

Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando
Epistles of John
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SYLLABUS

General Description:

The prime focus of this course is on the content of 1, 2, and 3 John. Nevertheless this focus is maintained against three backgrounds: (1) the nature of the Gnostic heresy at the end of the first century, and the answers, theoretical and practical, that the apostle John advances in response to it; (2) the problems of syncretism and contextualization in contemporary culture—for after all that is the sort of thing that John was facing, however unique his circumstances; (3) the bearing of the content of these epistles on a variety of strands of biblical theology.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course the student will have gained:

1. a detailed knowledge of the Epistles of John and their applicability to a fair range of pastoral situations;
2. the ability to relate the dilemma of the church's early and profound confrontation with various forms of proto-Gnosticism to modern problems of transcultural evangelization;
3. the capacity to probe to some extent just what is involved in "essential" Christianity—i.e. elements of Christianity that are non-negotiable, without which there is no Christianity;
4. A grasp of the doctrine of Christian assurance.

Commentaries

Raymond E. Brown. *The Epistles of John*. Anchor Bible 30. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982. (out of print) ISBN: 978-0385056861

Gary Burge. *The Letters of John*. NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. ISBN: 978-0310486206

Simon J. Kistemaker. *Exposition of James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*. New Testament Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. ISBN: 9780801020803

Colin G. Kruse. *The Letters of John*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. ISBN: 978-0802837288

Rudolf Schnackenburg. *The Johannine Epistles : Introduction and Commentary*. Reginald and Ilse Fuller. New York : Crossroad, 1992. (out of print) ISBN: 9780824511760

Stephen Smalley. *1, 2, 3, John*. Word Biblical Commentary 51. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007. ISBN: 9781418514242

John R. W. Stott. *The Letters of John: 2nd ed.* Tyndale New Testament Commentary 19. Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780830829989

Georg Strecker. *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John*. Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996. ISBN: 978-0800660475

Robert W. Yarbrough. *1–3 John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2008. ISBN: 9780801026874

Pre-Course Work

(1) From the list of the commentaries in the preceding section, choose one to read right through. If you are a complete beginner in biblical studies, opt for Stott or Burge. If you are a middle-level M.Div. student, choose Kruse (or if you want something slightly older, Marshall or Kistemaker). If you are more advanced, read Brown, Schnackenburg, Smalley, Strecker, or Yarbrough (by preference, the latter). Write an evaluative report of your reading of the commentary—not more than four pages, double-spaced. This is to be handed in the first day of the course. **20%**

(2) During the week of the course, familiarize yourself with three or four other commentaries on the Johannine Epistles.

Post-Course Work

Write a paper of not more than fifteen pages, double-spaced, on *one* of the following two topics:

1. Expound some significant passage in 1 John – a long paragraph or two – in enough detail to display your grasp of the text, and its theological relevance.
2. Choose one of the themes of 1 John, and write a careful essay on it, explaining not only what John says about it, but what it contributes to New Testament theology.

80%