

COURSE OF STUDY SCHOOL OF OHIO at MTSO

2025 Spring Term

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

Apr 4–5 and May 2–3

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.
- 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 (or NRSVue) 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. There will be four 90-minute Zoom classes (plus one 30-minute wrap-up session) each weekend.
- Students are to **participate in all Populi discussions** (see “Summary of Populi Discussions” below). These involve posting comments appropriate to the discussion prompt and then responding to other people’s postings or replying to their responses. There will be three one-hour discussions each weekend.
- Students should attend the **worship service on Zoom** each Saturday at 11:15.
- 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. Note that the reading is to be done *prior to the start of each week’s classes* and the exams are also to be submitted electronically prior to those classes.

Note that the answers to all of the questions on these exams may be found in the reading material from Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*. Further, copies of the exams are available at Populi under “Files” so that you can review the questions and look for the answers before taking each exam electronically. You may also re-take each exam one time—noting what you missed the first time and trying a different response.

- Prior to each weekend session students are to complete a **major written assignment** (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 each weekend sessions students are to come up with a **discussion question** that they think someone in their church or ministry setting might ask regarding passages from the biblical texts under discussion. These will form the basis for one Populi discussions each weekend.

Evaluation

Grades will be weighted as follows:

Assignment 1	20%
Assignment 2	20%
Exams 1	10%
Exams 2	10%
Class participation (via Zoom and on Populi)	40%

Specific Assignments Apr 4–5:

- 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:
 - A 300-word summary of your response to the question you addressed in Written Assignment # 1.
 - a discussion question (not an answer, just a question) that you think someone in your church or ministry setting might ask regarding a passage from either Romans or 1 Corinthians.

Specific Assignments for May 2–3:

- Read Powell, chapters 24, 25, 28, 30.
- Submit electronically: completed “Exam 2” (based on readings from Powell).
- Submit electronically: Written Assignment Two—either question # 1 or question # 2 (see attached page).
- Have ready to post on Populi:
 - A 300-word summary of your response to the question you addressed in Written Assignment # 2.
 - a discussion question (not an answer, just a question) that someone in your church or ministry setting might ask regarding the book of Revelation or themes associated with that book (the Second Coming, the Final Judgment, Life after Death, etc.)

CLASS SCHEDULE

Friday, Apr 4	
3:00 – 4:30 PM	Zoom Class: Book of Acts
4:30 – 5:30 PM	Populi Discussion: <i>Written Assignment # 1 – option 1 (on modern church and the Book of Acts)</i>
6:30 – 8:00 PM	Zoom Class: Paul
8:00 – 9:00 PM	Populi Discussion: <i>Written Assignment # 1 – option 2 (on authorship of Pauline letters)</i>
Saturday, Apr 5	
8:00 – 9:30 AM	Zoom Class: Romans
9:30 – 10:30 AM	Populi Discussion: <i>Questions Parishioners Might Have Regarding a passage from Romans or 1 Corinthians</i>
10:30 – 11:00 AM	Zoom Class: Feedback on Populi Discussions
11:15 AM	Worship on Zoom
1:30 – 3:00 PM	Zoom Class: 1 Corinthians

Friday, May 2	
3:00 – 4:30 PM	Zoom Class: Hebrews
4:30 – 5:30 PM	Populi Discussion: <i>Written Assignment # 2 – option 1 (on Hebrews and Jewish relations)</i>
6:30 – 8:00 PM	Zoom Class: James
8:00 – 9:00 PM	Populi Discussion: <i>Discussion of Written Assignment # 2 – option 2 (on James and wealth & poverty)</i>
Saturday, May 3	
8:00 – 9:30 AM	Zoom Class: Johannine Letters
9:30 – 10:30 AM	Populi Discussion: <i>Questions parishioners might have regarding the book of Revelation or themes associated with that book (the Second Coming, the Final Judgment, Life after Death, etc.)</i>
10:30 – 11:00 AM	Zoom Class: Feedback on Populi Discussions
11:15 AM	Worship on Zoom
1:30 – 3:00 PM	Zoom Class: Revelation

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Written Assignment One

This is to be submitted electronically before the first class session on Apr 4.

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?

Also prepare a 300-word summary of your response for posting on Populi.

Written Assignment Two

This is to be submitted electronically before the first class session on May 2.

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*?

Also prepare a 300-word summary of your response for posting on Populi.

Summary of Populi Discussions First Weekend

APR 4 AFTERNOON: Questions addressed in Written Assignment #1— Option 1

BEFORE OUR CLASS SESSIONS ON APR 4 – students who have chosen to address Option 1 for Written Assignment # 1 (dealing with miracles and supernatural manifestations of the spirit) should post a brief comment addressing that theme (brief = less than 300 words).

At 4:30 PM on Apr 4, we will all go to this discussion and offer responses to the posts of other students-- every student should respond to at least 3 different posts, indicating agreement, disagreement, questions, etc. After about half an hour, students should go back to their original posts and offer replies to responses that have been made by others.

APR 4 EVENING: Question addressed in Written Assignment #1—Option 2

BEFORE OUR CLASS SESSIONS ON APR 4 – students who have chosen to address Option 2 for Written Assignment # 1 (dealing with authorship of Pauline letters) should post a brief comment addressing that theme (brief = less than 300 words).

At 8:00 PM on Apr 4, we will all go to this discussion and offer responses to the posts of other students-- every student should respond to at least 3 different posts, indicating agreement, disagreement, questions, etc. After about half an hour, students should go back to their original posts and offer replies to responses that have been made by others.

APR 5 MORNING: Questions from Parishioners on Romans or 1 Corinthians

BEFORE OUR CLASS SESSIONS ON APR 5 -- each student is to post one question that they think a parishioner might have regarding some passage or theme from the letter of Romans or from the letter of 1 Corinthians.

At 9:30 AM on Apr 5, we will all go to this discussion and began responding to those questions . . . every student should respond to at least 3 different questions, indicating how you might answer the question or address the concern—and then spend the rest of the time (until 10:30 AM) replying to the responses that others have given.

Summary of Populi Discussions Second Weekend

MAY 2 AFTERNOON: Questions addressed in Written Assignment #2— Option 1

BEFORE OUR CLASS SESSIONS ON MAY 2 – students who have chosen to address Option 1 for Written Assignment # 2 (dealing with the letter of Hebrews and the issue of Christian evaluation of Judaism) should post a brief comment addressing that theme (brief = less than 300 words).

At 4:30 PM on May 2 we will all go to this discussion and began responding to those statements or questions . . . every student should respond to at least 3 different posts indicating agreement, disagreement, questions, etc. After about half an hour, students should go back to their original posts and offer replies to responses that have been made by others.

MAY 2 EVENING: Question addressed in Written Assignment #2—Option 2

BEFORE OUR CLASS SESSIONS ON MAY 2 – students who have chosen to address Option 2 for Written Assignment # 2 (dealing with the letter of James and the issue of wealth and poverty) should post a brief comment addressing that theme (brief = less than 300 words).

At 8:00 PM on May 2, we will all go to this discussion and offer responses to the posts of other students-- every student should respond to at least 3 different posts, indicating agreement, disagreement, questions, etc. After about half an hour, students should go back to their original posts and offer replies to responses that have been made by others.

MAY 3 MORNING: Questions from Parishioners on the book of Revelation or Associated Themes

BEFORE OUR CLASS SESSIONS ON MAY 3 -- each student is to post one question that they think a parishioner might have regarding some passage or theme from the book of Revelation or associated themes (the Second Coming, the Final Judgment, Life after Death, etc.)

At 9:30 AM on May 3, we will all go to this discussion and began responding to those questions . . . every student should respond to at least 3 different questions, indicating how you might answer the question or address the concern—and then spend the rest of the time (until 10:30 AM) replying to the responses that others have given.

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 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 sanctions: (1) warning; (2) failing grade for the assignment and/or course; (3) probation; (4) suspension; (5) dismissal from the Course of Study School of Ohio. In severe or repeat cases (regardless of the sanctions) a letter will be sent to the student's District Superintendent and Board of Ordained Ministry representative.

Attendance Policy

National policy from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) states that a student is expected to attend every class session. Unexcused absences may be cause for loss of credit or dismissal from the school. A student missing 20% or more of the classroom work shall not receive credit for the class. In the event of extenuating circumstances which require the student to miss up to 20% of the synchronous course time (whether in-person or on Zoom), the student should contact both the instructor and the Director prior to the start of the class to get approval and discuss make-up work. (Extenuating circumstances include emergency situations, illness, and dire circumstances, for example. Students are to provide back-up coverage at the local church while attending COS classes.)

- **CANCELLATION AND WITHDRAWAL:** Student must notify the COSSO office if they will be unable to attend class for which they are registered. Although there is no penalty when withdrawing more than two weeks in advance of the beginning of a term, registration fees are nontransferable and nonrefundable and unpaid registration fees are still due if withdrawing past the registration deadline. A \$50.00 late withdrawal fee is charged for all withdrawals within two weeks of the start of a class. All tuition and housing payments are applied to a future term.
Students withdrawing after the start of a term will be assigned a grade of AW (Administrative Withdrawal) and will be responsible for the full \$300.00 tuition amount. Any annual conference scholarship applied to the student billing record becomes the student's responsibility and is due by the end of the term. Housing payment is non-refundable.
- **NO SHOWS:** Except in cases of immediate and dire emergencies, if a student misses any class without notifying the COSSO office, tuition and housing fees are due immediately, a \$50.00 no show fee is charged, and the student will receive an "F" in the class.