

NETE 75093 Seminar in New Testament Literature  
Luke-Acts and Imprisonment  
HAR 213

Instructor: Prof. Jeremy L. Williams

Prerequisites:

Introduction to New Testament (preferred)

Description of Content:

This course examines the role of prisons and imprisonment in Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles (Luke-Acts). To do so, this course investigates the scenes where Jesus, John the Baptist, and the early Jesus followers are subjected to Roman imperial and provincial officials who place them into custody. These New\* Testament scenes will serve as a prism through which to explore ancient carceral practices and criminal justice procedures.

This course will also engage Luke-Acts as a resource for analyzing and challenging mass incarceration in the United States. We will consider critical criminological studies, critical race theory, liberation theology, Black studies, womanist cultural criticism, and post-colonial frameworks. Our methods will be used to examine how prisons are discursive tools that societies use to discipline bodies, especially marginalized, punishable bodies.

Students will learn to interpret Luke-Acts within its ancient context by tending to the ubiquity of imprisonment in antiquity. They also will consider how to read Luke-Acts in meaningful ways for contemporary communities. Students will entertain questions for how Luke-Acts and the Bible more broadly can be used to critique and abolish prisons. They will also be encouraged to imagine and proclaim new approaches to criminal justice.

Class Procedures:

This course meets once-a-week. Each session will be divided into two parts. The first part will feature a lecture on the topic and texts for the week. The second part anticipates vibrant, informed discussions of the week's assigned materials. Students will also make presentations throughout the semester and lead the discussion portion of the session.

Requirements:

1) Thoughtful, active participation

Participation involves coming to class prepared and with questions and comments anchored in specific references to the assigned readings. Participation will be measured by sharing in class and by posting biweekly responses to the readings. The responses serve two purposes. The first is to increase the number of voices in the class in order to foster a more egalitarian and cooperative learning environment that cultivates diversity of thought and collaboration. The second purpose for the response papers is for the students' learning and retention. The responses can take a number of forms. They can take the form of a traditional 1-page reflection that offers a critical evaluation of the primary or secondary text for the week. Also, creativity is encouraged, so the responses

can engage other types of media. For example, a student can provide a critical analysis in the form of 180-character tweet or an Instagram-styled photo with a caption. Students should be prepared to share their responses on the days that they submit them.

2) Presentation for a public audience

The goal of this assignment is to teach students how to convey a complicated topic to someone who is not a specialist. This can either be written or orally presented. If written, this assignment should take the form of an editorial or blogpost for a national media source. It should be approximately 1,000 words. If oral, students have the opportunity to work on this individually or in groups. Individuals have 10 minutes allotted, and groups have 20 minutes (regardless of how many people are in the group). In the case of groups, every member has to contribute equal work (writing, speaking, PowerPoint creating, etc.). For an individual, the presentation can be a sermon.

3) Short paper (1,500—2,000 words)

The professor will provide prompts for the first of the two papers. That papers will focus on exegeting a passage from Luke-Acts that engages a prison scene and places it into conversation with the methodological approaches discussed in class. The paper and project option for this assessment leaves space for student creativity. In consultation with the professor, students can develop art exhibits, podcasts, short stories, etc. to fill this requirement.

4) Final paper or project (1,500-2,000 words)

The final paper in consultation with the professor can be more thematic around an issue of ancient or contemporary imprisonment. It will not have a prompt and desires student creativity. Students can use this assignment to develop a project (e.g. art exhibits, podcasts, short stories, etc.).

Texts: Electronic versions of materials will be provided to students.

Grading Procedures:

Participation: 30%

Presentation for a Public Audience: 20%

Short Papers: 25%

Final Paper or Project 25%