

**Erskine Theological Seminary**  
*Christian Commitment and Excellence in Learning*

NT 774

**Hebrews**

**January Term, 2009**

**Thursdays, 9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.**

**Due West Campus**

**J. P. Hering, Ph.D.**

Office Telephone: (864) 379-8880

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri., 2:00-5:00 P.M., appointment recommended

E-mail: [hering@erskine.edu](mailto:hering@erskine.edu)

Seminary Fax: (864) 379-3171

Mailing address: P.O. Drawer 668, Due West, SC, 29639

- I. Course Description:** This course is designed to introduce the student to the historical circumstances, themes, and concerns of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Of special interest will be the Christology and eschatology of the Epistle and their relevance for preaching and teaching. **Note regarding exegesis papers:** *In order to receive exegesis credit for this course, students must have successfully completed BI 502 Principles of Exegesis (and, where applicable, Greek I and II) prior to taking this class. Please see Course Requirements below. Exegesis/Elective. Three hours.*
- II. Course Objectives:** The mission statement of Erskine Seminary indicates that its purpose is to educate its students “for service in the Christian Church”, in particular, the study of the Bible “in its own literary, historical and theological settings”, so that the student may “interpret it with relevance and meaning applicable for today.” This course examines the literary and historical aspects of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with particular emphasis upon critical examination and interpretation of the biblical text. In addition to the close exegesis of the text and its historical context, theological issues connected with the interpretation of the book are treated. Students will be expected (see Course Requirements below) to demonstrate a familiarity with the backgrounds, message and critical issues related to the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews.
- III. Required Textbooks: (Available from the Erskine Theological Seminary Online Bookstore at <http://www.ecampus.com/erskine>.)**

Bateman, Herbert W., ed. *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007.

Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.

Langenecker, R., ed. *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

The NIV Bible text (Barker, Kenneth, general editor, *The NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), notable for its affordable price, popular translation and excellent notes and maps, will be used in this course, and is suggested reading of each student. The selection of a Bible translation, however, will be left to the individual student.

In addition, there will be small reading assignments and/or handouts throughout the course to help the student organize and understand the relatively large amount of material to be learned.

- IV. Course Requirements:** Students are expected to attend every class meeting. Attendance in the *first meeting of the class is mandatory*; if the student cannot attend this meeting, please do not register, or if registered, complete the drop/add procedure. If a student must be absent due to an emergency or illness for all or part of a session, the student is responsible for all work done and due for that session. *No more than one session may be missed*. Due to the nature of the course, missing classroom discussion will almost certainly adversely affect the student's performance on the scheduled exams and exercises.

Students are expected to be adequately prepared for each class session, particularly the biblical reading assignments due. Classroom discussion will constitute an important element of our learning together, and will be adversely affected by poor preparation.

One objective exam will be administered, and will be related to the biblical, background and critical material covered in the introductory session. The test must be taken on the assigned date. See course outline for the test date.

Three short papers will be assigned, specifically, 1) Two reviews (with conclusion statements) of Bateman and Longenecker; 2) A Christological Hymn derived from the messianic expressions found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Guide sheets will be provided for these assignments.

An oral presentation will be given on the students' selected exegesis passages. A guide sheet will be provided.

Each student will be required to tender an exegetical paper based on a portion of the text of Hebrews (either English-language based or Greek). Please consult the professor for details and exegesis guidelines. A guide sheet will be provided for the preparation and presentation of the exegesis paper.

- V. Evaluation:** The Seminary grade scale (*Catalog*, p. 42 f.) will be used in determining a letter grade. The student's final grade will be calculated as follows:

Test = 20%  
3 Papers, 10% each = 30%  
Oral Presentation = 20%  
Exegesis Paper = 30%

Note: Completed and graded tests and papers will be returned to the student in a subsequent class period. Papers and tests tendered at the end of the semester (where impossible to return in class) will be held by the professor for pick-up by the student. Alternately, if the student wishes, the paper/test may be placed in the student's campus mailbox, or mailed to the student. In such cases, the student should indicate the mailbox number on the paper/test, or, when mailed, supply a SASE.

- VI. Class Meeting Dates:** This course will meet for four eight-hour sessions on the following Thursdays: January 8, 15, 22 and 29. See course outline below for details.
- VII. Seminary Policies:** Once you have completed, signed, and submitted your registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract. The student is encouraged to read the Erskine Seminary 2009-2010 *Catalog* for important information regarding drop/add procedures and deadlines (p. 4,37), course withdrawal (p. 37), as well as the correct manner of dealing with the grade status of "incomplete" (p.44). Please consult the Student Handbook for policies re. writing style and ethics, e.g., inclusive language and plagiarism, as well as the Seminary *Catalog*, p. 40f. A brief summary of these policies is as follows:

A grade of "**incomplete**" is not a privilege if the student. It is the prerogative of the professor. It can be given as a final grade only when (1) the student has completed most of the assigned coursework and (2) when the student has been providentially hindered from completing the rest. The student and professor must complete the appropriate form before an "incomplete" can be given. The final date that an "incomplete" can be changed to a grade for the January Term is April 1, 2009. After this date, the grade of "incomplete" will automatically become an "F", and cannot be altered. Note that there is a fee associated with "incompletes".

**Drop/Add or 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.

**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").

**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.

Papers submitted in this class should be submitted in typed, double-spaced format, and written according to Erskine Seminary's "Style and Form Standards for All Master's Level Programs". The student must be especially careful regarding citation of sources in all Seminary course work, including both footnotes and a full bibliography. Failing to cite a reference, or claiming other's material as one's own constitutes a type of fraud known as **plagiarism**. A charge of plagiarism is serious, and can result in the student's expulsion from the Seminary.

## Course Outline

### Session 1: Thursday, January 8 (9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.)

**Introduction:** An overview of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Issues regarding the integrity of the letter, intended audience, author, occasion, history of interpretation, letter-writing vs. epistle, etc. will be treated. Please read Ellingworth, pages 1-133 in preparation for this class session.

**Exegetical Work:** In this session, we will begin our exegetical examination of the letter, Hebrews Chapter 1.

### Session 2: Thursday, January 15 (9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.)

**Exegetical Work:** Hebrews 2:1ff. In this session, we will continue our exegetical examination of the letter, and begin our student exegetical classroom presentations.

**Discussion:** Bateman's book/Hebrew 6 controversies.

**Work due:** Paper #1, Book Review, Bateman.

*Note: The test, which covers the introductory material, will be administered during this class session..*

**Session 3: Thursday, January 22 (9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.)**

**Exegetical Work:** Hebrews. In this session, we will continue our exegetical examination of the letter, including student exegetical presentations.

**Discussion:** Langenecker's book/Hebrews in NT Christological context.

**Work due:** Paper #2, Book Review, Langenecker.

**Session 4: Thursday, January 29 (9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.)**

**Exegetical Work:** In this session, we will finish our exegetical examination of Hebrews, including student exegetical presentations.

**Discussion:** Deriving a Christological Hymn from the broader text of Hebrews.

**Work due:** Paper #, "A Christological Hymn".

**Note: Due to the compressed nature of the January term, the exegesis paper will be due on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> of February, 2009, to allow students extra time for writing and research. It is of utmost importance, however, that this deadline be kept!**