

The Fourth Gospel Online DN 932Z

Instructor: Loyd D. Melton, Ph. D.
Email: melton@erskine.edu
Phone: 864-379.8883 (o)
Fax: 864.379.3171
Address: P. O. Drawer 668, Erskine Theological Seminary,
Due West, South Carolina 29639
Website: <http://www.erskineseminary.org/Academics/Faculty/Melton.html>
Elective. *Three hours.*

Please be sure to read and familiarize yourself with ALL materials in this learning packet.

Welcome to the course, **The Fourth Gospel**. Although I cannot welcome you personally as I would on campus, I am available to discuss any aspect of this course through whatever communication medium is most convenient for you. I wish you well as you begin this course.

Course Description

This course surveys the background, contents, and unique features of the Gospel of John, and gives attention to the history of interpretation of John. Students assess the value of John's approach in light of the contemporary challenge of bearing witness to Jesus' coming.

COURSE PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the historical background, purposes, structure, unique features, and contents of the Gospel of John. Attention is given to interpreting individual passages from John in light of the author's intended purpose for his audience. A special focus is made on the relevance of the Gospel of John for today.

Course Purpose

1. To introduce the student to the unique features of the Gospel of John in comparison to the Synoptic Gospels.
2. To enable the student to describe each of the four divisions of the Gospel of John and to summarize the contents of each one.

3. To describe the likely historical background of the Gospel of John by explaining each of these issues: authorship, date, purposes, and the historical situation addressed in John.
4. To show how the Gospel of John makes its unique contributions to the understanding of New Testament Christianity.
5. To enable the student to interact with modern approaches to interpreting the Gospel of John in light of some of the critical problems presented by this Gospel to the modern interpreter.
6. To provide the student with the ability to evaluate critically current assessments of the historical value of John for understanding the development of New Testament Christianity.
7. To provide the student with the ability to interpret any passage from John in light of the author's intended purpose for his audience.
8. To enable the student to observe John's method of re-interpreting the Jesus traditions in light of the changing realities of his day.

Course Resources

Students continue to be responsible for securing their own required textbooks. As a convenience, there is a bookstore on the seminary's home page. To access this site and its information, locate textbooks, and compare prices, go to <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html>

The online bookstore will be a portal with links to Amazon, CBD, Barnes & Noble, the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and perhaps others. A limited number of copies of each textbook may be available from the Erskine Campus Bookstore, and copies may be ordered through that Bookstore.

All course textbooks must be purchased by the student prior to the drop date for the semester of enrollment for this course. Failure to purchase materials by this drop date will result in an automatic withdrawal from the course by action of the seminary Registrar. Please consult the latest edition of the seminary catalog for the drop dates for each semester. All course materials must be purchased by the student and cannot be borrowed or purchased from another student.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

- *The Gospel of John*, F. F. Bruce, Eerdmans (see Bibliography for complete citation)
- *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, Gary M. Burge, Baker (see Bibliography for complete citation)

- *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism*, Millard J. Erickson, Baker (See Bibliography for complete citation)

RECOMMENDED READING

- Beasley-Murray, George R. *John*. Revised edition. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, Texas: Word, 1987.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation and Notes*. 2 vols. Anchor Bible. Garden City, N. J.: Doubleday, 1966, 1970.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Kysar, R. *John's Story of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.
- Lindars, Barnabas. *The Gospel of John*. New Century Bible. London: Oliphants, 1972.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. New International Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.
- Ridderbos, Hermann. *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Smalley, S. S. *John: Evangelist and Interpreter*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988.

COURSE MATERIALS

All course materials (except required texts) are available to the student in the online classroom.

Course Grading Criteria and Scale

The following grading scale, from the Seminary catalog is used to assign a numeric value to each completed assignment. All scores are weighted equally. Your final grade is the average of each grade received. A letter grade will be computed on the basis of your average raw score using the following grade scale recently adopted by the Seminary faculty:

- A Level Work = Exemplary ability to differentiate constituent parts; assess and critique theories, thoughts, ideas, concepts, proposals, and relevant literature; and the ability to reason in a logical and compelling manner.
- B Level Work = Reflects above average grasp of the subject matter; displays a superior ability to use new knowledge in a creative manner; and can demonstrate an above average ability to discriminate among alternative viewpoints.
- C Level Work = Adequate but not exceptional ability to think cogently and clearly; sufficient ability to understand and comprehend subject

matter; and a satisfactory ability to integrate and organize course concepts in a logical and coherent manner.

D Level Work = Inadequate mastery of basic facts and information presented in the course; insufficient or inappropriate use of common terms and language indicating an inadequate grasp of the material; and an inferior ability to analyze and judge proposals, ideas or concepts.

Erskine Seminary Grading Scale:

A	95-100
A-	93-94
B+	91-92
B	88-90
B-	86-87
C+	84-85
C	80-83
C-	78-79
D+	76-77
D	72-75
D-	70-71
F	0-69

Course FAQs

1. **Please mail me** hardcopy versions of your assignments. The address is listed on the first page of this syllabus.
2. All assignments should be clearly marked with name, assignment number and date. Failure to include this information will result in a returned assignment.

COURSE PLATFORM

Erskine Seminary is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). According to the ATS Standard 10.3.4.3, "Institutions shall ensure that distance education programs provide appropriate opportunity for collaboration, personal development, interaction among peers within a community of learning, and supervised field or internship opportunities when appropriate to the degree program." It is with this stipulation that EDEN has implemented a web-based learning platform which will serve to provide a number of collaborative learning experiences. The learning platform is Moodle and according to their website, "Moodle is a course management system designed to help educators who want to create quality online courses . . . and create effective online learning communities." You will be provided with additional information concerning online classroom tutorials, site information, and the peer mentoring program. In order to meet the online discussion component of this course, you will need:

- A computer (or access to a computer)
- High-speed access to the Internet

Course Components

The purpose and objectives of this course will be achieved through five learning components.

The first is the **Lecture Component**. The student will demonstrate his/her mastery of the material by listening to the e-lectures.

The second is the **Reading Component**. The student will complete the reading of the required textbooks and prepare a Summary Paper. Students build on the e-lectures by completing the required reading and the Summary Paper.

The third is the **Historical Component**. Here, the student will research the topic "Christianity in Asia Minor in the First Century." Using the sources listed in this syllabus as well as other sources, the student will discover the nature of Christianity as it existed in Asia Minor late in the first century when the Gospel of John was probably written.

The fourth is the **Practical Theology** component. Here, the student will examine the Gospel of John in light of the present-day reality of postmodernism. The student will describe postmodernism using the Erickson book and will then relate the theology of John to postmodernism.

*These four components will provide a balanced learning experience for the thoughtful student. **The total hourly commitment for this course is expected to be approximately 120 hours.***

Please note: Successful completion of this distance learning course will require that you set your own schedule and discipline yourself to stay on the schedule. I recommend that you begin the course by listening to the lectures, write the required summaries of them, do the required reading (keeping notes as you read), maintain a Reading Log, prepare the Summary Paper, do the historical study, do the exegetical study, and prepare the assignment in practical theology. If you devote two hours per day to course assignments, you can complete this course in approximately two months. The time constraints of this course are self-imposed to a large degree. However, if you are working toward degree completion, please keep in mind the Seminary's expected time frame for degree completion. Consult the most recent Seminary *Catalog* for specific time frames in your degree program. Each course assignment identifies the time required for completion, all things being equal. Some variation in time required to complete an assignment is to be expected due to a variety of factors.

SUGGESTED STEPS TO COURSE COMPLETION

1. Do the four assignments in the order in which they appear in this syllabus. When you have finished an assignment, submit it to me and move on to the next one. Feel free to call me at any time that you have questions or difficulties so that we can resolve the issue immediately and you will not be delayed in your progress.

2. Feel free to submit to me any of your papers in rough draft or outline form. I will look at your work and make suggestions. This may save you from doing unnecessary work and may help you to keep your focus on your topic.
3. Before beginning your work in this course, choose an English translation of John and read the entire Gospel. Note your impressions about the text. Note questions that come to your mind.
4. At first, view the e-lectures to gain a foundational knowledge and get a “feel” for the course. If you work with Greek, use your Greek New Testament as the text of John is explained. This is a good opportunity for you to review and to become more competent in your use of the language. After the introductory lectures about the background of John, always have your New Testament open as the content of John is explained. Read the text of John carefully.
5. Do the required reading for the course. Break your reading into manageable chunks. Avoid trying to read too much in one session. Optimal learning takes place when reading is done in smaller segments with short breaks between reading sessions. Highlight important sections or words with colored markers so that you can easily find them when you return to the text at a later time.
6. Keep a Reading Log noting date, pages read, and time invested in each reading session. Reviewing this Log will enable you to determine whether or not you are maximizing your learning by reading in smaller segments with brief breaks of not more than one or two days between readings.
7. For your research paper, do your research and then outline your paper before you begin writing. You may think that outlining is a waste of time, but it will make writing the paper easier. Look at your outline to make sure that you have dealt with all the relevant issues and that your treatment is balanced.
8. For the course, make yourself a realistic timetable and stick to it.
9. Your work will be graded and returned to you as quickly as possible. If you have not received your graded work back within a month of when you submitted it, please contact me.

If you have any questions or encounter any difficulties while taking this course, please contact me immediately.

Course Assignments

ASSIGNMENT ONE: E-Lectures

Master the content of course lectures by listening and watching all e-lectures and writing a one-page summary (double-spaced) of the contents of the e-lecture. In your summary, discuss the major points made in the lecture series. If you choose, you can write a one-page outline of the lecture instead of a paper in narrative form. This entire paper should be no more than 16 pages in length.

Completing this assignment will count 25% of your final grade. The total estimated time required for successful completion of this assignment is 30 hours.

ASSIGNMENT TWO: Required Reading

For this assignment, you will produce a paper in which you do the following:

1. Read F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, pp. 1-27.
2. From your reading, describe Bruce's understanding of the following issues related to the Gospel of John:
 - a. The identity of the author
 - b. How the Gospel of John was received and used in the early church
 - c. Bruce's understanding of the real message of John
3. Read Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, pp. 9-83.
4. From your reading, describe Burge's understanding of the following issues related to the Gospel of John:
 - a. A summary of the history of the interpretation of John from the earliest times until the present with an emphasis on current trends in the study of John
 - b. A description of Burge's understanding of how the Gospel of John came into existence
5. From your reading of both books, note strengths and weaknesses in their arguments and indicate the value of their insights to the study of John.

*This Summary Paper should be no more than 20 pages long (double-spaced). It will be evaluated on the basis of how cogently and succinctly you summarize the assigned reading above as well as how you seem to understand what is said. It will also be graded on style and form. The total estimated time required for successful completion of Assignment Two is 40 hours. **This Summary Paper will count 25% of your final grade.***

ASSIGNMENT THREE: Historical

Write a paper on “Christianity in Asia Minor in the First Century.” Use New Testament histories, Bible dictionaries, New Testament introductions, commentaries, etc. in your research. You will need to concentrate on Christianity that existed in Asia Minor from A.D. 70-100. You may develop your paper in your own way, but it should deal at least with the following issues:

1. The beginnings of Christianity in Asia Minor
2. Major centers of Christianity in Asia Minor
3. Jewish-Christian relations in Asia Minor
4. Roman-Christian relations in Asia Minor
5. The influence of Greco-Roman pagan religions on Christianity in Asia Minor
6. The relevance of this information for understanding the purposes of the Gospel of John

Your paper should be fully documented, using at least 10 different sources. It will be evaluated on the basis of content and style. It should be fully documented. Mail a hard copy to me. Be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for this paper to be returned to you. **This paper will count 25% of your final grade. The total estimated time required for successful completion of this assignment is 20 hours.**

ASSIGNMENT FOUR: Practical Theology

This is an assignment in Practical Theology based on your understanding of John’s Gospel. One focus in this course on John has been to see John as a witness to Jesus in a first-century world that was drastically changing. The purpose of this assignment is to observe some of the changes in our world and to assess the value of John for bearing witness in the midst of this change.

This paper consists of 2 parts. In Part I, the student will read Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism*. In narrative form, respond to these questions:

1. Describe what Erickson is attempting to do in his book.
2. From Chapter 1, describe in your own words: (a) premodernism; (b) modernism; and (c) postmodernism.
3. From Chapter 1, describe in your own words the 7 tenets of postmodernism. What is Erickson’s distinction between “hard” and “soft” postmodernism?
4. From your study of the background of John, describe parallels between John’s world and these 7 tenets of postmodernism.
5. Summarize in your own words the negative responses to postmodernism (Wells, Oden, Schaeffer) in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

6. Summarize in your own words the positive responses to postmodernism (Grenz, Middleton and Walsh, Putt) in Chapter 5, 6, and 7.
7. In your own words, what is deconstruction?
8. Describe specific ways that postmodern thinking appears to be present in your ministry context.

Part II of this paper consists of the relevance of the Gospel of John in speaking to the postmodern world. Describe the major themes you find in John and show how they speak to postmodernism. How does John show in his Gospel that he is aware of the thinking of his world and consciously presents his witness to Jesus in a way that speaks to that thinking? Demonstrate this with reference to specific places in John such as his use of logos in the Prologue.

Submit your paper in hard copy to me. Be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your graded paper to be returned to you. **The total estimated time required for successful completion of this assignment is 10 hours. This assignment will count 25% of your final grade.**

Course Schedule

The following module system is a syllabus management system that will help guide you in the completion of course assignments. The module system for this syllabus is based on a semester start date as found in the most current catalog.

MODULE #1

All work for the first module should be completed four weeks from the Intraterm start date. Please see assignments listed below.

Week	Lectures to View	Assignments Due
1	Lectures 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin summary of e-lectures • Begin reading textbook <i>The Gospel of John</i>, F. F. Bruce
2	Lectures 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working on summary • Continue reading textbook – work on reading summary
3	Lectures 6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working on 1-page summary • Continue reading textbook - work on reading summary
4	Lectures 9-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue working on summary • Reading summary due • Assignment 2 due (see above)

MODULE #2

All work for the second module should be completed eight weeks from the semester start date. Please see assignments listed below.

Week	Lectures to view	Assignments Due
5	Lectures 12-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working on summary of e-lectures Begin reading <i>Interpreting the Gospel of John</i>, Gary M. Burge Begin Assignment 3 (see above)
6	Lectures 14-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working on summary Continue reading textbook – work on reading summary Continue Assignment 3
7	Lectures 17-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working on summary Continue reading textbook – work on reading summary Continue Assignment 3
8	Lectures 21-23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working on summary Reading summary due Assignment 3 due

MODULE #3

All work for the third module should be completed twelve weeks from the semester start date. Please see assignments listed below.

Week	Lectures to view	Assignments Due
9	Lectures 24-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working on summary of e-lectures Begin reading <i>Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism</i>, Millard J. Erickson Begin Assignment 4 (see above)
10	Lectures 27-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue working on summary Continue reading textbook – work on reading summary Continue Assignment 4
11	Lectures 30-32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize summary Continue reading textbook – work on reading summary Continue Assignment 4
12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading summary due Assignment 4 due

Relevant Institutional and Class Policies

Conduct in Theological Discussions: Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the Catalog for more information.

Language about God and Humanity: Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing "humanity" rather than "man" or "people" rather than "men").

Late or Incomplete Work: The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

Drop/Add/Withdrawal: Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated

basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use in writing of wording or ideas produced by others without crediting the author and/or source from which the material was taken. As the following statement indicates, plagiarism is a serious offense that undermines both the witness and integrity of the Christian community:

Occurrences of plagiarism shall be considered 'documented' when the instructor is able to produce documentary evidence that plagiarism has occurred, and when the instructor has reason to believe that the plagiarism was motivated by a deliberate attempt to receive credit for ideas or work not the student's own. Where such plagiarism involves the theft of the academic work of another student, whether at Erskine or any other institution, it shall be designated 'documented theft of another student's work.'

The instructor involved, in consultation with the Dean, may recommend measures deemed appropriate. In cases of documented plagiarism or documented theft of another student's work, the offending student will automatically receive the following penalties:

- Failure of the course(s) in which plagiarized or stolen work is submitted
- Dismissal from the Seminary for a minimum of one semester
- Forfeiture of the right to tuition refunds during the semester(s) affected

Before such penalties are imposed, a committee of at least three faculty members must agree that they are appropriate to the case. Appeals in such cases may only be addressed, in writing, to the President of Erskine College and Theological Seminary.

WRITING THEOLOGICAL PAPERS

The seminary has produced a *Writing Theological Papers* document that guides a student through the process of producing a high quality theological paper. It is included on your CD-ROM for this course and is part of your student handbook provided by the seminary.

Please edit your paper for typographical errors, misspelled words, stylistic miscues, and grammatical mistakes. The paper should be double-spaced and constitute original work written for this course only and cannot include material previously used in another course or for another purpose. Please read over the notation regarding the seminary policy on plagiarism included at the end of this syllabus. Your use of the work or thoughts of another without proper citation and acknowledgement constitutes plagiarism. **Content found at an Internet web site is construed to be**

copyrighted material written and produced by another person.

Undocumented wholesale use of words from an Internet web site passed off as the student's own work in a research paper of this sort constitutes plagiarism and will be considered a violation of the seminary plagiarism policy. Students who are determined to have violated the seminary's policy on plagiarism will receive a grade of zero for the paper, will not be allowed to re-submit another paper, and will have a written record of the violation added to their permanent student record. Further violations of the seminary's plagiarism policy could result in temporary or permanent dismissal from the seminary.

Please visit these websites for more information about plagiarism:

<http://www.plagiarism.org/>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html

<http://www.georgetown.edu/honor/plagiarism.html>

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