

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO at MTSO

2018 Summer Term

COS 521—Bible V: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation

August 6–16

Professor: Mark Allan Powell

Contact by e-mail: markpowellbusiness@gmail.com

Course Description

This course focuses on the content and context of these writings, and the theological emphases of their writers. In addition to Acts and Revelation, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, James, and 1 John will receive special attention.

Goals

Students will be able to

- Distinguish these genres of biblical literature, and understand the major theological themes in these writings.
- Faithfully exegete these forms of biblical literature.
- Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.
- Articulate the unity and authority of Scripture as a whole.

Texts:

- Mark Allan Powell. *Introducing the New Testament*. Second edition. Baker Academic, 2018. NOTE: If students have already bought the first edition of this book, published in 2009, they may continue to use that for the class—but the chapters are numbered differently – be attentive to this for the assigned readings for each session).
- Jouette Bassler, *Navigating Paul: An Introduction to Key Theological Concepts* (Westminster John Knox, 2006).

Also recommended by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry:

- Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine. *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*. Abingdon, 2013.

Recommended Supplementary Texts:

- An English New Testament. NRSV, NIV, or ESV are recommended translations. Paraphrases (e.g. *The Message*) are not appropriate for academic study.

Requirements

- Attendance at all class sessions is required.
- Prior to each class students are to complete the required reading, as indicated on the Class Schedule.
- Written Assignment # 1 (see attached) – this is to be completed and brought to class on Friday, August 10.
- Written Assignment # 2 (see attached) – this is to be completed and brought to class on Thursday, August 16.

Evaluation

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Assignment 1	30%
Assignment 2	30%
Class participation	40%

Written Assignment One

This is to be brought to class on **Friday, August 10.**

Length: 5-7 pages, double-spaced (Times New Roman 12-point, one-inch margins)

Address one of the following topics in a way that demonstrates awareness of the reading assignments for this class period *and* pastoral sensitivity to the needs of Christian people in contemporary context.

1. A parishioner says to you: “I have been reading the book of Acts and it seems like everyone was more faithful to God back then and that God used to work miracles for people all the time. Also in 1 Corinthians, everyday Christians spoke in tongues and prophesied and worked miracles. What I want to know is, why isn’t the Methodist church more like that today? Are we missing out?”

Explain how you might respond to this concern, taking into account what Powell and Bassler say about the book of Acts and about 1 Corinthians 12—14. Draw upon your theological training to discuss the place of charismatic and/or supernatural manifestations of the Spirit in Christian communities. You may feel free to draw upon your own experiences and to consider the role of “experience” ascribed to divine revelation in the Wesleyan quadrilateral (i.e., as one mode of revelation along with scripture, tradition, and reason). Why *isn’t* the Methodist church today more like the church in the book of Acts (or in Corinth)—and should it be?

2. A parishioner says to you: “I was preparing a Bible study on the book of Ephesians and I used one of the commentaries in the church library. The Bible clearly says that Ephesians is a letter written by Paul, but the commentary published by our church publishing house says that Paul did not write this letter. It bothers me that these scholars don’t believe what the Bible says and that our church publishes books by them all the same.”

Explain how you might respond to such a concern, taking into account what Powell and Bassler say about “pseudepigraphy” and the question of authorship of NT letters (not just Ephesians). Why do some scholars question the traditional ascriptions of authorship, even when they are offered in the biblical books themselves? How do they justify questioning what the biblical text says about authorship with regard for scripture as divinely inspired writings? And what is really at stake in these discussions?

Written Assignment Two

This is to be brought to class on **Thursday, August 16.**

Length: 5-7 pages, double-spaced (Times New Roman 12-point, one-inch margins)

Address one of the following topics in a way that demonstrates awareness of the reading assignments for this class period *and* pastoral sensitivity to the needs of Christian people in contemporary context.

1. A central concern of the Letter to the Hebrews is to establish Christianity as *a better religion* than Judaism. But we now live in a world that encourages us to respect the religious beliefs of other people—not to disparage them. Religious co-operation is usually preferred to religious competition.

So . . . is the message of Hebrews still relevant? If not, how do you suggest we deal with such passages in the Bible? Or, if yes, how do you suggest we communicate such a message in a meaningful and appropriate manner?

Be sure to interact with the text of the Bible and with the readings for this class? You might consider such questions as these: a) is the faith of Christians more pleasing to God than the faith of Jews? b) is Judaism a “false religion”? c) have Christians replaced Jews as the “chosen people of God”? d) should we actively try to convert Jews to make them Christians?

2. The letter of James not only expresses concern for the poor but also conveys harsh condemnations of the wealthy. But we now live in a nation that is one of the wealthiest countries in the world—even poor people in America today have greater access to life’s necessities than was common in the world of the New Testament. Even poor people have access to comforts and pleasures that the wealthiest people in the New Testament world would have regarded as luxurious.

So . . . how might you teach or preach the message of James in a middle-class American congregation today? or how might you teach or preach that message in a lower-class setting? Would you teach and preach the message differently in one setting than in another—why or why not?

Be sure to interact with the text of the Bible and with the readings for this class? You might consider such questions as these: a) is it sinful to be rich? b) do poor people tend to have greater faith than the wealthy? c) do riches inevitably involve a “friendship with the world” that distracts people from the way of God; d) how do we know “how much is enough” and how much is *too much*?

Academic Honor

The Course of Study School of Ohio requires that all material submitted by a student in fulfilling his or her academic requirements be the original work of the student.

Violations of academic honor include any action by a student indicating dishonesty or lack of integrity in academic ethics. Violations in this category include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly passing off work of another as one's own.

Cheating includes seeking, acquiring, receiving or passing on information about the content of an examination prior to its authorized release or during its administration. Cheating also includes seeking, using, giving or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting as one's own work with the work of another whether published or unpublished (including the work of another student). A writer's work should be regarded as his or her own property. Any person who knowingly uses a writer's distinctive work without proper acknowledgement is guilty of plagiarism.

A student found guilty of a violation of the academic honor code, after a review of the case, may be subject to one or more of the following actions: (1) warning; (2) probation; (3) suspension for the remainder of the course; (4) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio; (5) grade of Fail for the course. Regardless of the outcome, a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday, August 6	Book of Acts
Preparation:	Read Powell chapter 13 (chapter 12 in 1 st edition)
Tuesday, August 7	New Testament Epistles & Paul the Letter Writer
Preparation:	Read Powell chapters 14 and 15 (chapters 13 and 14 in 1 st edition) Read Bassler <i>Navigating Paul</i>
Wednesday, August 8	Romans
Preparation:	Read Powell chapter 16 (chapter 15 in 1 st edition)
Thursday, August 9	1 Corinthians
Preparation:	Read Powell chapter 17 (chapter 16 in 1 st edition)
Friday, August 10	Classroom Discussion based on Written Assignment # 1
Preparation:	Written Assignment # 1 is due today.
Monday, August 13	Hebrews and James
Preparation:	Read Powell chapters 24 and 25 (chapters 23 and 24 in 1 st edition)
Tuesday, August 14	Johannine Letters
Preparation:	Read Powell chapter 28 (chapter 27 in 1 st edition)
Wednesday, August 15	Revelation
Preparation:	Read Powell chapter 30 (chapter 29 in 1 st edition)
Thursday, August 16	Classroom Discussion based on Written Assignment # 2
Preparation:	Written Assignment # 2 is due today.