



**TYNDALE**  
Seminary

## Course Syllabus

# **GOSPEL OF JOHN: LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS NEWT 0726**

**Winter Semester 2011**  
**MONDAYS, 1:00PM-3:50PM**

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Office Location: rm 2004 Office Hours: Mon. 4-5 pm; Tues. 3-6 pm

## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A study focusing on the Gospel of John on the basis of the English text. After reviewing the background to the Gospel, emphasis is placed on tracing the author's thought and identifying theological motifs.

Not long after it was written the Gospel of John was called a "more spiritual" account of Jesus' life. The Fourth Gospel's direct teaching and evocative symbolism have helped to make it one of the most influential books in the New Testament. In this course we will examine the Gospel of John from the standpoints of history, literature, theology, and spirituality. Students will gain hands-on experience using academic tools and methods to reconstruct the original context and significance of John's message. We will also employ some techniques from literary criticism to explore the contours of John's story. Finally we will ask how the Fourth Gospel might shape our thought and practice in the contemporary world. Along the way we will compare a modern academic commentary on John with an early commentary by a great Christian leader of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. This comparison will give us the opportunity to reflect on the variety of ways in which John's Gospel has been read over the centuries and on the hermeneutical issues involved in moving between the ancient text and our contemporary world.

## **PREREQUISITES**

- Required: Interpreting and Applying the Bible (BIBL 0501)
- Recommended: New Testament Theology and History (NEWT 0522)

## **II. LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- reproduce a detailed outline of John's Gospel;
- outline John's treatment of several important theological themes;
- discuss the social and historical setting of John's Gospel and how it informs our reading of the book;
- discuss John's interpretation and re-application of Old Testament and early Jewish texts, themes, and symbols;
- analyze the narrative structure of a story in John's Gospel and discuss how this structure influences our understanding of the evangelist's message;
- discuss several points at which an ancient and a modern commentator on John disagree, explaining what gives rise to the disagreement and discussing the hermeneutical issues involved;
- discuss the significance of John's thought for contemporary Christian thought and practice;
- identify and discuss the hermeneutical issues involved in moving between John's first-century vision to the contemporary world.

### **III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **A. REQUIRED TEXTS**

Moloney, Francis J., *The Gospel of John*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1998. [ISBN: 9780814659670]

#### **C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

There are four principles of learning that undergird the assignments for this course. *First, we learn best when we put new knowledge to use right away.* Rather than simply feeding information back to an instructor, we learn best when we are engaged in a project or problem that requires us to apply our new skills and information. So, throughout this course we will focus on applying our new knowledge in the interpretation of NT passages.

*Second, we learn better when we acquire new knowledge in the context of the same activities we will pursue outside the course.* If we learn by pursuing artificial "textbook" problems, then we will not necessarily transfer that knowledge into real-world contexts. On the other hand, if we practice real-world activities from the beginning, then we are likely to use new skills and information beyond the course. Although students will put their Seminary education to use in many different ways, we will all be involved somehow in reading and interpreting Scripture. This activity is, in many ways, the common core of our multi-faceted roles in God's kingdom. It is central to our personal devotional lives, our leading of small groups, our strategizing about community outreach, our preaching, our teaching, our spiritual direction, our counseling, our visiting of prisoners, our creation of music and works of art, etc. So as we learn about the New Testament in its context, we will focus at each stage on how this new knowledge helps us to interpret specific passages in each biblical book.

*Third, we learn best when we are pursuing questions we form for ourselves, rather than questions that are set for us by an instructor. When we help to set the direction of our own learning, we are immediately more motivated and more likely to connect what we learn with other areas of knowledge. So students will decide for themselves what questions they want to make the focus of their blog discussions and what passage they want to examine in their final interpretation essay.*

*Fourth, we learn best when we help one another grapple with questions. Much of the North American educational system is oriented toward isolated, individual learning. This fosters a competitive, status-driven mindset in which I evaluate my learning based on my victory over others (“top-of-the-class”) and based on self-centred external rewards (“grades” and a good transcript). The problem is that both of these tendencies run directly counter to the values of God’s kingdom in which we are called to “build up” the community and sacrifice our own status for the sake of others. So most of your learning activities in this course will consist of co-operative, group activities. You will not just be graded on your own contribution. You will also be graded on how further the learning of others in your group. This does not mean being an “expert” and dispensing knowledge. It also means helping your group members to ask good questions. In many cases we build others up best by allowing them to teach us. So part of your group assignments will also involve inviting your group members to reflect on your own suggestions—what is strong and what is missing or incorrect. This is often a threatening experience for all of us, particularly in such an individualistic society.*

**1. Contribution to In-Class Group Discussions:** 40% of final grade

Students will participate in small- and large-group discussions in class. These discussions will be based in part on reading questions set by the instructor. Students are expected to demonstrate in the discussions that they have (a) read and understood the week’s sections in John’s Gospel and in the textbook; (b) reflected on the set reading questions enough to offer a substantial response; (c) reflected enough on the reading to formulate questions of their own to share with the group. **After each class, students will provide the instructor (by email) with a peer evaluation grade out of 4 for each of their fellow group members.** Students should use the rubric posted on the class web-page in order to formulate these marks. The instructor will also observe the discussions and will reserve the right to balance peer grades that he judges not to reflect a student’s actual learning and contribution.

**2. Interpretation Essay:** Due by midnight on **Saturday, Apr. 2nd**; 50% of final grade.

Students will write an essay of 12-15 pages in length providing and defending an interpretation of one passage from John’s Gospel. A grading rubric and full instructions for the essay are provided on the class web-page.

**3. Outline Quiz:** In-class on Monday, April 11<sup>th</sup>; 10% of final grade.

Students will reproduce, from memory, the detailed outline of John's Gospel provided by the instructor and used throughout the course as the basis for our discussions.

#### D. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

- Students should consult the current *Academic Calendar* for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at [www.tyndale.ca/seminary/calendar](http://www.tyndale.ca/seminary/calendar). An excerpt is attached with this syllabus for easy reference.
- All assignments must be submitted on deadline. Late interpretation essays will be penalized according to the policy laid out in the current academic calendar. **Students absent from class will receive 0/4 for their class discussion contributions** unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor or the student can demonstrate that the lateness is the result of a medical emergency.
- The student's **interpretive essay should be submitted by email attachment** to [iscott@tyndale.ca](mailto:iscott@tyndale.ca). Please DO NOT submit paper copies. Email confirmation that the essay has been received will be provided within 12 hours. Feedback on the interpretive essay will be provided by email **to each student's MyTyndale email account**. These assignments may be submitted in any standard word processing file format (.ODT .DOC .DOCX .WPD or .RTF).

#### E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments [*Sample*]

Contributions to In-Class Discussions	40 %
Interpretation Essay	50 %
Outline Quiz	10 %
Total Grade	100 %

#### IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

Each week students should read the appropriate chapters in John's Gospel, as well as the corresponding sections of Moloney's commentary. Although they are not included on the course outline, students are expected to read the introductory sections of Moloney's commentary during the first two weeks of class (i.e., prior to Jan 24<sup>th</sup>).

January 10	Introduction: A "More Spiritual" Gospel
January 17	John 1-2
January 24	John 3-4
January 31	John 5-6
February 7	John 7-8

February 14	John 9-10
February 21	John 11-12
February 28	John 13-14
March 7	John 15-16
March 14	<b>** Reading Week – No Class or Assigned Reading **</b>
March 21	John 17-18
March 28	John 19-20 <b>** Interpretation Essay due by email at 12am midnight , Sat. Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup> **</b>
April 4	John 21
April 11	Conclusions: John's Vision of Life in Christ <b>** Outline Quiz (in-class) **</b>

## V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

See bibliography on the class web-page.