

MOODY DISTANCE LEARNING

Course Number, Name, and Credit Hours

BI6617 Interpreting Acts & The Epistles, 3 credit hours

Course Description

An examination and utilization of various interpretive methods employed in the study of Acts and the New Testament Epistles. Emphasis is placed on the development of skills and techniques in analysis of narrative and epistolary texts, the exposition of themes within these texts, and the use of Acts in the interpretation of the epistles. Study is focused on one of the New Testament Epistles along with the book of Acts. Application of interpretive results to contemporary contexts is achieved through case study method.

Course Objectives

1. Decipher personal pre-understanding and presuppositions in reading and interpreting Biblical texts
2. Analyze both Lukan and Pauline literature according to genre, literary characteristics and historical and socio-cultural background
3. Evaluate Pauline texts in light of Lukan material in Acts
4. Develop a model of Paul's identity from Lukan and Pauline literature employing narrative dynamics and historical and socio-cultural background
5. Develop a theology of Paul that emerges from the Scriptures and is informed by the studies in this course
6. Generate text-based application in the interpretation of both the Lukan and Pauline literature

Course Textbook(s) and/or Other Required Media

Longenecker, Bruce. *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003). ISBN: 0801026075

Audio/Videos:

- Darrell Bock, "The Central Theme of Luke-Acts". YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=440ZClnF37E&list=PL4IDfgdJx8XrN-cqUdkoBxUDtCxjhb9Fr&index=1>
- Darrell Bock, "The Purpose of Luke-Acts" YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXOmE-IIs7k&list=PL4IDfgdJx8XrN-cqUdkoBxUDtCxjhb9Fr>
- Darrell Bock, "The Gospel and the Holy spirit in Luke-Acts" YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhy0e4r5SVU&list=PL4IDfgdJx8XrN-cqUdkoBxUDtCxjhb9Fr>
- Darrell Bock, "Luke's Christology" YouTube video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUCuDalPNfc&list=PAL4IDfgdJx8XrN-cqUdkoBxUDtCxjhb9Fr>

PDFs:

- **Alexander**, Loveday. "The Relevance of Greco-Roman Literature and Culture to New Testament Study." Pages 109–126 in *Hearing the New Testament*, edited by Joel Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). [0853646872]
- **Black**, Clifton C. "Rhetorical Criticism." Pages 256–277 in *Hearing the New Testament*, edited by Joel Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). [1565632397]

BI6617 Interpreting Acts & The Epistles – Course Syllabus

- **Bock, Darrel.** “The Context of Luke-Acts: A Short Introduction.” Pages 31–54 in *A Theology of Luke Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012). [0310270898]
- **Elliot, John H.** “Patronage and Clientage.” Pages 144–156 in *The Social Sciences in New Testament Interpretation*, edited by Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996). [1565634101]
- **Hester, James D.** “The Rhetorical Structure of Galatians 1:11–2:14,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 103/2 (1984) 223–233.
- **Ladd, George E.** “Paul: Introduction.” Pages 397–413 in *A Theology of the New Testament*, edited by Donald Hagner. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). [0802806805]
- **Ladd, George E.** “The Pauline Psychology.” Pages 499–520 in *A Theology of the New Testament*, edited by Donald Hagner. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). [0802806805]
- **Malina, Bruce.** “Honor and Shame: Pivotal Values in the First-Century Mediterranean World.” Pages 27–46 in *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. 3rd edition. Revised and expanded (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). [0664222951]
- **Vanhoozer, Kevin J.** “Introduction: What Is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?” Pages 13–22 in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*. Edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). [0801036231]

Narrated PowerPoint Presentations:

- “Acts & The Epistles: Contexts, Concepts and Background” (Week 1)
- “The Pauline Ethical Structure” (Week 3)
- “Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Method in Paul” (Week 5)

Bible:

- Any translation of the Bible with which you are comfortable—the NASB or the NRSV are recommended for serious study. While various translations of the Bible are available at www.logos.com, and other sites, it is best to have a hard copy of the text in front of you when you study.

Assignment

Guideline for the Discussion Board: Post your initial response to the discussion question by mid-week (Saturday, 12:00am CDT). Then read and respond to at least **ONE** of your classmates’ initial posts by the end of the week (Tuesday, 12:00am CDT).

Note about Papers: All papers must be in Turabian style. Each page should be approximately 300 words, 12-pt. TNR font on double-spaced lines with 1” margins.

3-1 Book Review: *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*

Write a **two page** book review of Longenecker’s *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Please note this is a book review, not a book report. While a book review does indeed demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the content of the book, the purpose of the review is to go beyond a mere reporting of the contents.

Among other things, a book review discusses the value of the book along with its strengths and weaknesses, its usability, and its place in its discipline. The book review will evaluate the book, recommend the book, caution readers about the book, or perhaps even reject the book as valid for scholarly study.

For this assignment, your job as a reviewer of the book is to evaluate the book as to its usefulness and value in providing socio-cultural background to the student of the New Testament. Try to avoid an approach to your review that simply disagrees with the book or that suggests something like, “Well, what the author should have done is...”. Review the book on the basis of the stated purpose of the book. (You will find an example of a book review in the **Lesson 3 Resources** folder called “Assignment 3-1 Book Review Example.”)

5-1 Praxis Essay

The definition of a Praxis Essay is a paper that has a *practical emphasis* based on the assignment specifications. It is an **essay** because it is a short analytic piece dealing with a specific topic from a personal and unsystematic viewpoint. So, your essay will be analytical or critical in approach and thorough in scope. However, while it is critical in approach and thorough in scope, it is not **formally** researched. In the two praxis essays you will write (Assignments 5-1 and 7-1), you will certainly need to be familiar with the Biblical passages involved, and so you may need to do some research in that way. But the point is, the essay is not a research paper. Because an essay is not formally researched, it is *personal*. That does not mean it is simply your opinion. It just means that it is a result of your own critical and informed thought. An essay will not include bald, unsubstantiated claims, although it will probably be slanted. Such alleged bias is the personal nature of the essay. Your essay is a **praxis** essay because it will be more concerned with practice than with theory. That is, you will be attempting to speak to the practice of interpretation and Biblical study rather than engaging in a theoretical discussion of hermeneutics and exegesis.

Your first Praxis Essay is to be composed according to the following specifications:

As you meet with your pastor friend for your regular time of prayer, encouragement and sharing, you learn that he is struggling to prepare a sermon on Galatians 2:15–21. As you listen to the things that are causing his struggle in preparing the sermon, you suggest he apply a rhetorical approach to his preparation and his study. He is just a bit reticent to do so and asks you how that would help him. In a short paper of about **2 to 3 pages**, explain to your friend how a **rhetorical approach** would help in a general preparation for preaching on Galatians, and then how a rhetorical approach would help with the specific preparation of a sermon on Galatians 2:15–21. Be sure to explain to your friend just what the rhetorical method is and why it is significant. You will also find it helpful to keep in mind all of your reading for the course so far to help place the rhetorical method in a historical-cultural context.

Please see the rubric for this essay in the **Lesson 5 Resources** folder.

6-1 The Theology of Galatians (Chart)

Using the chart provided in the **Lesson 6 Resources** folder, tabulate your findings for the development of a theology of Galatians. That is, in chart form, briefly articulate what the book of Galatians teaches about God (Theology Proper), Christ (Christology), the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology), Humanity (Anthropology), and Salvation (Soteriology). Be careful not to read your own theology into Galatians. Rather, let Galatians speak. Try to be as thorough—and yet as concise—as possible. (Please see an example of this chart using Colossians in the **Lesson 6 Resources** folder.)

6-2 Project: Annotated Pauline Chronology

Your Annotated Pauline Chronology is a project you will be putting together during the seven weeks of the course. You will want to work on it a bit each week knowing that **you will submit it for evaluation during Week 6** of the course.

Before you begin, you will want to track down some Pauline chronologies online or in books. Most New Testament Surveys or Introductions along with some commentaries will include a Pauline chronology. The Pauline chronology is essentially a timeline of Paul's life highlighting significant dates in his life and placing the writing of his epistle in that timeline. Your chronology should begin with Paul's birth and should include all of the events of his life with which we are familiar, or for which we have a good historical basis. Your chronology should include the writing of his epistles as well.

The chronology is described as an **annotated** chronology because you will include clear and precise comments on each of your entries to give clarity to them. For instance, note two consecutive annotated entries in a Pauline Chronology by Ben Witherington (Witherington, *Invitation to the New Testament* [Oxford University Press, 2013] 156).

- AD 47 — Saul is found in Tarsus by Barnabas and brought to Antioch; Paul preaches there for a year (Acts 11:25–26)
- AD 48 — Saul makes his second visit to Jerusalem (the famine visit) with Barnabas and Titus (Acts 11:27–30/Gal. 2:1–10). Private agreement is reached between Saul and the other church leaders that he and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles, Peter and others to the Jews, and circumcision would not be imposed on Gentiles. Issues of food and fellowship between Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus are unresolved (cf. Gal. 2:11–14).

Again, you are welcome to check any books or websites that might help you get started with your chronology. You should make certain, however, that whatever sources you decide to use are reputable and scholarly. REMEMBER: Just because it is on the Internet, doesn't make it reputable or accurate.

You may design your chronology according to any form you like (timeline, bulleted list, table, etc.). Be creative and make it attractive. Do keep in mind, of course, that you will be submitting it electronically. If possible, please submit this assignment as a PDF so that all parts of it stay where you want them, especially if using a diagram or other graphical representation. [You can download free PDF software, such as CutePDF (cutepdf.com), to do this. Then, use Word's print function to create the PDF.]

It is suggested that you work on this Annotated Pauline Chronology project regularly. You will notice very early in your work that it will be necessary to think through some historical events in Paul's life on which there is little or no scholarly consensus. On those points, you will be making your own decisions and drawing your own conclusions. An hour a week is recommended to give yourself time to complete the project.

7-1 Praxis Essay

{See the general description of a Praxis Essay above at Assignments: 5 – 1}

You have been tasked by organizers of the Weekend Pastor's Seminar in your region to present a seminar on "sermon/lesson preparation." The organizers have asked you to demonstrate the methods you employ and the process you use to prepare a sermon or lesson. That is, they want you to show ways to approach a passage of Scripture as you prepare to teach it or preach on it.

Drawing on what you have learned in this course, write a **4 to 4-1/2 page** paper explaining the process and details of what your preparatory work and findings might include. Choose either 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 (cf. Jeremiah 9:23–24) or Philippians 3:1–14 as your passage for your presentation.

One of the keys to this paper will be your organization of it. That organization will reflect the organization with which you do your preparatory study and work. You would be well served to give some time to thinking about the organization of your work and the presentation of the paper. (Please see the rubric for this essay in the **Lesson 7 Resources** folder.)

Assessments

Discussions (7)	20%
3-1 Book Review	10%
5-1 Praxis Essay	10%
6-1 Chart	20%
6-2 Annotated Pauline Chronology	25%
7-1 Praxis Essay	15%
Total:	100%

Letter grades are determined by the following scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage Equivalent	Description
A	96 – 100	Exceptional work
A-	94 – 95	Excellent work
B+	92 – 93	Very good work
B	89 – 91	Good work
B-	87 – 88	Above average work
C+	83 – 86	Average work
C	79 – 82	Work needs improvement
C-	75 – 78	Minimally acceptable work
F	< 75	Unacceptable work

Course Resources

Online students have access to the Moody Library. Though students may wish to check out books via inter-library loan, the online database has a number of articles and reviews available for download. You can access the online database by logging into your account at my.moody.edu. If you have not previously accessed the library database you may wish to complete the database tutorial at <http://library.moody.edu>.

In addition to the resources available at the Moody Library, you may wish to visit <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk> or www.bible.org. These sites contain content on various topics written by competent biblical scholars. It is also suggested that you download a free version of the NET Bible at [bible.org](http://www.bible.org).

The final resource that deserves mention here is iTunes University. Apple has developed a platform for colleges and universities to post audio and video content. There are a number of lectures available on iTunes U, including some on the Old Testament historical and prophetic books. Various schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary, Seattle Pacific University, Duke, and Yale have posted content related to biblical and theological studies. In addition, Covenant Theological Seminary has an Old Testament podcast.

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Course Bibliography (Supplemental)

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- Gray**, Patrick. *Opening Paul's Letters: A Reader's Guide to Genre and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Green**, Joel B., ed. *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Hays**, Richard B. "Is Paul's Gospel Narratable?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27.2 (2004) 217–239.
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- Lovering**, Eugen H., Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney, eds. *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- McMaken**, W. Travis. Book Review of *Introducing Theological Interpretation of the Scriptures* by Daniel J. Trier in *Reviews in Religion & Theology*. 17.1 (Jan 2010) 24-26.
- Malina**, Bruce. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. 3rd edition. Revised. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
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- Vanhoozer**, Kevin J., ed. *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Westerholm**, Stephen. *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Witherington**, Ben, III. *Invitation to the New Testament: First Things*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Witherington**, Ben, III. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.