

Exegesis of I Corinthians: The Community in Corinth

NT 212-3

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Spring 2025

Course Information

Instructor: Olubunmi (Bunmi) Adegbola
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Time: 9:00-11:50 am
Location: Schlegel 121
Office Hours: Thursdays 2-5 pm

Course Website:
<https://lpts.instructure.com/>

Course Description

“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours....”

The first letter to the Corinthians was written to a decidedly acceptable community of believers who have been welcomed into faith in Jesus as Lord and redeemer. This course examines the formation and delineation of identity within the house-churches, the complexities present in their identification and signification, and how these people navigated and interacted with imperial power, within their context.

Primarily, our methodology towards reading the texts will focus on historical interpretations while also engaging with principles of contemporary interpretive strategies. Students will be introduced to various members of the church, the imperial context of the text, and the diverse ways in which social locations determine how we navigate power, kyriarchy, and hegemonic institutions.

Rather than modelling discussions around Paul as the determinant of the historical situation in Corinth, the course rearranges the structure of the study towards understanding those who made up the church in Corinth. The course will explore theoretical methods of interpretation and how they inform the understanding of theology, practice, and association. It will also investigate how language and meaning work together to aid the reader's interpretation, with language helping to confer meaning, and meaning being embraced through the understanding of language. The goal is to engage in critical dialogue with the text and its reception history within different contexts.

Learning Goals

- Students will become familiar with the first letter to the Corinthians, its issues, and its challenging theological and socioreligious responses through reception history (MDiv SLO 1 & 3)
- Students will be able to use interpretive methods as a means towards justice, fairness and transparency in their reading of the formulas core to the Christian faith (MDiv SLO 4)
- Students will be able to critically explore the concept of signs and signification, and its role over a narrative (MAR SLO 3)
- Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically, imaginatively, and contextually on how elements of the text affect historic and contemporary life (MAR SLO 4)

Recommended Books

- James S. Jeffers. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.
- Smith, Mitzi. *Chloe and her People: A Womanist Critical Dialogue with First Corinthians*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023.
- Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters. *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Suggested Bibles, Commentaries, and Lexicon

- Horsley, Richard. *1 Corinthians*. Abingdon, TN: Abingdon, 1998.
- Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. NICNT, 2nd edn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014.
- Powers, B. Ward. *First Corinthians: An Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008.
- Thiselton, Anthony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Thrall, Margaret E. *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Tucker, Brian J. "1 Corinthians: A Social Identity Commentary." *T&T Clark Social Identity Commentaries on the New Testament*. New York: T&T Clark, 2024.
- One of the following NRSV study bibles: The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Coogan), The Harper Collins Study Bible (Attridge), The Jewish Annotated New Testament (Levine), The SBL Study Bible (SBL, NRSVue).

- Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon: Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2013. (The library has copies of this).

Course Reserve Page: <https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/courseReserves/course/id/22056713>

Ongoing Archaeological Project of Interest
[About - Corinth Computer Project](#)

Course Expectations

This course requires engaged participation in each lecture and active participation in each class discussion. Engaged participations does not mean “talking a lot.” It means reading all the assigned course materials, coming to class prepared to ask and answer questions about them, offering thoughtful and critical responses when appropriate, and participating in in-class activities. If you tend to be shy, please come talk to me and we can deliberate on helpful strategies for overcoming participation anxiety. If you know that you “talk a lot,” I ask that you please be mindful of your colleagues and allow them to participate in the conversation as well. Discussion will be conducted respectfully with opinions that are evidenced by the assigned reading and supplementary readings. Hateful speech, targeting of individual students, and any prejudicial words/actions will be addressed and reported where necessary.

More formally, you are expected to critically and imaginatively contribute to class discussions through the following course features:

3-2-1 Memos

For every session, students will provide a 3-2-1 response to their assigned readings for the week to facilitate content for their participation in class discussion. This way, students can state *three* key points they got from the reading, *two* things or concepts that are unclear or fascinating, and *one* question on the reading that they would pose to the author(s) if they ever got to meet them in person. Your memos are like reflection papers, but with connections to quotes and references from the class readings. This should be between 300-500 words. This is a **recurring submission** due the Thursday before class, at 3 pm.

Glossary Project –

This project involves the creation of a word study that defines and clarifies 3 terms of your choice from I Corinthians. The task is to construct a working definition by drawing on three components of a word study:

(1) Introduction: explain the historical/theological significance of the word of your choice.

(2) Observations: (a) give the definitions of the word; I encourage you to use Liddell & Scott (b) present the occurrences of the word in I Corinthians and, if you will, in other letters of Paul.

(3) Exegetical, historical, and/or socio-theological implications: how do your observations or those of your colleagues help us better understand 1 Corinthians through these terms? The point is to develop students' own analysis and/or definition through the texts. It also helps to inform critical reading by using the required tools for conducting an exegesis. These skills are transferable to the study of all books of the Bible, to help check assumptions on the contents of the texts of the Bible.

Each term should be between 200-250 words. Due date: March 28, 2025

Class Presentation Paper

Each student will sign up for a session of discussion to present a reading to the class. After their presentation, the student will submit a final paper that accommodates the student's interpretation of the author's argument, as well as the various points of contentions or agreements with the reading during the class. This should be between 3-5 pages. Due the Monday after your presentation. *Check Canvas for link to signup document.*

Final Exegesis Paper

The final exegesis paper allows students to choose a pericope within the first letter to the Corinthians which engages with issues arising at the intersection of theology, sociopolitical contestations, and contemporary religion. The paper is expected to include critical, imaginative, and constructive arguments, as well as engagement with the class readings.

This should be between 8-10 pages. Due Date: May 2, 2025

Evaluation

3-2-1 Memos: 30 points

Glossary Project: 20 points

Class Presentation Paper: 20 points

Exegesis Paper: 30 points

Assignments and Additional Support

- I strongly advise that, in preparation for the exegesis papers, you schedule an appointment to discuss your thoughts/plan/draft, two weeks before the deadline.
- I am available to read drafts of up to 750 words, no later than 72hrs before the deadline
- Let me know if you need to submit an assignment later than when due

Course and School Policies: From the Dean's Office

USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE: In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All work turned in to the instructor is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language [including A.I. chatbots] or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the [Academic Support Center](#). For the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the [Student Handbook](#).

A special form of plagiarism is self-plagiarism or "double-dipping": reusing an assignment written for another course (whether at LPTS or elsewhere) or incorporating a substantial portion of work submitted for another course in an assignment submission.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the [Academic Support Center](#) during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

CITATION POLICY: Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides: American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020. Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago

Press, 2017. Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center. See also the library's citation help page:

<https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

ATTENDANCE POLICY: According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course. Please note that religious and/or cultural holiday absences will be excused. Please notify me ahead of time, in person or via email, where possible/comfortable.

Other Items Relating to Spring Instruction, Learning, and Technology at LPTS

- To access the library and its resources, visit: <https://lpts.edu/library/>
- To request a library laptop loan, contact library@lpts.edu
- For general help with campus network access, Outlook (email), contact support@lpts.edu
- For help with Canvas credentials, contact TBD

Week 1 (02/07)

Introduction to Course

- Syllabus
- Practice Exegesis & Resources
- Castelli, Elizabeth A. "Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians." *Semeia* 54 (1992): 197-222.
- Brettler, Marc Zvi. "Biblical Authority: A Jewish Pluralistic View." Brown, William P. ed. *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, 1-9.
- Punt, Jeremy. "The New Testament as Political Documents." *Scriptura* 116 (2017): 1-15.

Text: I Cor. 1-2
(No memo due)

Week 2 (02/14)

The Greco-Roman Empire

- Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters. "Inequality in Corinth." *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 1-16
- Jeffers, James S. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999. (Chs. 1-4)
- Miller, Anna C. "Not with Eloquent Wisdom: Democratic Ekklesia Discourse in 1 Corinthians 1-4." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 35 (4), 2013, 323-354.
- Winn, Adam. "Striking Back at the Empire: Empire Theory and Responses to Empire in the New Testament." *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament*. Adam Winn, ed. Resources for Biblical Study 84. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016. Pp. 1-14.

Text: I Cor. 3-5

Week 3 (02/21)

Greco-Roman Corinth

- Harris, Gerald. "The Beginnings of Church Discipline: I Corinthians 5." *New Testament Studies* 37, no. 1 (1991): 1-21.

- James, Sarah A. “The Last of the Corinthians? Society and Settlement from 146 to 44 BCE.” *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 17-37
- Johnson Hodge, Caroline. “‘Mixed Marriage’ in Early Christianity: Trajectories from Corinth,” *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 227-44.

Text: I Cor. 6-7

Week 4 (02/28)

First? Letter to the Corinthians

- Bassler, Jouette. “1 Corinthians.” In *Women’s Bible Commentary*. Carol Newsom et al, ed. Revised Ed., Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012. Pp. 557– 65.
- Jeffers, James S. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999. (Chs. 5-9)
- Nasrallah, Laura Salah. “‘You Were Brought with a Price:’ Freedpersons and Things in I Corinthians.” *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 54-73.
- Smith, Mitzi. *Chloe and her People: A Womanist Critical Dialogue with First Corinthians*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023. (Chs. 1-3)

Text: I Cor. 8-9

Week 5 (03/07)

The Rhetoric of I Corinthians

- Ariel, Yaakov. “‘You Must Choose! The Prince of Peace or the Prince of Darkness:’ Evangelical Beliefs and American Dualism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.” *Light against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World*. Armin Lange et al., eds., Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011. 294-309.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. “Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction In 1 Corinthians.” *New Test. Stud.* vol. 33, 1987, pp. 386-403. (work comp.)
- Jeffers, James S. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999. (Chs. 10-13)

Week 6 (03/14)

Wealth and Poverty in Corinth

- Elliott, Neil. "Socioeconomic Stratification and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17–34)." *Paul and Economics: A Handbook*. Tom Blanton and Raymond Pickett, eds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. 245-78
- Friesen, Steven J. "Junia Theodora of Corinth: Gendered Inequalities in the Early Empire." *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 54-73.
- Ibita, Ma. Marilou S. "A Conversation with the Story of the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians 11:17-34: Engaging the Scripture Text and the Filipino Christians' Context." In *1 and 2 Corinthians: Texts @ Contexts*. Yung Suk Kim, ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 97-114
- Pinn, Anthony B. "Warm Bodies, Cold Currency: A Study of Religion's Response to Poverty." *Religion and Poverty: Pan-African Perspectives*, New York, USA: Duke University Press, 2009, pp. 228-246.
- Tite, Philip L. "Roman Diet and Meat Consumption: Reassessing Elite Access to Meat in I Corinthians 8 and 10." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. 42:2 (2019): 185-222.

Text: I Cor. 10 & 11

Week 7 (03/21)

Research and Study Week (Get started on assignment and the next week's reading)

Week 8 (03/28) Assignment Due

Status & Socio-Religious Customs in Corinth

- Matthews, Shelly. "Hearing Wo/Men Prophets: Intersections, Silences, Publics." *After the Corinthian Women Prophets: Reimagining Rhetoric and Power* edited by Joseph A. Marchal, ed. Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2021. 47-68
- Smith, Mitzi J. "'Love Never Fails': Rereading 1 Cor 13 with a Womanist Hermeneutic of Love's Struggle." *Theologies of Failure*. Roberto Sirvent and Duncan B. Reyburn, eds., Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, James Clarke & Co Ltd., 2019. 230-46.

- Stroud, Ronald S. "Religion and Magic in Roman Corinth." *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*. Friesen, Steven J., Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2010. 187-202
- Sample, Tex. "Help Me Make It through the Night': Narrating Class and Country Music in the Theology of Paul". Culbertson, Philip & Elaine W. Wainwright, eds. *The Bible in/and Popular Culture: A Creative Encounter*. Semeia Studies 65. Atlanta: SBL, 2010, 111-126.

Text: I Cor. 12 & 13

Week 9 (04/04)

Women Prophets in Corinth I

- Elliot, Elisabeth. "Why I Oppose the Ordination of Women," *Christianity Today*, June 6, 1975, pp. 12-16.
- Krause, Deborah. "Paul and Women: Telling Women to Shut Up Is More Complicated Than You Might Think." *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, Mark D. Given, ed., Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010.
- Oster, Richard E., Jr, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11:4', *NTS* 34, (1988), pp. 481–505.
- Townsley, Gillian. "The Straight Mind in Corinth: Problematizing Categories and Ideologies of Gender in I Corinthians 11:2-16." *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*. Teresa J. Hornsby, and Ken Stone, eds. Society of Biblical Literature: Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Atlanta, 2011. 247-81

Text: I Cor. 11 & 14

Week 10 (04/11)

Women Prophets in Corinth II

- Jodamus, J. (2020). "Redeeming Paul? Disruptive Masculinity, Sexual Autonomy, and Sexual Freedom in 1 Corinthians 7." *African Journal of Gender and Religion*, 26(2) <https://doi.org/10.14426/ajgr.v26i2.1011>
- Marchal, Joseph A. "The Corinthian Women Prophets and Trans Activism: Rethinking Canonical Gender Claims." *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*. Teresa J. Hornsby, and Ken Stone, eds. Society of Biblical Literature: Semeia Studies. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature Atlanta, 2011. 223-46.
- Peters, Janelle. "Reading I Corinthians 11:1-16 through Habits and Hijabs in the United States." In *1 and 2 Corinthians: Texts @ Contexts*. Yung Suk Kim, ed. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013. 129-46
- Schreiner, Thomas R. "Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16." In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to*

Evangelical Feminism. John Piper and Wayne Grudem eds., Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 1991, pp. 117–132.

- Smith, Mitzi. *Chloe and her People: A Womanist Critical Dialogue with First Corinthians*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023. (Chs. 4-5)

Text: I Cor. 11 & 14

Week 11 (04/18)

The Jerusalem Collection

- Friesen, Steven J. “New Testament Studies as a Kyriarchal Discipline: Making the World Safe for White, Male, Capitalist, Imperialist, Christian Supremacy.” *Bible and Critical Theory* 18 (2), 2022c: 1–27.
- Friesen, Steven J. “Labors of the Saints and the Collection for Jerusalem: Precapitalist Religion, Ethnicity, and Paul’s Christ Groups.” *Religion in the Roman Empire (RRE)*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 2024: 47-68.
- Smith, Mitzi J. “Water Is a Human Right, but It Ain’t Free.” In *Womanist Sass and Talk Back*. United States: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018. (9-24) ••

Text: I Cor. 16

Week 12 (04/25)

Reading I Corinthians

- Sanders, Boykin. “1 Corinthians.” *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Brian Blount et al., eds. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007. 292–324
- Smith, Mitzi. *Chloe and her People: A Womanist Critical Dialogue with First Corinthians*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023. (Ch. 6)

May 2, 2025 – **Final Assignment Due**