

# BI 192: Engaging the New Testament Letters

**Name of Instructor:** Olubunmi Adegbola, Kendra Mohn

**Semester and Year:** Fall 2026

Required for all M.Div. students. Optional for all others

Number of hours, grading option: 3 hrs, taken for grade or credit

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on reading, interpreting, and teaching the NT writings—in this case, the epistles (letters), from Romans to Revelation. In reading, we employ the critical lenses of literature, rhetoric, history, the socio-cultural sciences, and modern cultural studies. In interpreting, we translate key words, explore multiple textual layers, find rich theological diversity, and see how these writings reflected and addressed their original communities. In teaching, we discern how these writings continue to inspire and address faith communities today, while exploring ways to invite others into dialogue with the Holy Spirit as we read scripture.

## OBJECTIVES

- To gain deeper appreciation for reading texts closely as letters originating in specific socio-historical contexts to address the needs of specific communities. (*Practice of Engagement with Cross-cultural and Global Dimensions*)
- To read the NT Letters as integral parts of a living conversation with scripture, paying close attention to their distinctive messages, theologies, passages, and themes. (*Practice of Biblical and Theological Wisdom*)
- To interpret passages (exegesis) through close reading, comparative analysis, translation tools, and careful reflection. (*Practices of Curiosity and of Complex Analysis*)
- To work at teaching and preaching significant themes from these letters through class discussions, questions, and a project. (*Practices of Evangelical Listening and Speaking the Faith to Others*)<sup>1</sup>

**PROCEDURE:** Two weekly meeting times will feature plenary teaching, small group discussion, translation work, and other forms of dynamic engagement. Asynchronous distance students will engage the class through prerecorded presentations, real-time web-conferencing, and asynchronous online interactions. Through these various means, students in all three programs (residential, distance, collaborative) will engage in learning together as a unified class.

**EVALUATION:** Evaluation will be based on weekly participation and assignments, an exegesis paper, a short-answer essay assignment, and a final project.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

**Required:** Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2018.

**Suggested:** One of the following study Bibles:

- *The HarperCollins Study Bible NRSV, including the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Edited by H.W. Attridge. Atlanta: SBL, 2006.
- *The SBL Study Bible, with the NRSV Updated edition*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2023.
- *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: NRSV*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Edited by M.D. Coogan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Levine, Amy-Jill, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*. Second edition, fully revised and expanded. Oxford University Press, 2018.

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<sup>1</sup>See Wartburg's Pastoral-Diaconal Practices: <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/12-pastoral-diaconal-practices/>