

**Syllabus for  
CHRISTOLOGICAL EPISTLES  
GRK675**

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**Fall Module, 2005**

**I. Catalogue Description and Course Objectives**

*Catalogue Description:* Particular attention to the Christology of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. Problems of authenticity will be considered. (*Prerequisite: BIB550 or equivalent.*)

*Enlarged Description:* This course will consist of a careful study of major passages in these epistles in their socio-historical, literary/rhetorical, and theological dimensions. **The classroom discussion will focus primarily on Philippians and Colossians.** Special attention will be paid to the way Paul attempts to use his Christological convictions to shape the epistles' audiences into ecclesial communities whose life together reflects these convictions.

*Objectives:* Upon successful completion of the course you will have:

1. Demonstrated a basic grasp of the content and theology of Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians.
2. Demonstrated a rudimentary understanding of the socio-historical, rhetorical, inter-textual/canonical backgrounds against which they might be best understood.
3. Demonstrated an ability to exercise creative theological imagination by evaluating a contemporary Christological proposal in light of the Christological reflections in these epistles.
4. Demonstrated an ability to translate advanced grammatical constructions in either Philippians or Colossians and offer a compelling defense of your translation based on grammatical, historical, socio-rhetorical, and theological considerations.

**II. Required Textbooks**

Bauckham, Richard. *God Crucified: Monotheism & Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Gorman, Michael J. *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Keck, Leander. *The New Interpreters Bible, Volume 11*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

Longenecker, Bruce. *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003.

Walsh, Brian J. and Sylvia C. Keesmaat. *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004.

### III. Helpful Websites

<http://www.ntgateway.com/paul/>

This is the Paul section of the NT Gateway site. It is one of the best sites on the Web for generally reliable information on Paul and the rest of NT studies.

<http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Paul/Main.htm>

Journeys of Paul. By Craig Koester. Clearly presented and nicely illustrated pictures of Philippi and Ephesus.

### IV. Requirements: All assignments that are to be posted into Blackboard are due at 11:00PM, CST (subject to change at my discretion).

Note: Most of the assignments below involve using the online classroom software, Blackboard, in some way. To find out how to complete the task the assignment asks you to do, go into the Blackboard website at <http://blackboard.nts.edu>. Sign in by using the user name and password sent to you by the IT department here at NTS. (If you do not have a user name and password, email [blackboard@NTS.edu](mailto:blackboard@NTS.edu) immediately and they will send them to you.) From there, click on the “Help” button in the blue space at the top of the page. Next, click on “Online Blackboard Student Manual.” In this manual you should be able to find instructions on any task that you will be required to do.

**1. Reading the Epistles.** You must read Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians through at least 8 times during this course. You must read each epistle in one sitting and report that you have read each one of them in full for each of the due dates listed in the Schedule of Assignments below. By the due date/time of the reading, you must have posted a statement in the Reading Epistles Forum in Blackboard saying that you have completed that due date’s reading of the three epistles. Each reading counts 10 points toward your final grade, making all eight readings count 80 points toward your final grade. **You cannot “make up” any of this reading. You can only get credit for what you actually read by the due date listed on the Schedule of Assignments below. Because these are basically “give away” points, this is an all or nothing assignment. You do not get credit for partial reading.**

**\*\*Note Carefully\*\*** To save time, as you read each epistle, you should keep a running master list of *critical* questions and insights of comprehensive or theological significance that arise from a careful reading of the text. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. These questions will later become a part of requirement 5 described below.

- 2. Longenecker Reflection Paper:** Read Bruce Longenecker's novel, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Then read Philippians carefully (this will count as your first reading of Philippians). Assume for now that Longenecker's historical novel captures the socio-historical, cultural, and especially the **political** feel of the first century setting in which Philippians would have been first heard. Write a 750-1,000 word (3-4 pages) paper, typed, and double-spaced, answering the following question: How does understanding Philippians in light of this background change the way I read it? Give **specific examples from the text of Philippians** which sound different to you after reading Longenecker and **explain why they now sound different**. You may earn up to 80 points for this essay. To submit your paper, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Longenecker Paper assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file by 11:00 PM, Friday, July 22.
- 3. Summary of Michael Gorman's, *Cruciformity*.** The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize you with the wider scope of Paul's letters and various current issues in Pauline studies. You will read the entirety of this book prior to our class meetings and summarize it in three sections. I have broken down the book into three sections, each of which you are to read very carefully and then summarize in 750-1000 words (3-4 pages) per section. Do **not** spend your time/space critiquing it; I only want you to summarize his arguments. You may earn up to 90 points for this assignment. To submit your summaries, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Gorman 1, 2, or 3 assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file by 11:00 PM, on the due dates for each summary listed on the Schedule of Assignments below. My assistant, David Young, will be grading these summaries.
- 4. Fishbowl Discussions.** You will actively participate in various "fishbowl" discussions. The "fishbowl" will consist of a class discussion/critical analysis of the book assigned for that day. **I will not simply give these points away because you show up in class that day.** You must make regular contributions during this discussion period in a way that demonstrates an understanding of, **and a critical engagement with**, the assigned book. Depending on how many students are in the class, I may split the class in half with one half of the class discussing the first half of the assigned reading and with the other half discussing the second half of the assigned reading. If this happens, you will not know which part of the reading you would be assigned to discuss. **In any case, you are responsible for all of the assigned reading.** Hence, you should carefully read all of the assigned reading and take careful notes on it (in some form or fashion) or even bring a summary of it to refer to during the discussion.

I will attempt to focus the discussions by asking at least two of the following three questions: (1) What is the main thesis/purpose of particular chapters in the books? (2) How do the authors argue their overall case? (3) What are the ramifications for our theology/christology if their arguments are taken seriously? (4) What are the pastoral ramifications of their argument(s) for engaging in Christian formation in the church of North America?

- a. You may earn up to 50 points in the fishbowl devoted to Richard Bauckham's, *God Crucified* which will be held on Friday, September 2.
- b. You may earn up to 50 points in the fishbowl devoted to Walsh and Keesmat's, *Colossians Remixed*, pp. 7-114. It will be held on Monday, September 5.
- c. You may earn up to 50 points in the fishbowl devoted to Walsh and Keesmat's, *Colossians Remixed*, pp. 115-233. It will be held on Friday, September 9.

**5. Introductory Issues Objective Exam.** This exam will be over the material in the introductions to each epistle in the *New Interpreter's Bible* commentary. It will cover the material on pages: 351-65; 469-76; 553-83. It will be objective in nature consisting of true/false, multiple choice, and matching questions. It will be given on Tuesday, August 30, the first day of class. You may earn up to 100 points on this exam. **Note Carefully:** This will not simply be a "recognition" exam. These objective exams are generally perceived as "difficult/very challenging."

**6. Critical Reading Responses (CRR) to Commentary Reading.** In the second half of the course you will prepare a critical reading response of **3-6 pages** for each epistle and the three commentary reading assignments associated with them. The specific content of the reading assignments and the due dates of the critical reading response are on the Schedule of Assignments below.

These responses should have three sections: (1) *Critical* questions and insights of comprehensive or theological significance that arise from a careful reading of the epistle itself **prior to** reading the selections from the textbooks. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. These questions should be an **edited version** of your running master list of *critical* questions and insights that you generated during your prior readings of the epistles. (2) *Critical* questions and observations that your reading of the NIB commentators raises in your mind about the biblical text and/or vice-versa, critical questions and observations that reading the biblical text raises in your mind about your reading of the NIB commentators. An example of an "A" quality CRR will be available in Blackboard under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder. It will be called "Model CRR."

To submit your assignments, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the CRR1, 2, or 3 assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file. Submit each CRR by no later than 11:00 PM on the dates listed on the Schedule of Assignments below. You may earn up to 30 points for each CRR making them worth a total of 90 points. My assistant, David Young, will be grading your CRRs.

7. **Original Translations.** You will submit original translations of Philippians 2:1-13 and Colossians 1:9-20. In **dialogue with the NIGTC commentaries by O'Brien and Dunn**, your translation should contain footnotes defending your translation of aspects of the text which: (a) lend themselves to a variety of translations **and** (b) have a significant impact on the way meaning emerges from the text. You may earn up to 110 points for this assignment. You must print it out and place it in my NTS box by 4:30 PM on Monday, October 31.
8. **Take-home Essay/Research Paper.** You may choose to either write a take-home essay on a question (or questions) that will be distributed the last day of class or a research paper on some aspect of the interpretation of these epistles. The approximate length of both should be 3,000-5,000 words (12-20 pages). You may earn up to 300 points for this essay/research paper. To submit your essay/paper, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Essay/Paper assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file. Submit your essay/paper by 11:00 PM on Wednesday, November 16.

The take-home essay will be a question (or questions) related to the interpretation of these epistles and the ministry implications of the material we've covered in class and in the reading. Hence, to answer it, you will creatively draw on your class notes, all your course reading, and on your own theological reflections in the context of a ministry situation.

Unless you will have access to the NTS library or another equivalent theological library, you should **not** choose to write the research paper. As a research paper, it clearly **requires additional research over and above your class resources**. If you do choose to write the research paper, **I must approve whatever topic you choose by Friday, September 30**. If I haven't approved a research topic for you by that time, I will assume you are writing the take home essay.

As general guidelines for the research paper, follow the instructions given by Joel Green in the document, "Some Comments on Research Papers." It is located in Blackboard under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder. **I will assume you have read and followed Green's directions when I grade your paper.** Note carefully: You should begin your research paper with a thesis statement that explicitly states the thesis you intend to argue and return to that thesis statement in your conclusion. While the paper should generally follow Turabian style, you may consult the *SBL Handbook of Style* for proper form for footnotes, abbreviations, etc. You may also use the document entitled "Ripples and Luke 24HBT.doc" located in Blackboard under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder as a general guide as to how this paper should look in terms of footnotes and style.

## V. Summary of Grading Policy

The final grade will be computed using the following point scale. There are 1,000 possible points.

80 points	Reading the Epistles
80 points	Longenecker Reflection Paper
90 points	Summaries of Gorman
150 points	Fishbowls
100 points	Introductory Issues Objective Exam
90 points	Critical Reading Responses
110 points	Original Translations
300 points	Take-home Essay/Research Paper

The following point scale will determine letter grades:

A	1,000-900
B	899-800
C	799-700
D	699-600
F	599-0

## VI. Schedule of Assignments: All assignments that must be posted into Blackboard are due at 11:00PM CST unless otherwise noted. (Subject to change at my discretion) *NIB* = New Interpreter's Bible

Date	Assignment Due
07/15	1 <sup>st</sup> reading of the Epistles
07/22	Longenecker Reflection Paper
07/29	2 <sup>nd</sup> reading of the Epistles, 1 <sup>st</sup> Summary of Gorman, pp. 1-94
08/05	3 <sup>rd</sup> reading of the Epistles
08/09	2 <sup>nd</sup> Summary of Gorman, pp. 95-267
08/19	3 <sup>rd</sup> Summary of Gorman, pp. 268-401
08/24	4 <sup>th</sup> reading of the Epistles
08/30	Introductory Issues Objective Exam
09/02	Bauckham Fishbowl
09/05	Walsh and Keesmat Fishbowl, pp. 7-114.
09/09	Walsh and Keesmat Fishbowl, pp. 115-233.
09/16	5 <sup>th</sup> Reading of the Epistles
09/23	Critical Reading Report 1 (Philippians: <i>NIB</i> , 479-549)
09/30	6 <sup>th</sup> Reading of the Epistles
10/07	Critical Reading Report 2 (Colossians: <i>NIB</i> , 587-669)
10/14	7 <sup>th</sup> Reading of the Epistles
10/25	Critical Reading Report 3 (Ephesians: <i>NIB</i> , 369-466)
10/31	8 <sup>th</sup> Reading of the Epistles, Original Translations
11/16	Synthetic Essay/Research Paper