**Dr. Adam Wells**

**Wiley 004**

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**Office hours: 10-12 M,W**

**12:45-2:45 T,Th**

**ETLA 311: The Gospel of John in Context**

**Course Description:**

This course considers the Gospel of John in literary, religious, philosophical, economic, and socio-historical contexts. We will examine the ways in which the gospel forms (and is informed by) a particular religious community that exists in creative tension with the broader Greco-Roman world. To that end, the course will begin with a close reading of John, considering its genre, literary structure, theological purpose and reception, and relation to other canonical literature. We will then consider John’s relation to Greco-Roman culture – specifically, the ancient economy and Greco-Roman philosophy and religion. Finally, we will examine Raymond E. Brown’s historical reconstruction of the Johannine community in relation to modern sectarian communities (e.g., the Branch Davidians).

**Required Texts:**

Brown, Raymond E. *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.

Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*. Edited by Francis Moloney. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Culpepper, R. Alan. *The Gospel and Letters of John*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998.

*HarperCollins Study Bible*

**SCHEDULE OF READING ASSIGNMENTS\***

**\***Readings should be completed *before* the day’s lecture.

Aug. 28: Intro

**I. John as Literature**

Sep. 2: Culpepper pp. 13-26, 29-37, 42-48.

Sep. 4: John 1; Genesis 1:1-2:3; Culpepper pp. 62-66, 109-128.

Sep. 9: John 2-4; Culpepper pp. 128-147.

Sep. 11: John 5-8; Exodus 16:1-36; Culpepper pp. 148-174.

Sep. 16: John 9-12; Culpepper pp. 174-196.

Sep. 18: John 13-16; Culpepper pp. 197-219.

Sep. 23: John 17-21; Culpepper pp. 219-250.

Sep. 25: Catch up

Sep. 30: How to Write an Exegesis Paper. **On Moodle:** Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* (Selections)

**II. Theological Themes and Issues in John.**

Oct. 14: Brown pp. 220-252.

\*\*\***ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Oct. 16: **On Moodle: 1)** Wink, “‘The Son of Man’ in the Gospel of John.” **2)** Johnson, Elizabeth A. “Introduction,” and “Jesus-Sophia.”

Oct. 21: **On Moodle: 1)** Schneiders, “The Community of Eternal Life,” 171-183

**2)** Perkins, “Coming Out, Lazarus’ and Ours: Queer Reflections of a PsychoSpiritual, Political Journey,” in *Take Back the Word*, 196-205.

\*\*\***EXEGESIS WORKSHEET DUE.**

Oct. 23: **On Moodle:** Moore, “Are There Impurities in the Living Water that the Johannine Jesus Dispenses?” in *Feminist Companion to John*, Vol. 1, 78 – 97.

Oct. 28: **On Moodle:** Clark-Soles, “Death and Afterlife in the Fourth Gospel.”

**Mid-term Exam (Take Home)**

**III. John in Context**

Oct. 30: **On Moodle:** C. K. Barrett, “The Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel.”

Nov. 4: Gospel of Mark; Brown pp. 90-111

**\*\*\*EXTENDED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY + ABSTRACT DUE**

Nov. 6: 1 John; Culpepper pp. 251-275

Nov. 11: Brown pp. 115-132; **On Moodle:** *Acts of John* (selections)

Nov. 13: **On Moodle:** Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy* (Selections)

Nov. 18: *Community* pp. 13-92

Nov. 20 and 25: Class Canceled. Prof away at conference.

**IV. The Johannine Community**

Dec. 2: **On Moodle:** Clark-Soles, *Scripture Cannot Be Broken* (Selections I)

**\*\*\*FINAL PAPER DUE**

Dec. 4: **On Moodle:** Clark-Soles, *Scripture Cannot Be Broken* (Selections II)

Dec. 9: **On Moodle: 1)** Culpepper, “The Gospel of John as a Document of Faith in a Pluralistic Culture,” in *What is John?*, 107-127.

**2)** Segovia, “The Gospel at the Close of the Century: Engagement from the Diaspora” in *What is John?*, 211-216.

**Final Exam: Take Home**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**1)** **Regular attendance** at and informed participation in class meetings (9:30-10:50 T,Th). Every student should try to speak-up regularly!

**2)** **Papers (50%).** This course will culminate in a major research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor. Start thinking about your topic early! Each of the following assignments will “build” into your final paper. More details will be given as the semester moves along.

* Annotated Bibliography – 5%. DUE OCT. 7
* Exegesis Worksheet – 10%. DUE OCT. 14
* Extended Annotated Bibliography + Abstract – 5%. DUE OCT. 28
* Final Paper – 30%. DUE DEC. 2

**3) Oral presentations** **(5%).** During the last 4-5 weeks of class, each student will give a short (8-10 minute) presentation on his/her research topic.

**4) Midterm (20%)**

**5) Final (20%**)

**6)** **Weekly Journal (5%).** Every week (except weeks when other papers or exams are due) students will turn in a short (~1 page, double-spaced) reflection essay.

The Gospel of John is one of the most important and complex Christian texts. Living with is (inhabiting it!) for an entire semester is bound to be challenging. Your weekly journal is a space for you to work on your writing skills while also grappling with the issues, texts, arguments, etc., that you face in this course. The journal is not about getting the “right” answer about a passage, but expressing how you – in the context of your own unique journey – interact with the text. Be creative! Your journal doesn’t have to be academic prose. You may write a poem, draw a picture, reflect on a work of art, and so forth.

Here are a list of prompts that might help you to write your journal if you get stuck:

* When I read this passage, I am (excited/surprised/disturbed) because…..
* This passage reminds me of a (song/time in my life) because…
* This passage is similar to my *own* story in the sense that…
* Retell the story from the perspective of a minor character.
* Draw a picture that relates to the passage, and explain how it relates.
* Write a poem, song, or hymn that relates to a particular reading.
* If what this passage says about (God/ Jesus/ the Holy Spirit), then that means…
* I have come across a song, picture, sculpture, play, dance, image that relates to the readings in complex ways. Let me express that….

**NOTE: No late work will be accepted. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. (And I do check!)**

**GENERAL GRADING RUBRIC:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Lower Numerical Cutoff** | **Description** |
| A | 94 | Exceptional work that shows creativity and careful analysis of material. A-level work is sophisticated, well-written, and free from errors in grammar and spelling. |
| A- | 90 | Shows exceptional mastery of concepts, and goes well beyond requirements. |
| B+ | 87 | Work in the B-range is above average. B level work may be excellent work with several small errors or flaws. It is solid work, and shows significant command of concepts. |
| B | 84 |  |
| B- | 80 |  |
| C+ | 77 | Work in the C-range is average and satisfactory. It fulfills the criteria of the assignment, but does not display the same level of analysis, comprehension, and/or creativity as B and A-level work |
| C | 74 |  |
| C- | 70 |  |
| D | 60 | Work in the D-range is substandard. It may have major flaws, or show little mastery of major or minor concepts. |
| F | 0 | Work in the F-range shows no mastery of relevant material. F-level work fails to complete requirements or is otherwise unacceptable. |

\*\*Letter grades are equivalent to a numerical score 1 point above the lower numerical cutoff. For example, an A paper is equivalent to a numerical score of 95

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**:

During your college years, by responsible class attendance you can establish a reputation for reliability that will help your professors to write good reference letters for jobs or programs of graduate study. I value faithful attendance highly, as an indication of your commitment to the course goals.

You are allowed TWO excused absences. You may request that an absence be excused for an appropriate reason such as sickness, a medical appointment, athletic competition, dangerous driving conditions, etc. An excused absence is based on an email request from you (**not** on a note from a nurse, a list from a coach, or your telling me why you missed class). **Before or right after any** **absence, please email me, giving the date and the reason that you missed class, if you want me** **to consider excusing the absence.** **If you do not email me before or soon after your absence, I will assume that it is unexcused**. Unexcused absences will reduce your course average by 2 points for each such absence.

**Note: I do not give make-up quizzes or exams. If you miss an in-class assignment or exam, you will receive a zero.**

**PARTICIPATION POLICY:**

Informed participation is expected. You should be physically and mentally present and engaged in every class! Your learning process will be helped immensely by participating actively in the course, so don’t be afraid to ask questions, or engage your peers (and me) in discussion. Follow the Apostle Paul’s advice: Be bold!

Non-participation (e.g., sleeping, eating your lunch, staring off in the distance for extended periods of time, disruptive behavior and so forth) will negatively impact your course grade.

**COMPUTER AND CELL PHONE POLICY:**

A successful class requires the active participation of everyone involved. Cell phones are distracting and disruptive; they are detrimental to both individual learners and the class as a whole. Consequently, the use of cell phones in class is strictly forbidden. Turn them off before class begins—off, not vibrate! I will give you one warning per semester, after which I will deduct one point from your final grade for every violation of this policy. If I see your cell phone during an exam or quiz, you will automatically receive a ZERO on that exam or quiz.

The use of laptops in class is prohibited unless you receive an accommodation from the Powell Resource Center.

**How to Get the Most Out of This Course**

As with any course, what you invest will determine your return, not simply in the grade you earn but in the knowledge and perspectives you take with you. Things to do, more or less in order of importance, are:

1. **Keep up with the assignments**. There is a good deal of reading in this course, and more than in the ordinary 300-level course. Stay current with the reading assignments. If you fall behind you will have a hard time catching up.

2. **Prepare conscientiously for class discussions**. Read closely the texts assigned, ponder the questions provided, make notes, and be ready to participate in discussion in a thoughtful and well-informed manner.

3. **Take advantage of the office hours of the instructor**. My office hours are for your benefit. They provide opportunities for you not only to ask questions and obtain clarifications, but also to get to know me and to let me get to know you.

4. **Familiarize yourself with the specialized vocabulary of the academic study of religion**. There are many technical terms and fifty-cent words: learn what they mean and how to pronounce and spell them. To this end, you should freely and frequently consult reference materials on-line or in the library.

5. **Make use of resources beyond those required for reading or purchase**. There are many, many commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, etc. Don’t be afraid to consult outside sources!