

**Syllabus for  
THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS  
NTL676**

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**Summer, 2004**

**I. Catalogue Description and Course Objectives**

*Catalogue Description:* Against a background study of the literary character of the Epistles, the course will trace their flow of thought, with closer attention to passages of particular doctrinal significance (*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. Special attention will be paid to the way the letters shape their audience with regard to ecclesiology, eschatology, and holiness.

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

1. Demonstrated a basic grasp of the content and theology of 1 & 2 Thessalonians.
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 engage in disciplined group discussion characterized by critical theological reflection on the biblical text and secondary sources.
4. Demonstrated an ability to exercise disciplined biblical interpretation and creative theological imagination by writing an essay that requires you to synthesize class lectures, class reading, theological reflection, and ministry context.

**II. Required Textbooks** (Other material will be made available through Blackboard or the NTS library.)

Donfried, Karl P. and I. Howard Marshall. *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Harink, Douglas. *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003.

Horsley, Richard A. ed. *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997.

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

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

Powell, Sam and Michael Lodahl. *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999.

### 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 with a few pictures of Thessalonica.

### IV. Requirements

Note: Some of the assignments below involve using the online classroom software, Blackboard. 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 1 & 2 Thessalonians through at least 10 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 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 two epistles. Each reading counts 10 points toward your final grade, making all ten readings count 100 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.**
- 2. Longenecker Reflection Paper:** Read Bruce Longenecker’s short novel, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Then read 1 & 2 Thessalonians carefully (this will count as your first reading of 1 & 2 Thessalonians). 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 Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians 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 1 & 2 Thessalonians in light of this background affect the way one should read these epistles? **Give specific examples from the text of the epistles 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. Post this paper to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by Thursday, May 13 at 11:00 PM CST.

**3. Fishbowl Discussion of Douglas Harink's, *Paul among the Postliberals*.** You may earn up to 100 points by actively participating in a "fishbowl" discussion of Harink. The "fishbowl" will consist of a seminar type whole class group discussion/critical analysis of this book. **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 book. I would strongly encourage you to take notes on your reading or even to bring a summary of each chapter in the book to refer to during the discussion. This discussion will occur in the first class session on May 17 and will last 1-2 hours.

**4. Fishbowl Discussion of Essays in Richard Horsley's, *Paul and Empire*.** You may earn up to 100 points by actively participating in a "fishbowl" discussion of specific essays in this book. The "fishbowl" will consist of a seminar type group discussion/critical analysis of one essay per day (except for May 18 when 2 essays will be discussed). You will actively participate in 5 of these fishbowls making each one worth 20 points each. You will not know which fishbowl discussion you will be appointed to until you arrive in class that day. Hence, you should prepare each day for possible participation in the fishbowl.

**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 book. I would strongly encourage you to take notes on your reading or even to bring a summary of each essay to refer to during the discussion. The focus of each discussion will be these two questions: (1) What is the main thesis/purpose of the essay? (2) What are its ramifications for interpreting particular sections/verses of 1 & 2 Thessalonians? The discussions will typically last 20-30 minutes.

**5. Critical Reading Responses (CRR) to Commentary Reading.** You will prepare a critical reading response of **4-6 pages** for each epistle and the reading assignments by Smith and Donfried associated with them. The specific content of the 1 Thessalonians reading assignment includes: (1) 1 Thessalonians; (2) Smith, 673-737; (3) Donfried, 3-79. The specific content of the 2 Thessalonians reading assignment includes: (1) 2 Thessalonians; (2) Smith, 741-772; (3) Donfried, 83-113.

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 text itself **prior to** reading the selections from Smith and Donfried. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. (2) *Critical* questions and observations that your reading of Smith and Donfried 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 the claims of Smith and Donfried. (3) A comparative section noting any significant disagreements or inconsistencies between Smith and Donfried as to how they address these critical issues. An example of an "A" quality CRR will be available for you under the Course Documents tab in Blackboard. It will be called "Model CRR."

Post your first CRR as an attached Microsoft Word file into the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by no later than 11:00 PM on Saturday, May 22 and your second in the Drop Box by 11:00 PM on Thursday, May 27. **No late assignments will be accepted.** You may earn up to 110 points for each CRR making them worth a total of 220 points. My assistant, Kara Lyons, will probably be grading your CRRs.

**6. Synthetic Essay.** You will write one synthetic essay (approximately 3,000-5,000 words). To write it, you will need to read and **extensively** utilize **Lodahl and Powell**, the biblical text (esp. 1 & 2 Thessalonians), the material we covered in class, the assigned reading for the class, and possibly a few other essays on reserve in the NTS library. In addition, you will need to exercise your informed theological imagination. I will give you the essay the first week of class. You may earn up to 400 points for this assignment. It must be posted as an attached Microsoft Word file to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by Saturday, June 5 at 11:00PM.

## V. Summary of Grading Policy

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

100 points	Reading the Epistles
80 points	Longenecker Reflection Paper
100 points	Fishbowl on Harink
100 points	Fishbowl on Essays in Horsley
220 points	Critical Reading Responses
400 points	Synthetic Essay

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: Unless otherwise noted, each reading of the epistles is due to be posted into Blackboard by class time on the date listed below. (Note: Due dates are subject to change at my discretion.)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
05/12	1 <sup>st</sup> reading of Epistles due to be posted into Blackboard by 11:00 PM
05/13	Longenecker Reflection Paper due to be posted into Blackboard by 11:00 PM
05/17	Harink FB
05/18	Essays 1 & 2 in Horsley FB; 2 <sup>nd</sup> reading of Epistles
05/19	Essay 3 FB; 3 <sup>rd</sup> reading of Epistles
05/20	Essay 4 FB; 4 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles
05/21	Essay 5 FB; 5 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles
05/22	1 Thessalonians CRR due to be posted into Blackboard by 11:00 PM
05/24	Essay 9 FB; 6 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles
05/25	Essay 12 FB; 7 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles
05/26	Essay 8 FB; 8 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles
05/27	Essay 10 FB; 9 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles 2 Thessalonians CRR due to be posted into Blackboard by 11:00 PM
05/28	Essay 7 FB; 10 <sup>th</sup> reading of Epistles
06/05	Synthetic Essay due to be posted into Blackboard by 11:00 PM