

# **COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO at MTSO**

**2021 Spring Weekend Term**

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

**April 16–17 and May 14–15**

**Professor: Mark Allan Powell**

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## **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. Chapters 10–14, 24–25, 28, 30. Note: if for some reason you have a copy of the first edition of this book (with a blue cover), you may use that—but the chapter are numbered differently, so you would read chapters 9–13, 23–24, 27, 29.
- 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 exegetical study.

## Requirements

- **Attendance** at all Zoom class sessions is required.
- Prior to each weekend session students are to do the **required readings** from the textbooks and complete the **take-home/open book exam** relevant to the material for that session. These exams will be posted on Populi. The answers to all of the questions on these short quizzes may be found in the reading material from Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*. They are to be submitted electronically prior to each weekend session.
- Prior to the first weekend session – and subsequent to the second weekend session – students are to complete **major written assignments** (be certain that you complete these assignments in a manner that complies with the attached statement of the Course of Study School of Ohio regarding “Academic Honor”).
- Prior to both weekend sessions students are to compile a **short list of questions** that they think someone in their church or ministry setting might ask regarding passages from the biblical texts under discussion.

### Specific Assignments April 16–17:

- Read Powell, chapters 10–14 and Bassler, *Navigating Paul*.
- Submit electronically: completed “Exam 1” (based on readings from Powell).
- Submit electronically: Written Assignment One—either question # 1 or question # 2 (see attached page).
- Have ready to post on Populi: *two* discussion questions (not answers, just questions) that you think someone in your church or ministry setting might ask regarding a) a passage from the book of Acts; and b) a passage from either Romans or 1 Corinthians.

### Specific Assignments for May 14–15:

- Read Powell, chapters 24, 25, 28, 30.
- Submit electronically: completed “Exam 2” (based on readings from Powell).
- Have ready to post on Populi: *three* discussion questions (not answers, just questions) that you think someone in your church or ministry setting might ask regarding a) a passage from the book of Revelation; b) a passage from the letter to the Hebrews; and c) a passage from either the letter of James or 1 John.

### After Class Written Work—submit electronically by June 1

- Written Assignment Two (see attached page).

## **Evaluation**

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Exams 1 & 2	20%
Class participation (via Zoom and on Populi)	40%

## **Written Assignment One**

This is to be submitted to the professor electronically before the first class session on April 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 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 submitted to the professor electronically before **June 1**.

Length: 8–10 pages, double-spaced (Times New Roman 12-point, one-inch margins)

The student is to complete an exegetical study, a reflection paper, or some similar project that is obviously informed by a text or series of texts from the book of Acts, the New Testament epistles, or the book of Revelation.

The following ideas are suggestions for the sort of project that would be appropriate (the examples given are only random, sample ideas—you might use one of these but you may also feel free to be creative and come up with a topic of your own selection—one that fits your particular interests and the context in which you are now serving:

- a thematic paper treating a topic that is of relevance to the church today (e.g., “How Paul’s Treatment of Food Offered to Idols Can Inform Ethical Disagreements in the Church Today” or “How 1 Corinthians and 1 John May Help Today’s Church Realize the Goal of Church Unity and/or Deal with the Reality of Schism”).
- a theological reflection paper on a theme pertinent to this literature, reflecting on that theme within the broader context of Christian theology (e.g., “How Paul’s Understanding of Sin and Righteousness Fits with a Wesleyan Concept of Sanctification” or “How Luke’s Understanding of the Holy Spirit Contributes to Christian Trinitarian Theology”)
- a paper that applies a NT perspective discussed in this course to a theme that is of concern to contemporary society (e.g., “How the Book of Revelation May Help Rather Than Hinder Movements Toward Ecological Justice” or “What the Book of James Has to Offer People Who Identify Themselves as ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’”).
- a report on a project planned or conducted within a ministry setting that attempts to relate ideas drawn from the biblical literature we have considered to pastoral ministry in a particular context. For example, a design for a unit of Confirmation Ministry, or for a Stewardship program, or for an Adult Sunday School program.
- a sermon based on a specific biblical passage from the literature we have examined (in this case, the sermon itself might be about 5 pages, with an additional 5 pages explaining why your exegetical understanding of the text led you to preach the passage in the manner that you did—consult at least two reliable biblical commentaries and consider what our textbooks have said about the biblical book in which this pericope is found).

## **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

<b>Friday April 16</b>	
<b>3:00 – 4:30 PM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: Book of Acts</b>
4:30 – 6:00 PM	Populi Discussion: Questions Parishioners Might Have Regarding some passage from the book of Acts
<b>7:00 – 8:00 PM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: Paul</b>
8:00 – 9:00 PM	Populi Discussion: Question # 1 from Written Assignment # 1
<b>Saturday, April 17</b>	
<b>8:00 – 9:30 AM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: Romans &amp; 1 Corinthians</b>
9:30 – 11:00 AM	Populi Discussion: Questions Parishioners Might Have Regarding some passage from Romans or 1 Corinthians
<b>11:15 AM</b>	<b>Worship on Zoom</b>
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Populi Discussion: Question # 2 from Written Assignment # 1
<b>2:00 – 3:00 PM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: WRAP UP</b>

<b>Friday, May 14</b>	
<b>3:00 – 4:30 PM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: Book of Revelation</b>
4:30 – 6:00 PM	Populi Discussion: Questions Parishioners Might Have Regarding some passage from the book of Revelation
<b>7:00 – 8:00 PM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: Hebrews</b>
8:00 – 9:00 PM	Populi Discussion: Questions Parishioners Might Have Regarding some passage from the letter to the Hebrews
<b>Saturday, May 15</b>	
<b>8:00 – 9:30 AM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: James / 1 John</b>
9:30 – 11:00 AM	Populi Discussion: Questions Parishioners Might Have Regarding some passage from either James or 1 John
<b>11:15 AM</b>	<b>Worship on Zoom</b>
1:00 – 2:00 PM	Populi Discussion: Project Ideas for Written Assignment # 2
<b>2:00 – 3:00 PM</b>	<b>Zoom Class: WRAP UP</b>