

Course Outline

1. Course code: THEO5910

2. English title: New Testament in Contexts

3. Chinese title: 適域的新約研究

4. Course overview

This course looks for the central messages of New Testament writings – which include biography, history, epistle, homily and apocalypse – in light of proper literary, historical, social, and theological contexts. Reading NT writings as sacred scriptures of Christian religion and historical testimonies of Christian community, we will learn to apply sound exegetical methods to clarify the meaning of those writings and use fitting interpretive models to appropriate their messages, so as to meet the challenges of our spiritual, theological and social contexts today. Students will be introduced to critical methods of exegesis (such as textual criticism, redaction criticism, narrative criticism) and influential models of interpretation (history of effects, contextualization, and ideological criticism) to gain hermeneutical competence in reading the New Testament as a theological discipline and a cross-cultural exercise. This course will intersect with theological reflection, Christian formation, homiletical practice, and artistic interpretations of NT writings.

5. Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- Recognize the major traditions, events and themes of NT writings.
- Apply a variety of critical approaches to the study of NT texts.
- Locate the social historical contexts of their authors and readers.
- Reflect on possible theological meanings of NT text.
- Interpret a variety of biblical passages for teaching, preaching and arts.

6. List of topics

- Matrix and Methods (NT as sacred text and historical source, social historical contexts of Judaism and Greco-Roman culture in the first century, textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, narrative criticism, sociological approach, ideology criticism, history of effects)
- The Four Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke, John; literary design and social historical contexts, Christology and discipleship)
- Paul's Letters (Philemon, First Thessalonians, First Corinthians, Romans, Galatians; contexts and contents; crises and messages)
- Other Writings (Pastoral Epistles, Peter's Letters, Hebrews, Revelation; hostile contexts, church formation in the world, hope beyond now)

7. Learning activities

- Lectures (1.5 hours/week), presentations and discussions in class (1.5 hours/week)
- Reading (3 hours/week), research and writing outside of class (3 hours/week)
- Lab, field trip, and web-based teaching are not applicable.

Lecture	Discussion	Reading	Project	Web & Others
in/out class	In	out	out	NA
1.5/0 (hr/wk)	1.5/0	0/3	0/3	

M	M	M	M	NA

8. Assessment scheme

- Full attendance to lectures and active participation in discussions (10%)
- Two Critical Reviews (You can write your paper in English or Chinese; 4 pages each, double space; roughly 1000 words in English and 1500 words in Chinese; 40%)
 - (1) G. Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean* (due Feb 5)
 - (2) N.T. Wright. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective, Ch. 5-8* (due Mar 25)
 - For writing style and format, consult *The SBL Handbook of Style (2014)*.
 - For critical review, use the first two pages to summarize the author's methods, arguments and conclusions. In the third page, explain *what* and *why* you agree and/or disagree with them. In the last page, show as specifically as possible *how* those scholarly opinions may deepen or challenge our understanding of the NT and its messages for today. Due on the date (by 11:00pm) for discussion.
 - Please submit your paper in digital form (Word doc.) to jyieh@vts.edu, with the file name "your family name.review.book author" [e.g. Johnson.review.Thesisen].
- One Exegesis Paper (Choose one of the following passages; you can write your paper in English or Chinese; 7 pages, double space; roughly 1750 words in English and 2625 words in Chinese; 50%):
 - (1) Matt 22:1-14 "The Parable of the Wedding Banquet" (due by 11:00pm Feb 26)
 - (2) John 14.15-31 "The Promise of the Holy Spirit" (due by 11:00pm Mar 11)
 - (3) Rom 8:18-30 "Future Glory" (due by 11:00pm Apr 1)
 - (4) Heb 12:1-12 "The Example of Jesus" (due by 11:00pm Apr 15)
 - For writing style and format, consult *The SBL Handbook of Style (2014)*.
 - For exegesis paper, you will find it helpful to use some of the best critical commentaries and scholarly interpretations for research. Check my recommendation at the end of the syllabus and consult the "Bibliography" at the end of each chapter in R. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Do not forget to use *ATLA Religious Index* in the library to find some of the best, recent and relevant journal articles on your scripture text.
 - Please submit your paper in digital form (Word doc.) to jyieh@vts.edu, with the file name "your family name.exegesis.text" [e.g. Johnson.exegesis.Matt22]

9. Recommended learning resources

Textbooks:

- Raymond Brown. *Introduction to the New Testament*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. ISBN 0300140169
- Gerd Theissen. *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*. Updated edition. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007. ISBN 0800639006 【葛德泰森。《那個加利利人的影子》。陳惠雅翻譯。台南：南與北文化出版社，2011。ISBN 978-986-97488-1-0】
- N.T. Wright. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009. ISBN 0800663578
- 葉約翰。《山上寶訓新解：新盟約與效應史》。香港：研道社，2015。

Recommended

- Borg, Marcus & N. T. Wright. *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, 2nd ed. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007. ISBN 0061285544

- Hays, Richard. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996. ISBN 0-06-063796-X
- Theissen, Gerd. *Jesus und Paulus: Fundament und Architekt des Christentums*. 2013. 【葛德泰森。《用新眼光看耶穌與保羅：基督宗教的根基與建築師》。台灣神學院、台南神學院翻譯小組譯；台北：南與北出版社，2014。】

Other readings:

Critical Commentaries for research (*recommended)

1. One-Volume Bible Commentary

Fitzmyer, Joseph, Roland Murphy, and Raymond Brown. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice-Hall, 1990.

Mays, James. *Harper's Bible Commentary*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2000.

Newsom, Carol, Sharon Ringe and Jacqueline Lapsely (eds). *The Women's Bible Commentary*. 3rd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.

Patte, Daniel. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004.

2. Critical Commentaries for Exegesis and Research

 (*Recommended)

Matthew

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| *Boring, M. E. (NIB, 1995) | Brunner (Eerdmans, 1987) |
| *Davies, W. D. & D. C. Allison (3 vols. ICC, 1998) | Gundry, R. H. (1997) |
| Hagner, D. A. (2 vols. WBC, 1995) | Hare, D. R. A. (IBC, 1993) |
| *Luz, U. (Hermeneia, 2001-2006) | Schweizer, E. (1975) |

John

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Barrett, C. K. (1956) | *Brown, R. E. (AB, 1966, 1970) |
| Schnackenburg, R. (1982) | Haenchen, E. (Hermeneia, 1984) |
| Lindars, B. (NTG, 1990) | *Moloney, F. (SP, 1998) |
| Thompson, M. (NTL, 2015) | *Beutler, J. (2017) |

Hebrews

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Wilson R. (1987) | *Attridge H. W. (Hermeneia, 1989) |
| Lane W. L. (Word, 1991) | Ellingworth P. (1993) |
| *Koester C. (AB, 2001) | *Johnson L. (NTL, 2006) |
| O'Brien P. (2010) | |

Romans

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| *Barrett C. K. (1958) | Käsemann, E. (ET, 1980) |
| Achtmeier P. (Interpretation, 1985) | Dunn J. D. G. (Word, 1988) |
| *Fitzmyer, J. (AB, 1993) | Stowers S. K. (1994) |
| Stuhlmacher P. (1994) | Moo, D. (NICNT, 1996) |
| *Jewett, R. (Hermeneia, 2007) | Matera, F. (Paideia, 2010) |
| Keck, L. (ANTC, 2011) | *Longenecker, R. (NIGTC, 2016) |
| *Thiselton, A. (2016) | |

A Select Bibliography for Reference and Further Study

Bassler, Jouette, ed. *Pauline Theology, Vol. 1: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

Baukhham, Richard. *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015.

Borg, Marcus & N. T. Wright. *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007.

- Brown, Raymond. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1997.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*. New York: Paulist, 1984.
- Brown, Raymond. *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Burridge, Richard. *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biographies*. Waco: Baylor UP, 2018.
- Conzelmann, Hans. *The Theology of St. Luke*. New York: Harper, 1961.
- Cousar, Charles. "Eschatology and Mark's *Theologia Curcis*," *Interpretation* 24 (1970) 321-35.
- Dahl, Nils. *The Crucified Messiah*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1974.
- Dunn, James, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph. *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching*. New York: Paulist, 1989.
- Green, Joel. *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Grieb, A. Katherine. *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002.
- Hay, David and Elizabeth Johnson, eds. *Pauline Theology, Vol. 3: Romans*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Hay, David, ed. *Pauline Theology, Vol. 2: 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.
- Hays, Richard. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996.
- Käsemann, Ernst. *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984.
- Kingsbury, Jack. *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.
- Kysar, Robert. *John the Maverick Gospel* 3rd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007.
- Malherbe, Abraham. *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Martyn, J. Louis. *History & Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. rev. enl. ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1979.
- Meeks, Wayne. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Schneiders, Sandra. *The Revelatory Text*. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999.
- Stanton, Graham. *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992.
- Theissen, Gerd. *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 2007.
- Wright, N. T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. 2 Vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013.
- Briggs, R.C. 《如何瞭解耶穌基督：新約聖經研究方法》。葉約翰譯。第六版，台北：永望，2001。
- 葛德泰森。《那個加利利人的影子》。陳惠雅譯。台南：南與北，2011。
- 葛德泰森。《用新眼光看耶穌與保羅：基督宗教的根基與建築師》。台灣神學院、台南神學院翻譯小組譯；台北：南與北，2014。
- 葉約翰。《山上寶訓新解：新盟約與效應史》。香港：研道社，2015。

10. Feedback for evaluation

- Students are encouraged to share their learning experience throughout the course.
- Student's weekly oral presentations of critical review and exegesis research in class provide concrete and early feedback for the progress of the course and for the adjustment of its pedagogy before the course is finished.

11. Course schedule

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, SECTIONS & ASSIGNMENTS

Readings are presupposed as background for lectures and discussions.
They can be found in textbooks or extra readings on reserve.

Matrix and Methods

Jan 8 Introduction: The NT & Modern Readers

- The NT as Sacred Text: Experience & Interpretation
 - The NT as Historical Source: A Cross-Cultural Reading
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 1.

Social-Historical Contexts of Jesus and the Gospels

- A People of God with a Long Sacred Memory
 - A Time of Turmoil: Greco-Roman Rules & Jewish Responses
 - A Place to Belong: A Profile of Jewish Groups & Leaders
 - A Common Tradition with Many Interpretations
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 4.

Jan 15 Social-Historical Contexts of Paul and Earliest Christianity

- Roman Empire
 - Roman Religions
 - Philosophical Schools
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 5.

Text of the New Testament

- The Original Text? Ancient Manuscripts & Versions
 - Reconstructing an Authentic Text: Textual Criticism
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 3.

Jan 22 Critical Studies of the Gospels (I): Diachronic Approach

- “The Synoptic Problem”
 - Source Traditions: Form Criticism
 - Final Composition: Redaction Criticism
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 6.

Critical Studies of the Gospels (II): Synchronic Approach

- The World behind the Text (Author): Social-Historical Approach
 - The World of the Text (Text): Literary-Narrative Criticism
 - The World before the Text (Reader): Ideological Criticism, History-of-Effects Approach
- S. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, Ch. 6.

Jan 29 Chinese New Year Holiday: No Class

Feb 5 Section Discussion 1: G. Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean*.

- Be prepared to share with your group at least two things you have learned about the society, politics, or religious sects in Palestine at Jesus’ time, and one thing you appreciate or question regarding Theissen’s social-historical reconstruction of the time.
- *Critical Review due today by 11:00pm.**

Exegesis: How to Do Exegesis on a Gospel Text and Paul’s Letter?

- Purpose and Methods of Doing Exegesis
 - References and Commentaries for Exegesis Research
- “A Brief Guide to Doing Exegesis on a Gospel Passage” and “A Brief Guide to Doing Exegesis on a Pauline Passage” (John Yieh).
- G. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis* (p. 21-50).

The Four Gospels

Feb 12 Mark's Gospel: A *Kerygma* in Narrative

- "Gospel" as a Literary Genre
- Literary Structure and Main Themes

Context: The Dawning of the New Age

- An Apocalyptic Drama Unfolding (Mk 1)
 - "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God ..." (Mk 4)
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 7.

Servant Discipleship: "Bear Your Cross to Follow Me"

- Disciples (Mk 5-8) & Discipleship (Mk 8-10)
 - "The Little Apocalypse" (Mk 13)
- C. Cousar, "Eschatology and Mark's Theologia Crucis," *Interpretation* 24 (1970), 321-335.

Suffering-Servant Christology: The Crucified Messiah

- The Passion Narrative (Mk 14-15)
 - The Empty Tomb (Mk 16)
- N. Dahl, "The Crucified Messiah," in *The Crucified Messiah*, 10-34.

Feb 19 Matthew's Gospel: A Biography of the Messiah

- How to Read Matthew?
- Matthew's Structure and Main Themes

Context: A Painful Separation from Judaism

- Jewish Community in the Post-War Era
 - Fulfillment of the Scriptures (Mt 1-4; 5.17)
 - Matthew's Church & Jewish Authorities (Mt 21-23)
- G. Stanton, "The Gospel of Matthew and Judaism," in *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*, 146-68.

Didactic Christology: The Teaching Son of God

- Jesus: The Messiah and the Son of God
 - Jesus: The Only Teacher of God's Will
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 8.

Radical Discipleship: Righteousness in Preparation for the End

- The Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)
 - Eschatological Ethics (Mt 24-25)
- 葉約翰。《山上寶訓新解：新盟約與效應史》。香港：研道社，2015。

Luke's Gospel: A History of Jesus and the Church

- How to Read Luke?
 - Luke's Structure & Main Themes
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 9.

Context: The Middle of Time

- Jesus & Salvation History
 - "Delayed Eschatology"
- H. Conzelmann, "Luke's Eschatology," in *The Theology of St. Luke*, 95-136.

Feb 26 Mission Christology: The Savior of the World

- Jesus the Savior for All

- Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- J. Green, "A Savior, Who is the Messiah, the Lord': Jesus, John, and the Jewish People," in *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, 50-75.

Transforming Discipleship: A Life Totally Changed

- Conversion by Grace and Faith
- Transformation with Gratitude and Obedience

J. Fitzmyer, "Discipleship in the Lucan Writings," in *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching*, 117-145.

John's Gospel: A Spiritual Gospel

- Literary composition
- Symbols and ironies

R. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Ch. 11

Context: Hostility from Outside

- God so loves the world
- For fear of the Jews

J. L. Martyn, "A Synagogue-Church Drama: Erecting the Wall of Separation," in *History & Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 24-63.

Mar 4 John's Christology: Incarnation and Descent-Ascent

- Jesus the Son of God
- What does the Son do?

R. Kysar, "The Father's Son -- Johannine Christology" in *John the Maverick Gospel*, 37-70.

Discipleship and Community: The Vine and the Branches and Oneness

- True disciples
- Love one another

R. Bauckham, "Human and Divine Community," in *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology*, 21-42.

Section Discussion 2: M. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions?* (Part III. The Death of Jesus and Part IV. "God Raised Jesus from the Dead")

- Be prepared to share with the class at least two things you have learned about Jesus' death and resurrection from either Borg or Wright, and one question you want to raise to either Borg or Wright.

Paul's Letters

Mar 11 Paul's Letters as Pastoral Tools

- Paul as Missionary, Pastor and Theologian
- How to read Paul's Letters?
- Epistolary Structure and Rhetorical Device
- Pastoral Messages and Theological Underpinning

R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 15, 16.

Philemon: Profit or Love

- **Context:** A Run-away slave returns
- Messages: Love your brother
- Method: Persuasion

R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 21.

First Thessalonians: Fellowship and Parousia

- **Context:** Believers are dying
 - Messages: Christ will return
 - Method: Exhortation
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 18.

Mar 18 First Corinthians: Community of Faith, Love, and Hope

- **Context:** New believers are divided
 - Messages: Church as Body of Christ
 - Method: Admonition
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 22.

Romans: Gospel as God's Power for Salvation

- **Context:** Visit to Rome
 - Messages (Ch. 1-4): God's righteousness and human justification
 - Messages (Ch. 5-8): Reconciliation, sanctification, and unity
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 24.

Mar 25 Romans:

- Messages (Ch. 9-11): Jews and Gentiles in God's salvation plan
- Messages (Ch. 12-15): Living sacrifice and transformed mind
- Method: Diatribe

葛德泰森，〈保羅和羅馬書：保羅的信仰告白－回顧保羅的神學發展〉，〈用新眼光看耶穌與保羅：基督宗教的根基與建築師〉（2014），265-292。

Section Discussion 3: N.T. Wright. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*.

- Be prepared to share with your group at least two things you have learned about Paul's theological views and one thing you appreciate or question regarding Wright's assumptions or methods.

***Critical Review due today by 11:00pm.**

Apr 1 The Galatian Debate: Gentile converts are justified through faith alone. Yah vs. Nay.

- There are two teams on the debate, one to argue for yah (as Paul would) and the other to argue for nay (as the so-called "Judaizers" of the Letter to the Galatians and some Corinthians would).
- Members of each group work together to research on the pro and con arguments and choose four speakers for the team to present their main opening arguments (5 minutes), to critique the other side (3 minutes), to rebut the critique (5 minutes), and to present final statements (3 minutes).

J. L. Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles," in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*, 7-24.

Other Writings

Pastoral Epistles

- **Context:** Building up a church
 - Messages: Church leadership and social life
 - Method: Instruction
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 29-31.

Apr 8 Peter's Epistles

- **Context:** Living a holy life
 - Messages: Delayed parousia and moral virtue
 - Method: Discourse
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 33.

Hebrews

- **Context:** Onward, pilgrims!
 - Messages: Heavenly high priest and spiritual journey
 - Method: Homily
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 32.

Apr 15 Revelation

- **Context:** Resisting the beasts
 - Messages: God in charge and a perfect End
 - Method: Visions
- R. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT*, Ch. 37.

New Testament as a Source for Theology and Ethics

- Moral Visions in the NT
- Hermeneutic Paradigms

Section Discussion 4: R. Hays, "PART TWO: The Synthetic Task: Finding Coherence in the Moral Vision of the New Testament," in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation, A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (1996), 187-206.

- Be prepared to discuss whether and why you agree with Hay's choice of the three focal images for NT moral vision.

12. Contact details for teacher

Prof. John Yieh; Email: jyieh@vts.edu

13. Course website: n/a

14. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/> .

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed [declaration](#) that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.