BOOKS (see also attached bibliography)

F. Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Sacra Pagina vol. 4)
or
G. O'Day, "John" in *The New Interpreter's Bible* vol. 9
D. Rensberger, *1, 2, 3 John* (Abingdon)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. LECTURES

Attendance at lectures is required. Bring a Bible to each class session. If you must miss a class session due to illness or other pressing need, let me know whenever possible.

B. PRECEPTORIALS AND PAPERS

Attendance at preceptorials is required.

Each student will write papers (two pages, single spaced, 12 point type) in response to the preceptorial questions as indicated on the schedule of assignments. Papers are due at class time on the dates indicated in the schedule.

Online preceptorial instructions are included in the course site on MyLutherNet.

*Alternative track:* Students who have already done basic work in Johannine studies or who wish to pursue research interests may do a research paper instead of the weekly assignments. Those who do a research paper will still attend the precept discussions. The research option involves the following:

- September 17 or sooner: Contact the instructor to identify the text or topic.
- October 1: Outline of the paper and bibliography due
- November 19: Complete paper due (25-30 double-spaced pages with footnotes). Instructor will give comments.
- December 17: Revised paper due

C. REQUESTS FOR LETTER GRADES: due before Sept. 24 at 5:00pm (catalog, p. 80)

D. CRITERIA USED FOR EVALUATION OF WRITTEN WORK

1. SPECIFIC CRITERIA

a. Ability to discuss the assigned passages using the approaches indicated in the schedule of assignments.

b. Attention to both the details of the text (including Greek for M.Div students) and to larger theological issues (continued on next page).
c. Careful and selective use of secondary sources (Symbolism, commentaries, etc.). Cite sources in your paper (author’s last name, short title, page number) to show what you are reading.

2. GENERAL CRITERIA
a. ON TIME. Assignments are due on the dates assigned at preceptorial time. Turning work in late will affect the grade, unless arrangements are made in advance.
b. Clarity- Logical and clear argument, careful use of the English language.
c. Reflection - Data critically evaluated so that the student's own viewpoint is clear.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Sept. 10

Precept - Introduction to the course

Sept. 14-17

Lecture - John 1:1-18 In the beginning was the Word
John 1:19-42 Behold the Lamb of God
Precept - John 1:1-18 Prologue

Assignments for the week:

Read The Word of Life chapter 1 – this provides an introduction to the gospel.

Using the handout with the NRSV and NIV translations, make notes to bring to class about one of the key translational differences in John 1:1-18. (No written work will be turned in.) Include comments on the Greek text and the strengths and weaknesses of different English translations.

On-campus precept group: If your last name begins with A – L, bring notes on the translation of 1:5 (“understood” / “overcome”). If you last name begins with M – Z, bring notes on 1:14 (Jesus’ glory is of “the One and Only, who came from the Father/ Jesus’ glory is like “a father’s only son”).

Online precept group: the groups are assigned on the course site.

How do you “work on a translation problem?” Here are some ideas:

1. Data about the translation issue from your knowledge of Greek. What are the issues in Greek: vocabulary, syntax, textual variants? (M.Div. students use a lexicon)
2. Comment on the different senses of meaning that different translations have. What is gained or lost by various English options? Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each English translation (M.A. & M.Div.)
3. Present data on the context. Look at the verses surrounding the translation problem that may help to decide the translation issue. (M.A. & M.Div.) (continued on next page)
4. Present data on how the author uses the word(s) or syntax at issue elsewhere in the gospel (M.Div. and M.A. if possible –use of BibleWorks or a concordance for this part). Comment on the relevance of this information for making a decision in your text.
Sept. 21-24

Lecture - John 1:43-51 Come and See
          John 2 New Wine – New Temple

Precept - John 3:1-21 Jesus and Nicodemus

Assignments for the week:


Due at preceptorial: A paper in which you trace the way in which the evangelist depicts Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in 3:1-21.

- At the outset: What are we told about Nicodemus? How would you characterize the initial exchanges?
- In the middle: What are significant points in the conversation?
- At the end: Has anything changed in Nicodemus’s perception? If so, what? If not, why not? When considering the ending, be sure to ask how the light and darkness imagery in 3:19-21 relates to Nicodemus.

Translation issues: At the appropriate point in your paper, make brief comments *(no more than one paragraph)* on John 3:3 (M.Div. students show use of Greek. M.A. students do what is possible using English). Weave your comments on 3:3 into the discussion of the interactions. The way you understand the issue affects the way you interpret the interaction:

3:3 The NRSV says "born from above" and the NIV says "born again."

- Why do the translations vary and how do the connotations of the translations differ?
- What are the strengths of each translation? What are the weaknesses of each translation? (Note: neither translation is perfect.)
- Look up all the occurrences of ἀνωθεν in John's gospel. Is one meaning or the other prominent in the other contexts? How might this affect your reading of John 3?

Sept. 28 – Oct. 1

Lecture - John 4:46-5:16 Two Healings
          John 5:17-47 Defense and Prosecution

Precept - John 4:1-42 Jesus and the Samaritan woman

Assignments for the week: Due at preceptorial: A paper in which you:

(1) Trace the way the woman's perceptions of Jesus develop in the narrative as you did with the Nicodemus passage. (Where are things in the beginning? What are significant points in the interaction? Where are things at the end?) *(continued on next page)*

(2) Briefly compare the Samaritan woman with Jesus' disciples as they appear in 4:31-38.

Translation issues: In your papers comment very briefly on the following items in footnotes along the
way:

4:10 M.Div students: Jesus’ words are in a conditional clause structured around the words \( \tau \ldots \delta \ldots \). What kind of condition is this and what does it show about the woman’s perceptions at this point?

4:12 M.Div students: Why does the woman’s question begin with \( \mu \nu \)?

4:29 All students: The NIV has "Could this be the Christ" and the NRSV has "He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" How do the different translations affect the way you interpret her question? MDiv students: What is the function of \( \mu \nu \tau \tau ? \) (How you interpret this point affects your interpretation of the whole passage.)

Oct. 5-8

Lecture - John 6:22-71 Bread of Life Discourse

Precept - John 6:1-21 Feeding 5000 & Walking on the Sea

Assignments for the week:

We will divide each precept into two groups. Each group will prepare to discuss either John 6:1-15 (focus on Jesus and the crowd) or 6:16-21 (Jesus and the disciples). This builds on the character-study work you have done in previous weeks. Consult your commentary on your passage and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel pp. 54-59 and 94-99. Make notes for yourself on the biblical passage (no written work will be turned in):

- First do a character study (group 1 focus on the crowd, group 2 on the disciples). What do we know about them at the beginning? How do you see them at the end? Did anything change? If so, what changed and why did it change? If not, nothing changed, what do you make of that?
- Second, ask what life issues you might see in this scene. A life issue is something that people in the gospel and people today must deal with. Where do you see an issue in the text that people today must continue to work with?

Group #1 (those who last names begin with A – O) will focus on 6:1-15 (translate 6:14-15)

Group #2 (those who last names begin with P – Z) will focus on 6:16-21 (translate 6:20-21).
Oct. 12-15

Lecture -       John 7-8       The Messianic Debates
               John 7-8       Water and Light

Precept -       John 9       Jesus and the Man Born Blind

Assignments for the week:


Due at preceptorial: A lesson plan for a one-hour Bible study for either adults or youth on John 9.

- We will have different members of each precept create a different type of Bible study (large group, small group, online)
- Everyone should assume that this is part of an ongoing 8-10 week study of the gospel. (Assume that everyone has already covered John 1-8. Don't go over the issues of authorship, date, etc.)
- Bring 4 copies. We will break into groups of four so that class members can both give and receive feedback.

Interpretive note: There is a major translational problem in John 9:3. MDiv students please look at this verse in Greek. All students check Word of Life, pp. 57-59 on this issue before developing your Bible study on that part of the passage. Do not feel obligated to discuss this with your groups!!! You simply need to be aware of it. It may or may not be important to spend time on it in your group.

(instructions continue on next page)
A Bible study should include several elements:

(1) **An opening.** This might be a hymn or prayer, perhaps an activity that the group would do, or something else that would lead into the study of the text.

(2) **Study of the text.**

   (a) Think about the general flow of the session. Where do you want to begin? What would be a good place to end up? How would you structure the session? How much of the passage can you cover in the time available? Where will you focus? What will you prioritize?

   (b) How will you read the text? Will you read it all at once? Or read it in sections during the session? Who will read it? (e.g., the leader, or participants might take turns, or you might do it as a mini-drama with multiple readers reading the lines for different characters).

   (c) Do you want to start with background information or do you want to move directly to text itself?

   (d) Include several levels of material in your study (move back and forth between the various levels in the course of the session):

   - Simple informational components that help people read carefully. This can include information given by the leader as well as questions that ask participants to identify key words, major actions, ideas, etc.
   - Interpretive components. Identify things in the text that need clarification or could be taken in different ways. The leader might offer comment that clarifies something or frame a question that helps participants explore an issue for themselves.
   - Questions of contemporary significance or “life issues.” Life issues are points of continuity between the text and contemporary life. Examples include issues of suffering, sin, unbelief, social conflict, faith, belonging. What kinds of life issues might be of most importance for your particular group? What is the connection between reading the text and reflecting on these life issues?

(3) **Conclusion.** This could be a hymn, prayer, etc.
### THREE SPECIFIC FORMATS FOR BIBLE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large Group</th>
<th>Small Group</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Envision a group of 25-30.</td>
<td>Envision a group of 6-10.</td>
<td>Envision an online group of 8.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presentation:** In a large group the leader usually presents at least some material. This might include background material, comments on specific parts of the text, or thoughts about the life issues.
- How would you structure the presentation?
- Would you use visuals or other media? If so, what will they be?

**Activities:** To engage the group you might weave in various activities:
- Dramatic reading
- Break-out sessions for discussion. Have people turn to one or two people next to them and talk about a specific question for five minutes, then return to large group format.
- Short writing exercise
- Break the large group into smaller groups for a more extended activity. Decide whether you need a leader for each small group.

**Information:** Are there points at which the group leader should present some background information or commentary?
- Would the leader present the material? Or would you create a handout?

**Questions:** If the session is primarily a discussion, give special attention to focusing questions that are:
- **Accessible** (participants should be able to respond on the basis of their own reading of the text or on what they already know. Help people get on board with the discussion.
- **Of different types** (include some questions that help careful reading, some that encourage reflection, and some that draw on life experience. Keep a sense of progression in the topics. Think about where you want to start, where you want to end up, and what the general flow might be in between.

(cont. on next page)
Activities: Are there activities that might enhance the session?
- Dramatic reading
- Short writing exercise
- Game

Keep a sense of progression in the topics. Think about where you want to start, where you want to end up, and what the general flow might be in between.

Activities: Are there things that participants might do before or after the online session?
- Reading something
- Talking to someone in their own immediate context

Oct. 19-22

Lecture- John 10:1-21 The Gate and Good Shepherd
John 11 The Raising of Lazarus

Precept- John 10:22-42 Feast of Dedication

Assignments for the week:

Mid-course check-in: (1) What are you finding most engaging about the Gospel of John? (2) What are you finding most difficult or challenging about the Gospel of John?

Read The Word of Life chapter 4 on Christology.

Background work: Using two recent Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias, gather information about the festival of Dedication or Hanukkah, which is the setting of John 10:22-42. (e.g., The Anchor Bible Dictionary and the New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible). You can check with the librarians about other resources.

NOTE: most of the online dictionaries are at least a century old. E.g., a popular online favorite is Easton’s Bible Dictionary from 1897. (Honestly, would you want your kids to use textbooks from 1897 for a school project?).

The festival has a villain (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) and a hero (Judah Maccabee = Judas Maccabeus).

On-campus precept (bring notes – no written work will be turned in):
- If your last name begins with A – O, find out more about Antiochus. If your last name begins with P – Z find out more about Judah Maccabee. Make a list of the “works” associated with the figure you are researching.
- If these are the two types of people remembered at the festival, how does this create problems for understanding who Jesus is?
- People want Jesus to tell them “plainly” whether he is the Messiah (10:24). Jesus says that he has told them already (10:25), but instead of a simple “yes” or “no” answer, Jesus has called
himself the Gate and Good Shepherd. Why would he speak of himself this way instead of giving them a simple “yes” or “no”?
- How do Jesus’ “works” bear witness to his distinctive identity?

Oct. 26-29

Lecture - John 12 Preparations for the Passion
Precept - 13:1-17 Footwashing

Assignments for the week:

Read *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 127-134 on the significance of footwashing.

For precept: Prepare a Bible study on John 13:1-17. We will follow the procedure used on John 9 above.

Nov. 2-5

John 14 Jesus as the Way

Precept- Holy Spirit

Read *The Word of Life* chapters 6 and 7 on the Spirit, Faith, and Eschatology.

Translate 16:12-16 and note significant aspects of the Greek text (*no written work will be turned in*).

Nov. 9-12

Lecture - John 15 Vine and the branches
John 16 The Spirit as Witness

Precept- John 17

Assignments for the week:

John 17 appears each year in the lectionary. We will divide each precept into three groups. Each group will be responsible for writing a two-page study on one part of the passage. The goal of the paper is to provide preaching helps for others. Construct the paper as follows:

Page 1 (or perhaps more): provide 1 to 2 jam-packed pages of exegetical helps. Look at aspects of the passage that need clarification or warrant special attention. Some might be issues of detail (e.g., are there things you notice in the Greek text that should be considered? Are there expressions that are unclear and need clarification?) Some might be literary or contextual (e.g., how does this passage fit in to the immediate context and the wider flow of the gospel?) Some might be theological (e.g., what does this say about God, Jesus, faith, community, etc.). Some examples of key points are given along with the passages below. (continued on next page)
Page 2: In one paragraph suggest one good sermon strategy. Think about what your passage is saying that people today need to hear. Does it address something in John’s context that remains important in our context? Do not just brainstorm. Identify one good sermon strategy and summarize it in one paragraph.

On the rest of your second page show how you might develop a sermon. Think of this as a sermon summary. (An actual sermon would presumably be longer.) In your first paragraph describe how you would introduce a sermon on this passage (e.g., would you start with the biblical text or with some aspect of contemporary life?) Then take several paragraphs to show how you would move step-by-step through the sermon (i.e., after the introduction, what would your next main section cover? What would you deal with in the middle? How would you wrap it up?)

Bring 4 copies to precept.

Group 1: John 17:1-5 (e.g., δόξα, δοξάζω, τελειώμα)
Group 2 John 17:6-19 (e.g., κόσμος, ἁγιάζω, αποστέλλω)
Group 3: John 17:20-26 (e.g., to be “one”/ἐν, πιστεύω, γινώσκω)

Nov. 16-19

              John 19:17-42 The Crucifixion

Precept - John 20:1-18

Read The Word of Life chapters 3 and 5.

We will work through 20:1-8 together. No written work due.

Nov. 21-29

No class - Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 30 – Dec. 3

Lecture - John 20:19-31 Easter evening
              John 21 Discipleship after Easter

Precept John 1:1-18 Preaching the prologue of the Gospel

Our last two precepts will be devoted to preaching helps on the prologue of the Gospel and First Epistle of John. Each member of the class will work on one or the other. The prologue of the gospel appears in the lectionary during the Christmas season. The prologue of First John appears in the Easter season, as the first of a multi-week series of readings from First John. (continued on next page)
This week half the class will bring thorough, insightful, deeply researched (brilliant perhaps?) exegetical work on John 1:1-18. We touched on a few things at the beginning of the course. Don’t simply rehash that. There is so much more!!! As we did before, provide us with a couple jam-packed pages of material. Then give us a paragraph with some reflections on one really good (I mean really good) sermon strategy. Then develop a sermon summary so that we can see what a sermon might look like.

Dec. 7-10

Lecture - Introduction to the Johannine Epistles

Precept - Preaching the prologue to the First Epistle (First John 1:1 – 2:2)

The second half of the class will focus on the prologue to First John (1 John 1:1 – 2:2). Follow the instructions in the assignment for last week. We will await fabulous insights into another very rich text.

Resources: the commentary by Rensberger; see also the other items in the bibliography at the end of this syllabus.

Dec. 14

Lecture Key passages in the Johannine Epistles

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RECOMMENDED WORKS ON JOHN

1. GOSPEL OF JOHN

Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Word Biblical Commentary 36. Waco: Word Books, 1987. British - Evangelical. Introduction reviews various interpretive positions and issues regarding the enigma, origin, authorship, date and place of writing, theology, purpose and structure of the Fourth Gospel. The section on the origin and authorship are especially thorough. Commentary follows a sixfold division on each textual unit, which includes: (1) bibliography, (2) author's own translation, (3) notes on syntax and variants, (4) form/structure/ setting, (5) comment, (6) explanation.


Koester, C. R. *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003. This work explores the various aspects of meaning in the Gospel’s imagery, actions, and persons. The book maintains that the Gospel addresses a spectrum of various kinds of readers, fostering a sense of Christian identity that is distinct from and engaged with the world.


II. The Johannine Epistles


Grayston, K. *The Johannine Epistles*. NCBC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. Holds that the epistles were written before the gospel (contrary to most other commentators). His emphasis is on the relationship of the letters to their original cultural context.

