

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Fall 2009**
Instructor: Dr. Julian V. Hills
Course #: THEO 6120
Course Title: **New Testament Method**

Content:

In 1973, a young Walter Wink wrote, "Historical criticism is bankrupt" (*The Bible in Human Transformation*, p. 1). Now a new young firebrand, Hector Avalos, has published a book announcing *The End of Biblical Studies* (2007) as an academic discipline with any sort of integrity -- in part by suggesting that scholars employ "a variety of flawed and specious techniques that are aimed at maintaining the illusion that the Bible is still relevant in today's world" (cover blurb).

This course will be, I hope, a vigorous re-affirmation of the necessity and the rich fruit of appropriate method, or methods, in biblical studies. Of course, we shall want to hear what Wink and Avalos have to say; but not in a purely defensive posture. Instead, we shall examine a host of first-rate examples of biblical criticism well employed, and each student will write several exegetical papers that will correspond to the best canons of scholarly research and writing. In addition, we shall discuss the role of biblical studies in the academy (say, in a religious or secular university setting) and in the service of the Church.

Format:

Lectures, early on; then seminar papers and responses. Some book reports.

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- A final 2-hour examination -- the questions will be available in advance.
- Several short papers (6-10 pp.) and a final paper (15-20 pp.)..

Language Pre-requisites:

- All students will be expected, minimally, to learn the Greek alphabet, so as to "follow along" in a Greek NT (or interlinear Greek-English NT) and use a lexicon. I shall be glad to help you get started before as well as during the course, if you wish.
- French and / or German can of course be used with profit, but are not required.

Required Texts:

- Hayes, John H., and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

Department of Theology

- A Greek New Testament (Nestle-Arland or United Bible Societies -- a recent edition): Some may choose an edition with Greek and English on facing pages. Complete beginners may also wish to use an interlinear Greek-English New Testament.
- *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 1993).

Optional texts:

- A Synopsis, or "Gospel Parallels": Everyone will need to use a synopsis at home and in class, and I urge you to purchase one. The Nestle-Arland Greek-English edition is superb, but very expensive.
- Hector Avalos, *The End of Biblical Studies* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus, 2007). I "recommend" that you purchase this book, but emphatically not because I agree with Avalos! We shall discuss this book, and it will be on library Reserve.
- *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999): In addition to being a fine guide in editorial matters, the *Handbook* amounts to a survey of the field and the of variety of publications in it. For example, the listings of the Dead Sea Scrolls and of non-canonical early Christian texts, along with their respective abbreviations, constitute an invaluable checklist; the list of journals and reference works with their abbreviations and acronyms is likewise of enormous value.
- Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2d ed.; New York: American Bible Society, 1994): Indispensable for serious study of and writing on the Greek NT. It will be on library Reserve.

PLEASE NOTE: I do NOT plan on placing a book order with BookMarq.