

[January 1, 2022 draft]

**New Testament Theology:
Paul and Modern World (BIBNT 803)**

GETS, Room (TBD): Feb 11-12 4-5; March 11-12; April 22-23—Fri and Sat
9am-3pm [“3-weekend in-person”]

Instructor: K. K. Yeo, PhD
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Notes: 1) Because this is a 3-weekend seminar course, those who register for the course agree to completing the reading assignments before the first day of class and to present the first draft of their term papers on April 27 (revised paper is due May 1, 2022). Greek is helpful but not required in this course.

2) Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to **providing the most accessible learning environment** as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience **disability-related barriers** in the academic setting, please contact Student Access to move forward with the established accommodation process (e: student.access@garrett.edu; p: 847-467-5530). If you already have established accommodations with Student Access, please let me know as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of the term, so we **can work together** to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is **confidential under FERPA regulations**.

A. Course Description and Objectives

Course Description

An introduction to basic issues in current debate concerning New Testament theology, paying attention the rhetorical theology of the apostle Paul, and its reception in our modern world. Attention is given to scriptural criticism and cross-cultural hermeneutics in conversations with modern authors [“knowing”], thus to the practice of its hermeneutical meanings for diverse cultures today [“doing”], as one seeks to be a competent and faithful interpreter of the biblical text in a world of differences [“being”] regarding *will/power and community*.

Learning Process

Since time will not allow us to cover every book of the Pauline epistles and the critical issues in New Testament theology, reading assignments and seminars are designed to help us to comprehend the material more in-depth:

First, readings from the assigned material provide basis for our discussion, please sign up two assigned readings to report to class, with a 2-page handout of: a) summary of content/thesis and argument/proof, b) three to five short quotes, with page number, c) two questions for discussion.

Second, one article and one book reviews are designed to help individuals in their research papers as well as to provide resources for others. See format of article/book review (1-page single-spaced) in the appendix.

Third, a 12-page (all inclusive) double-spaced research paper enables a hands-on experience of doing a NT/Pauline theology paper; papers will be shared in seminars. This term paper is either an exegetical or theological interpretation of a Pauline text/motif (historical interpretation in 5 pages) between Paul and modern author (reception/dialogue in 5 pages). Consult with Prof. Yeo for topic approval.

Presentation of research paper

A copy of the first complete draft of the paper is to be submitted to the instructor and the respondent at least 48 hours before the presentation in class. Distribution of the whole paper to class members is an option, but a one-page précis of the paper is required to class members as the research paper is presented orally (30 minutes maximum). It is recommended that each presenter highlights the paper they wish to read. Paper presentations will not be graded.

Each respondent is assigned (ten-minute oral response in class), but respondents are asked to write their responses for the benefit of the presenters. Responses or feedbacks may consist of appreciative affirmations of the strengths, *constructive criticism* of the weaknesses, or questions regarding any issues of the paper.

Objectives

1. To have a graduate-level knowledge of current literature on Paul and modern authors [if one has done the reading of assigned textbooks, attended classes, completed all the assignments];
2. To have a deeper understanding and appreciation of one Pauline pericope in relation to our modern world, and a critical and creative appropriation of Paul’s thoughts in our modern world [evident by a successful writing of a term paper];
3. To begin showing a holistic growth (knowledge and love, individual and communal) of personal and social selves in biblical reception and hermeneutic [as demonstrated in the hermeneutical section of the term paper].

B. Main Texts [required readings are available in pdf on Moodle without endnotes, **for personal use only**]

The Greek New Testament: either UBS 5th Edition, edited by Kurt Aland et al., United Bible Societies (2015). ISBN-13: 978-1619706187; or *Novum Testamentum Graece* 28th Edition, edited by Kurt Aland et al., American Bible Society (2012). ISBN-13: 978-3438051608. You can use this *Greek New Testament* available in Bible software such as Accordance or Logos.

Agamben = Agamben, Giorgio. *The Time that Remains. A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0804743839 \$19.00 at Amazon.com

Blanton = Blanton, Ward & Hent de Vries, edited. *Paul and the Philosophers*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2013. ISBN-13: 978-0830831807 \$29.00 at Amazon.com

Cosgrove = Cosgrove, Charlie et al., *Cross-Cultural Paul: Journeys to Others, Journeys to Ourselves*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. ISBN-13: 978-0802828439 \$5.00 at Amazon.com

MWT = Green, Gene et al., ed., *Majority World Theology: Christian Doctrine in Global Context*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-0823249640 \$39.00 at Amazon.com

Yeo = Yeo, K. K. *Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2002). ISBN-13: 978-1587430343 \$5.00 at Amazon.com

C. Class Schedule and Assignments

Jan 1-31: Preparation

Greetings! Welcome to “New Testament Theology: Paul and Modern World” course.

A month before class, you can get ready for first class on Feb 4-5 by:

- 1) downloading the syllabus and other resources from Moodle, get familiarize with the course structure and goals, assignments and expectations, as well as bibliography and resources;
- 2) before Feb 4, read the assigned reading material—at least scan-read, then read more carefully on the two sections you wish to lead the class discussion on;
- 3) deciding which two sections of assigned reading you like to lead the class discussion on (and let Prof. K. K. know [kkyeo@garrett.edu];
- 4) considering which pericope in Pauline epistles or theological theme of Paul that interests you. This pericope and/or theme could easily become your research paper, and you can begin the library research early—not too early to

consult Prof. Yeo once you have a rough outline of your paper. The final version of the research paper is due **May 1**, but the presentation in class is **April 23, 2022**.

Feb 4, am:

(A). Theology and Rhetoric and Cross-cultural

Syllabus and Assignments: What is New Testament Theology? Method of New Testament Theology. Rhetorical and Cross-cultural Theologies.

Readings:

- Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, “Overture: Receptions, Critical Interpretations, and Scriptural Criticism,” in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 1-54: ____
- Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Implications for a Cross-Cultural, Chinese Hermeneutic* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), Ch. III (“Cross-cultural Hermeneutic”), 15-49; Yeo, “Creative Transformation, the Bible, and China,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in China* (New York: OUP, 2021), ed. K. K. Yeo, 1-17: Yeo

Feb 4, pm:

(B) Cultural and Transcendental Critique; Will and Subjectivity [Romans 7]

Readings:

- Yeo, “Culture and Intersubjectivity as Criteria for Negotiating Meanings in Cross-cultural Interpretations,” in *The Meanings We Choose*, ed. Charles H. Cosgrove (Edinburgh: Sheffield/T&T Clark International, 2004), 81-100; and • Agamben: “The First Day” (pp. 1-18): ____

Supplement [PhD]: Yeo, “Biblical Interpretation in the Majority World,” in Mark Hutchinson edited, *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Vol. V, The Twentieth Century Themes and Variations in a Global Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 131–169.

Feb 5, am:

(C) The Time That Remains

Readings:

- Blanton: Eleanor Kaufman, “The Saturday of Messianic Time” (297-309); and • Gilles Deleuze, “Nietzsche and Saint Paul” (381-394): Yichen_
- Agamben, “The Second Day” (pp. 19-43); and “The Fourth Day” (pp. 59-87): ____

Supplement [PhD]: Agamben, “The Fifth Day” (pp. 88-112); “The Sixth Day” (pp. 113-137)

Feb 5, pm:

Readings:

(D) Power, Community/church, and Faith Hope Love

• Yeo, *Chairman Mao*, chap. 3, 4 (pp. 85-138): ____

• Yeo, *Chairman Mao*, chap. 6, 7 (pp. 163-212): Yeo

Supplement [PhD]: Yeo, “The Rhetoric of Election and Calling Language in 1 Thessalonians,” in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 526–547.

March 11, am:

(E) Receptions from Modern Majority World

Readings:

• Shohe, “Redefining Relationships,” MWT, 267-279; and • Yeo, “The Transformative Mission of God: A Confucian-Christian Vision,” in Edmund Kee-Fook Chia edited, *Confucianism and Christianity: Interreligious Dialogue on the Theology of Mission* (London: Routledge, 2021), 137–153: ____

• Cosgrove: Cosgrove, “Paul and Personhood in African American Perspective,” 143-178; and Acosta, “From What Do We Need to Be Saved?,” MWT, 415-429: ____

Supplement [PhD]: Asano, “Motherliness of God,” MWT, 82-94; • Yeo, “Messianic Predestination in Romans 8 and Classical Confucianism,” in *Navigating Romans Through Cultures: Challenging Readings by Charting a New Course* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 259–289.

March 11, pm:

Readings:

• Alfred, “An Indigenous Reinterpretation of Repentance: A Step on the Journey to Reconciliation,” MWT, 430–443; and • Cosgrove: Yeo, “Christ and the Earth in Pauline and Native American Understandings,” 179-218: Yichen

Supplement [PhD]: Yeo, “The Rhetorical Hermeneutic of 1 Corinthians 8 and Chinese Ancestor Worship,” *Biblical Interpretation* 2.3 (1994) 298–31 [Republished in pp. 168–186 of *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and the New Testament Studies*, ed. Anna Runesson (Leiden: Brill, 2011)]; and • Xue, “The Community as Union with Christ,” MWT, 551-564.

March 12, am:

(F). Materialism and Freedom

Readings:

• Blanton: Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul and Universalism,” 87-104; • Welborn, “The Culture of Crucifixion and the Resurrection of the Dispossessed,”

127-140: ____

• Blanton: Slavoj Žižek, “The Necessity of a Dead Bird” (pp. 175-185); and • Simon Critchley, “You are not your own” (224-255): ____

March 12, pm:

(G). Ethics and Law

Readings:

• Blanton: Itzhak Benyamini, “‘Love your neighbor,’ the Son, and the Sons” (pp. 413-436); and • Kenneth Reinhard, “Paul and the Political Theology of the Neighbor (pp. 449-465): ____

April 22: Library research or Paper presentations

April 23: Paper presentations

C. Requirements and Grades (based on 400 points and 4-point scale)

2 Presentations of required readings and lead class discussions (30-40 min):	80
NT Rhetorical Theology Term Paper (12pp; PhD 16pp):	200
Response to Paper (1 p.):	50
1 (2 for PhD) Article Reviews (1-page review for each article):	30
1 Book Review (1 page):	40
Total points:	400

Grade:	A 400-371	A- 370-331
	B+ 330-301	B 300-271
	B- 270-231	C 200-171
	C+ 230-201	C- 170-131
		D 130-101

Or on 100-point scale:

A 94-100	A- 90-93 (91.5)		
B+ 87-89 (88)	B 84-86 (85)	B- 80-83 (81.5)	
C+ 77-79 (78)	C 74-76 (75)	C- 70-73 (71.5).	D 60-69 (65)

Expectations:

1. All assignments need to be submitted in order to get a passing grade.
2. Theology paper (12 pp. for Master, 16 pp. for PhD) will be graded based on the following criteria: (a) consistent and proper style/documentation (20 pt); (b) clear and succinct writing/expression (20 pt); (c) ability to do theological research and use scholarly material (40 pt); (d) coherent and convincing content, argumentation, and procedure (60 pt); (e) relevant and creative theological hermeneutics (40 pt).

3. Submission of theology paper: Turn in a copy of the finished paper to the instructor and the respondent at least 48 hours before the presentation. Distribution of the whole paper to class members is not necessary but a one-page précis is helpful. Presentation of the paper will not be graded.

4. Respondent's paper: Respondents are expected to write *at least one page* (500 words) of their response for the benefit of the students. Such response may consist of appreciative affirmation of the strengths, constructive criticism of the weaknesses, or questions that help to further discussion and clarification.

D. Samples of Article/Book Review (1 to 2-page each review)

Name: K. K. Yeo

Date:

September, 18, 2020

Article: Thomas H. Olbricht, "An Aristotelian Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Thessalonians," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians, Essays in honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 216-236.

Thesis: The appropriate designation for 1 Thessalonians is "reconfirmational" which is the subgenre of the exhortation or paraenesis church rhetoric. It has similar features as the Hellenistic rhetorical tradition, but it also has its distinctiveness.

Argument: Olbricht points out the importance of understanding the theology of Paul in the context of (comparison and contrast with) the Hellenistic rhetoric. In the article, he limits his study in the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition because he argues, Paul is affected more by Greek rather than Roman rhetoric. More importantly is Olbricht's attempt to avoid "mechanical superimpositions of categories from *The Rhetoric* ..." (p. 222) The reason being that "*The Rhetoric* ... is not a precise compendium of rules tailor-made for effortless adjudication but rather observations and recommendations that are operable only if granted specified variables." (pp. 222-223)

Olbricht therefore suggests new genre, "church rhetoric," since Christian sermon, or writing, have different variables (such as world view, *topoi*) from Aristotelian understanding of rhetoric. 1 Thess, then, according to his analysis, is a "reconfirmational" encouraging (2:12, 3:2, 5:11) piece. "Paul chiefly sought to reconfirm the young congregation in the matters on which it had been taught, and secondarily to clear up eschatological misconceptions. ... The letter is essentially praise, with almost no blame." (p.

227) The argumentative structure of 1 Thess is: past and present confirmation (1:1-10), Paul's ministry confirmed in the believers (2:1-16), the effort at reconfirmation through Timothy (2:17-3:13) and reconfirmation of the believing community by letter (4:1-5:28). The arrangement is: Prescript (1:1); Exordium (1:2-3), Statement (1:4-10), Proof (2:1-5:11), Epilogue (5:12-24), and Postscript (5:25-28).

Olbricht's Aristotelian analysis of 1 Thess has allowed us to see the distinctiveness of Paul's rhetoric in that "The text's power lies in declaring the action of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit - past, present, and future ... The result is a powerful community of faith, sustained by recurring exhortatory communication, which in turn creates faith and brotherly love despite affliction, or paradoxically, joy through tribulation." (p. 236)

Quotation: "Rhetoric, after all, was not in the forefront of Paul's mind as he penned 1 Thessalonians. Theology and purpose led, not rhetoric." (p. 219) "Any use of *The Rhetoric* that treats it as a frozen corpus is not faithful to the presuppositions of its author. We are indebted to Aristotle more for his methodology than for the completeness of his categories or conclusions." (p. 223)

Evaluation: An innovative and perceptive analysis of 1 Thess in the light of Aristotelian rhetorical tradition without being locked into his categories. Olbricht has given a fair treatment, on the one hand, using the appropriate insights of Aristotle to illumine Paul's text, and on the other hand, to point out the differences Paul's rhetoric from that of Aristotle, thus indicating the distinctiveness of Christian rhetoric. It is too bad that such a complex analysis must fit into a twenty-page article because issues such as argumentative structure, arrangement of 1 Thess are outlined but left unexplained. Nevertheless I think Olbricht has forged new ground in the old rhetorical tradition.

Name: K. K. Yeo

Date:

September, 18, 2020

Book: Judith M. Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance, Staying in and Falling Away* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990. 325 pp.)

Thesis: Volf's thesis is that Pauline calling/election language assures believer

of their salvation and exhorts them to endure persecution in the apocalyptic tension. She argues that if one knows she is one of the elect, she will attain the salvation and not fall away. "The exegetical conclusions reached here through in-depth analysis of the texts tend toward the classical Reformed doctrine of perseverance." (p. 2)

Argument: This book is a revision of Volf's doctoral dissertation under the direction of Dr. Otfried Hofius, accepted by the Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät of the University of Tübingen in 1988.

Volf offers reader a topical and systematic exegesis of election/calling language in Pauline corpus (Thess. Gal. Cor. Rom. and Phil.) by means of E. P. Sander's "staying in" notion (i.e. salvation is by grace but ... works are the condition of remaining in).

In Part I she is concerned with the issue of eschatological tension and staying in salvation. In chapter one she argues for the continuity in salvation as she analyzes a group of texts which indicate divine saving initiatives in pre-choosing the believer and completing the individual's salvation (Phil 1:6). This continuity of salvation, election-calling-glorification, is seen in part through the Spirit as the guarantee (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5) and the saving works of Christ (Rom 8:29, 30; 2 Thess 2:13, 14; 1 Thess 5:9). In chapter two a second group of texts are analysed to prove the necessity of enduring in hope (Rom 5:1-11) and in faithfulness of God (2 Thess 3:3, 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Thess 5:23, 24, 1 Cor 1:8,9) the persecutions and antagonistic forces (Rom 8:28, 35-39) which threatened the continuity and consummation of salvation (Rom 8:31-34).

For the rest of the book Volf is concerned with "the concrete problems Paul faced in his ministry touch the question of staying in salvation." (p. 4) In Part two she argues that ethical failure of Christians causes Paul to have the theology of excluding them from salvation. She argues in detail, therefore, Paul's harsh warning to those who seek to destroy the weak (Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 8:7-13), Paul's warning of judgment on those disobedient ones (1 Cor 11:27-34), Paul's warning of delivering someone to Satan (1 Cor 5:1-5), and Paul's warning to evildoers being excluded from the Kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21). To be in the "in-group" is not the same as to be the elect or the justified.

In Part III she deals with the issue of the possibility of falling away

through unbelief (Israel's unbelief in Rom 9-11 or Gentile's boasting in Rom 11:17-24) or turning away from the gospel (Gal 5:1-4, 2 Cor 13:5). She concludes that "For Paul salvation is exclusively by God's sovereign and unconstrained grace from start to finish. ... Therefore perseverance cannot be automatic." (p. 228)

In Part IV Volf examines those texts that deals with Paul's own hope of his ministry in passing the test (1 Cor 9:27), attaining the final goal (Phil 3:11,12) and not laboring in vain (Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5; Gal 2:2; 4:11). This Pauline concern for his ministry to be "staying in" becomes a paradigmatic for all Christians in his churches not to believe in vain (1 Cor 15:2) or to receive God's grace in vain (2 Cor 6:1).

Volf concludes that election is related to perseverance so that the audience may not fall away. She even goes to great extent saying that Paul's concern was not primarily for the Christian but for the success of his own ministry (pp. 267-278, cf. "labouring in vain in" 1 Thess 3:5). On 2 Thess 2:13-14 Volf's interpretation is that God has chosen a group of people for salvation, and this "acquiring of salvation depends entirely on God." (p. 20) "Paul's statement that God has not destined Christians to wrath relativizes human action" (p. 24). And Paul's exhortation to the Christians to be watchful does "not invoke human activity towards acquisition of salvation but passive attentiveness in expectation of receiving salvation as a gift" (p. 25).

Quotations: "Paul draws attention to the eternal divine initiatives in salvation: divine election, foreknowledge and predestination. He shows that these initiatives also have the final salvation of Christians as their ultimate goal. The completion of salvation is thus part of God's eternal will." (p. 80) "Paul sees in such temporal judgment of Christians a confirmation of God's intention to spare God's children from final condemnation, which is reserved for the world." (p. 155) "According to Paul it is possible to lose one's membership in the 'in-group' on account of immoral conduct ... But when this happens, continuity in actual salvation is not interrupted. To say that 'remaining in the in-group is conditional on behavior' is not the same as saying that remaining in *salvation* is conditional upon behavior. ... for Paul the 'in-group' is a mixed community not to be identified with the elect or the justified." (p. 157)

Evaluation: This dissertation looks impressive and exhaustive in its treatment of Pauline calling/election language. Such study, clearly belongs to the biblical

field, is preoccupied with a systematic theological issue.

Volf takes the topical systematic approach in analyzing the election/predestination language but without first observing the Sitz im Leben of each audience in each letter. Consequently, inadequate reconstruction of audience situation causes her to conclude that there is some “falsely professed faith” (274) in Thessalonians. Such postulation might also be influenced by her preconceived reformed position on perseverance of the saints.

Volf’s interpretation (on perseverance and not falling away from salvation) might turn out to be the theology of the millenarian Christians with whom Paul disagrees. On 2 Thess 2:13-14 for example she considers this question: “Does the text give assurance of salvation based on God’s action under the condition that believers meet the requirements placed on them?” (p. 17) She denies it and says that “God not only elects to salvation but also supplies the means to realize his purpose, namely, sanctification and faith” (p. 19). Is that a Pauline conviction of the elect or the radical millenarian elitist view of themselves?

She does rightly see the tie between election/calling to apostasy or to stay in the salvation of God in the midst of tribulation in the Pauline apocalyptic theology. That perhaps is the greatest strength of the book.

Bibliography

#: strongly recommended for PhD students

A. On NT Theology

B. Recommended (Not Required):

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- Dunn, J.D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Goppelt, L. *Theology of New Testament, i: The Ministry of Jesus in its Theological Significance; ii: The Variety and Unity of the Apostolic Witness to Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981, 1982.
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Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

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Select Bibliography

A. On NT Theology

SBL Series:

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- #Smith, D. Moody. *The Theology of the Gospel of John*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
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B. On Rhetorical Studies

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- Amador, J. David Hester. *Academic Constraints in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction to a Rhetoric of Power*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.
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