
Time and Place: Wed, 9-11:50, Rm 2201
Instructor: Dr. Alicia Batten
Office: Room 2116, Academic Building, CGUC
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12 – 2 pm and by appointment
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Course Description

Catalogue: This course uses a variety of methods of analysis and interpretation of biblical texts to conduct a close reading of a selected New Testament book.

The Letter of James has suffered neglect in the history of scholarship. Fortunately, this situation has changed in recent decades, with many commentaries, monographs and articles appearing about the so-called “right strawy epistle” (Martin Luther). Debate continues as to the letter’s authorship, provenance, relationship to Pauline thought, and overarching structure and meaning with no overall consensus emerging. However, considerable advancement has been made about the rhetorical sophistication of James well as clearer understandings of how the letter adapts pre-existent traditions to suit its own context.

In this course we will engage in a close contextual reading of the letter of James using a variety of methodologies. Thematic topics include the perception of God in the letter, faith and works, poverty and wealth, wisdom, speech, as well as the relationship between James and the teachings of Jesus. Throughout the course we will reflect on the ongoing significance of the letter at various points in history and in the contemporary world.

The course is usually a seminar. However, I will provide lectures (in the Socratic style) throughout the semester in addition to breaking the class into small discussion groups from time to time. Students are expected to attend class having completed the reading, prepared notes, and ready to present their questions and comments.
Learning Goals

1) To understand some of the main structural and thematic elements of the Letter of James within its historical context.
2) To develop further familiarity with scholarly methods of biblical interpretation.
3) To comprehend some dimensions of the impact of the reception of James through the centuries, as well as its ongoing significance for people in the world today.

Texts

Required
A Bible. You are welcome to bring a translation of your choice, and you are encouraged to read multiple translations. It is especially helpful to have a Bible that includes the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books given James’ use of Sirach. Paraphrases, such as The Living Bible, or The New Living Bible, are not acceptable, however. If you have studied Greek, I encourage you to use it as much as possible.


Course Reader – Available at the bookstore.

Commentaries and books on James on reserve in the Milton Good library at CGUC (one day loan period)

Recommended

Requirements

1. Students need to come prepared for each class discussion, having read the texts for the class and made notes on them. As you read, write down questions and/or comments about the readings and bring your notes to class. Missing part or all of class for reasons other than illness or family emergency results in a reduction of this part of the course mark of 20% per missed class. I will do my best to make sure that everyone has a chance to participate. 10%

2. A 2000 word essay reflecting an initial reading of James. This is not a research paper that requires reading secondary literature, but an initial reading and reflection on the letter. I suggest that you read it through in two different translations, then make an outline of the letter. In your paper, address the following questions: 1) What is my initial reaction to
this text (positive, negative, or both) and why do I think that I reacted in this way? 2) What new insights or surprises did I have while reading and thinking about this text? 3) What more do I want to know about this letter (what is confusing or strange within it)? Due September 20th (second class). Be prepared to share your main points with the class. The paper needs to be typed, double-spaced in 12 point font. 15%

3. Research paper. Students can choose either to focus their paper on an exegesis of a section in James, or on a specific topic (e.g., perception of God; the rich; speech etc …). This paper should be 12-15 pages (3000-3800 words). It should use Chicago style and is due December 13th (you can submit it earlier if you wish). During class on November 22nd, students will share a 10 minute progress report on how their paper is developing, including what sources are the most helpful so far (the annotated bibliography is due on this day). The progress report will not receive a mark but failure to do one results in a reduction of the research paper mark by 20%. Its purpose is to help students advance their research and ideas about their paper. 35%

4. Annotated Bibliography for research paper. A bibliography of a minimum of 10 sources (books, articles, chapters in books etc … - please avoid online sources unless it is a peer reviewed, online journal), in Chicago Style, is due on November 22nd. This bibliography should be annotated, meaning that a couple of sentences need to appear below each entry, indicating the significance of the source for your research paper. 15%

5. Lead off discussion questions. Once throughout the semester, you should prepare 3 discussion questions spurred by the reading and topic for the day. These questions can focus on understanding James historically, but also, on thinking about the meaning of James for today. The primary requirement is that the questions connect to the reading (both of James and the secondary reading) in some way. You do not have to prepare a hand-out (but you might want to write the questions on the board). Generally, we will have 2 people do this per class (after the break) and I will mark this pass/fail. 5%

6. Book review of Margaret P. Aymer, James: An Introduction and Study Guide. Diaspora Rhetoric of a Friend of God. Your review should be between 800-900 words, double-spaced in 12 point font. Due Nov 29th. Students will share their findings about this book during class on November 29th. 20%

Schedule

September 13th
Topics: Introduction to the course and to the Letter of James; textual criticism; doing exegesis

September 20th
Todd C. Penner,” The Epistle of James in Current Research” CR: BS 7 (1999): 257-308 (reader; if you wish, you can skim this article – you may use it as a reference point and for bibliography later on).

Topic: Sharing of first papers; Historical Perspectives on James; Current research on James

September 27th (2 people provide discussion questions today)


Topic: The Structure and Rhetoric of James

October 4th (2 people provide discussion questions today)


Topic: James and Jesus Traditions

October 11th – No class.

October 13th – Friday (1 person provides discussion questions)

Reading: James 1:1-18; Everyone should choose 1 commentary (on reserve) and read the section on Jas 1:1-18 (but read up to James 1:27 in the letter itself); take notes on things in the commentary that you find interesting and/or unclear; J. L. P. Wolmarans, “Misogyny as a Meme: The Legacy of James 1:12-18,” Acta Patristica et Byzantina 17 (2006): 349-361 (reader)

Topic: James 1:1-18; “Doubt” in James?; The Anthropology of James; Gender and James

October 18th (2 people provide discussion questions)


Topic: James 2:1-13; James and Patronage; James and the Law
October 25th (2 people provide discussion questions)
Topic: James 2:14-26; James and Paul

November 1st (2 people provide discussion questions)
Topic: James 3:13-4:10; James and wisdom; James and Friendship; James and Speech

November 8th (2 people provide discussion questions)
Topic: Rich and Poor in James

November 15th (1 or 2 people provide discussion questions)
Topic: Healing in James; The ending of James

November 22nd – Research paper progress reports. Annotated Bibliography is due.
Topic: Progress reports; reading James today

November 29th - Book review due this day. Be prepared to offer some comments on the book.
Topic: Discussion of Aymer’s book; reading James today; conclusion of the class.
December 13th – Final date to hand in research papers – please submit by 4 pm.

Books on One Day Reserve in the CGUC Library

*Commentaries that can be consulted for class sessions*

- Davids, Peter H. *The Epistle of James* (1982)
- Deems, Charles F. *The Gospel of Common Sense as Contained in the Canonical Epistle of James* (1888)
- Hartin, Patrick C. *James* (2009)
- Martin, Ralph P. *James* (1988)
- Mayor, Joseph B. *The Epistle of St. James* (1892)
- Painter, John and David DeSilva. *James and Jude* (2012)

*Other Books on One Day Reserve*

- Aymer, Margaret P. *First Pure, Then Peaceable: Frederick Douglass, Darkness, and the Epistle of James* (2007)
- Batten, Alicia J. *What are they Saying about the Letter of James?* (2009)
- Batten, Alicia J. *Friendship and Benefaction in James* (2010; 2017)
- Batten, Alicia J. and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Early Jesus Traditions* (2014)
- Gowler, David B. *James Through the Centuries* (2014)

E-books (available through the library system)

Supplementary Bibliography (far from exhaustive! students will need to do their own search)


**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** Students are required to complete the assignments by the due dates indicated and hand them in at the beginning of class (except for the final paper which can be submitted on LEARN or by 4 pm on December 13th at reception). Exceptions will be made only in the case of illness (see below for documentation of illness) or some other emergency, and then only if permission has been granted prior to the due date. Late assignments are penalized 5% per day late.

**Cross-listed course**

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

**Academic Integrity**

*Academic Integrity:* In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/arted/academic-integrity) for more information.

*Discipline:* A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/policy-71). For typical penalties check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/guidelines-for-the-assessment-of-penalties).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/policy-70), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.
**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

*Note for students with disabilities:* The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health supports if they are needed.

**On Campus**
- **Counselling Services:** counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 xt 32655
- **MATES:** one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- **Health Services Emergency service:** located across the creek from Student Life Centre

**Off campus, 24/7**
- **Good2Talk:** Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- **Grand River Hospital:** Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
- **Here 24/7:** Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME:** set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online at the Faculty of ARTS website Download UW Waterlo and regional mental health resources (PDF)

Download the WatSafe app to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, please see the CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory (PDF).

Writing and Communication Centre

The Writing and Communication Centre (WCC) works with students as they develop their ideas, draft, and revise. Writing and Communication specialists offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, synthesizing and citing research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.
You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or you can drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit the Writing Centre Appointments Page. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

**Please note** that communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you.