

The Gospel of John (NT628; 3 credit hours)  
Trinity School for Ministry, fall 2017

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### Course Description

The purpose of this course is to become better equipped to read the Gospel of John, often called “the Fourth Gospel” in scholarly literature, as Christian Scripture. We will focus on many themes and various historical and theological particularities along the way as we “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” this letter, but the overarching aim is to learn to engage with the Gospel of John as a prime canonical witness to the living reality of Jesus Christ and thereby deepen our grasp of the gospel. (Pre-requisite: BI500.)

The general set of outcomes Trinity desires for each of our graduates includes the following:

1. The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.
2. The student will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.
3. M.Div.: The student will be able to effectively communicate the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.  
M.A.R.: The student will be able to effectively teach the Christian faith.  
S.T.M.: The student will demonstrate the ability to carry out research from original sources.
4. M.Div.: The student will be prepared to effectively lead in a variety of Christian communities.  
M.A.R.: The student will be equipped to apply scholarship to the life of the church in his or her chosen theological discipline.  
S.T.M.: The student will be equipped to successfully pursue further independent research and post-graduate study in his or her chosen theological discipline.

This course is one of the core courses in the curriculum that provide an understanding of Scripture and biblical theology, thereby grounding this curriculum as a whole (outcome 1). Such attention to biblical theology is at the heart of a classic Anglican approach to Scripture (outcome 2; see Article XX of *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*), and an understanding of the Bible is a pre-requisite for both effectively communicating the Christian message and offering effective leadership (Outcomes 3 and 4). So this course

contributes to each of these general outcomes, doing so through the following specific objectives:

1. Increased understanding of the historical issues related to the composition of the Gospel of John, as well as the Gospel's literary and theological structure and contents.
2. Increased skill in interpreting individual passages in the Gospel of John in the light of the entire Gospel, the context of four canonical Gospels, and the canon as a whole (biblical theology).
3. Introductory knowledge of some of the major trends in early, modern, and specifically Anglican study of the Gospel of John.

### Required Texts

In addition to a basic “standard” English translation of the Bible (e.g., NRSV, ESV, etc.); I recommend *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, student edition [San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006]; ISBN: 978-0060786847), there are three *required* textbooks for this course:

1. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. F. J. Moloney, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). (ISBN: 978-0300140156)
2. Brendan Byrne, S.J., *Life Abounding: A Reading of John's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014). (ISBN: 978-0814635742)
3. Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). (ISBN: 978-0802829382)

### General Approach

Paying detailed attention to the text is the bread and butter of this course, so each student is expected to have read the assigned portions of John that are listed below as focal texts for each class session as well as the Brown *Introduction* and Byrne commentary sections that correspond to each session. A combination of my lectures and our collective discussion will take up most of each of our weekly meeting. The assigned readings will provide key background information (and further bibliographies, should you wish to explore any topic in more depth), so that the lectures may focus more single-mindedly on the “big picture.” Even with this combination of your own focused study of the readings outside of class and our shared discussion in class, it will still not be possible to do more than scratch the surface of the Fourth Gospel. Hence, the goal of this course is not so much the transfer of *content* but the modeling and imparting of a *way of study*—so that you will “learn to fish,” per the old saying (“Give someone a fish and feed them for a day; teach someone to fish and feed them for a lifetime”). Imparting a set of *skills*, rather than *information*, is my aim.

### Course Requirements

*Attending lectures and class participation.* This is the basic minimum requirement. As the TSM *Student Handbook* states, “Students who miss more than three classes in one term may forfeit credit for the class and may be in danger of failing the course. As a matter of courtesy, students who must miss any classes should notify their professors, ahead of class if

possible.” (A word about taking an “Incomplete”: Incompletes are given only in the most serious of cases. They are not granted as a way to extend the semester due to unfinished work. In order to request an incomplete, you must obtain the necessary form online and bring it to me so that I can list the specific assignments to be completed along with due dates. The revised due date will not extend beyond six weeks from the last day of class. The form will then be submitted to the Academic Dean for final approval and will only be granted in the most serious of cases.)

*Ten reading quizzes.* Because the content of my lectures and our class discussion will largely focus on the “big issues” of Johannine interpretation, much of the important background information—such as date and authorship considerations, etc.—will only be accessible to you through the assigned readings. The readings are, then, considered to be essential to this course, not simply optional extras that might help to “fill out” my lectures if the student desires to go further in depth. Therefore, ten of the thirteen class sessions will include a quiz on the content of the assigned readings. This is purely to ensure that you are in fact completing the reading; questions about how to integrate the readings with class lectures will not appear on the quizzes.

*Paper on Koester textbook.* A little over halfway through the course, students will submit a 1500-word review essay that critically engages the textbook on the theology of John written by Craig Koester. More information will be provided near the beginning of the semester about how to complete this paper

*Final exegetical paper.* At the end of the course, students will submit a 3000-word exegetical essay on how the crucifixion in the Gospel of John is related to the Gospel’s theology of “glory”/exaltation. Once again, more information on how to complete this paper will be given in class.

### **Course Evaluation**

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows: The reading quizzes will count for 25% of your mark for the course, the Koester paper for 35%, and the final exegetical for 40% of your final grade. Final grades may be raised or lowered on the basis of class attendance, participation, and/or tardiness of work.

Your written work will be evaluated according to the following criteria: clarity and charity of thought and expression, accuracy of information, and breadth and depth of discussion. I will use letter grades or their equivalent to mean the following:

B (80-89): The thought and expression are clear and the information is accurate. The discussion is broad and deep enough to indicate a solid understanding of the issue. By “broad” I mean that sufficient aspects of the topic are covered, and by “depth” I mean that enough supporting and illustrating material is offered to flesh out the basic thought.

C (70-79): The material shows an adequate grasp of the topic, but at points the discussion is unclear, inaccurate, narrow or shallow.

D (60-69): The material shows something close to an adequate grasp of the topic but is notably defective according to one or more of the criteria.

F (below 60): The material does not indicate that the student has an adequate grasp of the topic, or it is severely defective according to the criteria.

A (90-100): The material is exceptional. Usually this means that it is not only clear and accurate but also develops the topic in breadth and depth beyond what is necessary for a good understanding of it. Such material is often, though not always, marked also by creativity, exceptional insight, and/or relatively extensive research.

The school's grade scale is as follows: A = 100-95; A- = 94-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D = below 70; F = below 60. As per The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) requirements, several samples of student work may be randomly selected and used as a class artifact as part of an on-going assessment of courses and degree programs. Students' names will be removed from any work used for this purpose.

### Computer Policy

Use of computers or other electronic devices such as mobile phones or tablets is not permitted during class.

For information about how note taking on laptops can hinder rather than help your retention of what you hear in the classroom, see Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science* (April 23, 2014). As Ruth Graham summarizes, "Note-taking is a two-part action: creating the notes ('encoding') and reviewing them later ('storage'), both of which confer learning benefits. When the encoding becomes too easy, that first opportunity to learn is wasted, particularly when it comes to absorbing concepts rather than rote facts.... Taking notes by hand, by contrast, forces students to grapple with the material enough to summarize it, since they aren't physically capable of writing down every word. The constraints enforced by the rudimentary technology of pen and paper force a deeper engagement with the material, the paper concludes" ("Taking Notes? Bring a Pen, Skip the Computer," *Boston Globe* [May 25, 2014]).

### Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
TBA	Introduction to the course: What is a "gospel"?	Chapter 1 of Brown textbook; First quiz
TBA	The Synoptic Gospels and the historical background of the Fourth Gospel	Chapters 2-3 of Brown textbook; Second quiz

TBA	John 1 and the relationship of God to “the Word”	Chapters 4-5 of Brown textbook; Byrne commentary on John 1; Third quiz
TBA	John 2 and the “signs” in the Gospel	Chapter 6 of Brown textbook; Bryne commentary on John 2; Fourth quiz
TBA	John 3 and “Johannine irony”	Chapters 7-8 of Brown textbook; Bryne commentary on John 3
TBA	John 6 and “sacraments”	Chapter 9 of Brown textbook; Bryne commentary on John 6; Fifth quiz
TBA	John 8 and Johannine Christology	Bryne commentary on John 8; Sixth quiz
TBA	John 9 and Jesus’ rejection	Bryne commentary on John 9; Seventh quiz
TBA	Anglican approaches to the Fourth Gospel	Koester paper due
TBA	John 11 and Johannine eschatology	Bryne commentary on John 11; Eighth quiz
TBA	John 13-17 and Johannine ecclesiology	Bryne commentary on John 13-17; Ninth quiz
TBA	John 18-19 and “the trial of truth”	Bryne commentary on John 18-19; Tenth quiz
TBA	John 20-21 and the Johannine understanding of the resurrection	Bryne commentary on John 20-21
TBA		Final exegetical paper due