Linguistic Characteristics; Distinctive Vocabulary
Theological Motifs and Emphases
 Johannine Christology: “I AM” (*egô eimi*)
 Double Meanings and Misunderstandings
 “Signs” in John’s Gospel

The Fourth Gospel and Its Relationship to Judaism: *Hoi Ioudaioi* [“The Jews”...?]
The Johannine Prologue (Chapter 1)
The Wedding Feast at Cana: “The First of Jesus’ Signs”
The Bread of Life Discourse (Chapter 6)
Jesus: the Good Shepherd
Jesus the Vine and We the Branches
The Farewell Discourse and Last Supper: Its’ Distinctiveness
The Johannine Passion
The Resurrection
Peter and the Risen Christ
Historicity and the Fourth Gospel

F. UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

Students are responsible for knowing the University’s academic policies and regulations and any particularities of their own course of study. These can all be found at the University’s website (<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>). Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for any violation thereof. The following policies are particularly important to note:

Submission of Assignments: Unless otherwise indicated, assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates as given above. Assignments may not be dropped off at King’s or submitted electronically. It is the responsibility of the student to organize his or her work so that the assignments are completed on time. For a serious reason, a student may approach the professor before the due date, and may be granted an extension at the discretion of the professors. Any medical reasons will be confirmed by proper documentation, as approved by the Dean’s Office. A penalty of 10% of the value of the assignment will be deducted for each day it is overdue without permission. No electronic devices will be allowed during tests or the examination, unless approved in advance by Student Services at the University or King’s.

Students who miss tests will negotiate a “make-up” date with the professor. Any medical reasons will be confirmed by proper documentation as approved by the Dean’s Office.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by quotation marks

and/or footnotes. Plagiarism is a major academic offense. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Selection and Registration of Courses: Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all prerequisite course(s) have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any anti-requisite course(s) that they have taken.

Absence from Class: Should you be obliged to be absent from class (because of illness or a significant personal reason), you are responsible for ensuring that you are up-to-date on any materials covered in class while you are away, including any class handouts. If you know in advance that you will be away for a class, please arrange with a colleague to pick up an extra set of handouts for you.