



# PRAIRIE COLLEGE

**Online Education Course Syllabus for  
NT 351 READING HEBREWS TO REVELATION  
Syllabus Edition 1, Published 2019  
3 Credit Hours**

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## **I. Course Description:**

In this course, students are introduced to the book of Hebrews, the Catholic epistles (James, 1, 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3, John, Jude), and the book of Revelation. This course will focus on the ways in which the earliest Christians navigated the eschatological tension between the first and second comings of Jesus. In the process, students will gain further understanding of the historical circumstances of Christians living in the late first-century Roman Empire, as well as further interpretive skills development (esp. literary analysis, canonical integration, history of interpretation, and theological appropriation).

*Prerequisite: NT 112 Reading the Gospels and Acts*

## **II. Course Rationale:**

This course provides a critical introduction to the NT books running from Hebrews to Revelation, focusing specifically on the theme of eschatology.

## **III. Course Outcomes:**

1. To gain a basic understanding the biblical books from Hebrews to Revelation, with special attention given to the theology and lived realities of eschatological tension for early Christians living in the late first-century Roman empire.
2. To sharpen the skills of attentive Bible reading, especially literary analysis, canonical integration, history of interpretation, and theological appropriation.
3. To encounter our triune God in reading scripture, leading to greater love for God and a deeper attentiveness and obedience to his Word, Jesus Christ, spoken to us by the Spirit through these scriptural texts.

## **IV. Required Texts:**

Jobes, Karen H. *Letters to the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

If you do not already have a quality study Bible, I suggest the following:  
Keener, Craig S. and John Walton, eds. *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2016.

## V. Performance Evaluation:

Assignment	Course Outcomes	Percentage of Grade
Reading	1, 2, 3	7.5%
Forum Participation	1, 2, 3	7.5%
Exams	1, 2	30%
Literary Analyses	1, 2	15%
Eschatology Project	1, 2, 3	15%
Canonical Integration	1, 2	12.5%
History of Interpretation	1, 2	12.5%

## VI. Course Requirements:

### 1. Reading – 7.5%\*

Required reading consists of the assigned portions of Jobes' *Letters to the Church* (abbreviated throughout the course as "Jobes"), one supplemental reading on Revelation, as well as the whole of the biblical text of Hebrews to Revelation. All of this reading accounts for 7.5% of your course grade. Students will report at the end of class how much they have read from both Jobes and the Revelation supplemental reading (how many pages read out of 442 pages total [421 from Jobes, 21 from the Revelation supplemental reading]) as well as from Hebrews to Revelation (how many chapters read out of 56 chapters total).

\*Note: The percentage of the biblical text you read determines the total percentage of your course grade (Hebrews to Revelation only, not the textbook). For example, if you read 90% of Hebrews to Revelation, your final course grade will only be 90% of your course grade after all assignments/tests are marked (e.g., if you were going to have a course grade of 95/100, but only read 90% of the scriptural text, your actual final course grade would be 90% of 95, or 85.5).

### 2. Forum Participation – 7.5%

Throughout the course you will post in online discussion forums at various points immediately before or after course lectures. These posts represent your participation grade for the course, and account for 7.5% of your final course grade.

Forum posts are graded by the degree to which students demonstrate thoughtfulness and thoroughness in answering the questions provided. Often the questions are open-ended, so there is no single correct answer. Students will receive a 100% participation grade if they provide a thoughtful, thorough answer to the questions posed, 50% for a thoughtful but partial answer, and 0% for anything else. For any grade lower than 100%, students will receive detailed feedback and instructions for improvement.

### 3. Exams – 30%

Students will have a total of 5 exams. The instructor will provide a basic study guide for each exam on Brightspace. These exams together account for 30% of your course grade (6% each).

4. Literary Analysis Assignments – 15%

You will analyze the literary features of two passages, one in Hebrews, another in James, by answering the questions on the assignment sheet provided on Brightspace and in the following Appendix (see page 7). This assignment will train you to ask good, curious questions of the text. These analyses are graded on attention to detail, providing exhaustive, thoughtful answers to each of the questions asked. There will be two analyses, accounting for 7.5% each of your final course grade (total 15%).

5. Eschatology Project – 15%

In this assignment you will draw on key texts from the course to define what it means to live faithfully in your context with eschatological perspective. This is an exercise in theological appropriation. For the project you will identify (1) the key scriptural texts that guide the project (at least two from Hebrews to Revelation), (2) a particular life setting that is the focus of reflection, and (3) another person within that setting who can reflect with you and offer feedback on the project. The final form of the project is up to you: it could be an essay (1000-1250 words), but also a piece of visual art, a song or poem, a video, etc. If the final form is not an essay, a 300 word summary is required giving an explanation of the project. Further instructions are on Brightspace and in the Appendix (see page 8).

6. Canonical Integration Assignment – 12.5%

In this assignment you will wrestle with the relationship between different passages in the biblical canon. You will write an essay response to one of the prompts provided on Brightspace and in the Appendix (see page 10). This essay is to be 1000-1250 words in length (~4-5 pages double spaced), submitted as a Word document or PDF. You may consult and cite secondary sources, but it is not required, and you may only use these to support your main argument; the focus of this essay is on providing your own critical thoughts on the relationship between biblical passages (if more than half of the essay consists of citing others' thoughts, you will be penalized).

7. History of Interpretation Assignment – 12.5%

In this research assignment you will gain perspective on a biblical passage by examining its history of interpretation. You will study and summarize five different interpretations of a given biblical passage, with at least 4 of these being from the pre-modern period (Reformation period and before). Further instructions are on Brightspace and in the Appendix (see page 12).

## VII. Academic Policies:

### 1. On Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic violations of any kind will not be tolerated (including plagiarism, cheating, falsifying documents, duplicating work from other courses, or complicity in any such offense). Please see the Academic Guide, pp. 17–18 on the Registrar’s webpage:  
<https://prairie.edu/current-students/registrars-office/>

### 2. Grading and Response Time

The timeline for grading and assignment feedback is 7-10 days. The instructor will endeavour to respond to student communications within 2 days, excluding weekends, holidays, and vacation time. The following Prairie College grading scale applies to all course assignments.

<b>Letter Grade</b>	<b>Number Grade</b>	<b>Rating</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
A+	90-100		4.0
A	85-89	Excellent	4.0
A-	80-84		3.7
B+	77-79		3.3
B	73-76	Good	3.0
B-	70-72		2.7
C+	67-69		2.3
C	63-66	Satisfactory	2.0
C-	60-62		1.7
D+	55-59		1.3
D	50-54	Poor	1.0
F	0-49	Failure	0.0
P	-----	Pass	
AU	-----	Audit	
I	-----	Incomplete	
W	-----	Withdrew	

Numerical course grades are not rounded.

## VIII. Course Outline:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading &amp; Viewing</b>	<b>Assignments/Assessments Due</b>
Beginnings: Course Overview	Read the Course Syllabus. Watch the Instructor's Introductory videos.	Introductory Forum Post
<b>Unit 1: Hebrews</b>		
A. Jesus the Son	Jobes, 1-19, 23-77; Heb 1:1-14; Bible Project's video Instructor's Lecture	
B. The Humanity of Jesus	Jobes, 80-113; Heb 2:1-5:14; Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post
C. Relating Old and New	Heb 6:1-9:28; Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post
D. Apostasy in the Already and Not Yet	Jobes, 116-143; Heb 10:1-13:25; Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post Unit 1 Exam Literary Analysis 1
<b>Unit 2: James</b>		
A. Consider it all Joy?	Jobes, 148-179; James 1:1-27; Bible Project's Video Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post
B. Faith or Works?	Jobes, 184-231; James 2:1-26; Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post
C. Social Justice and Justification	James 3:1-5:20 Tim Keller's Lecture	Post-Lecture Forum Post Unit 2 Exam Literary Analysis 2
<b>Unit 3: 1 and 2 Peter</b>		
A. 1 Peter: Saved, Being Saved, Will be Saved	Jobes, 268-297; 1 Peter 1:1-25; Bible Project's Video Instructor's Lecture	
B. 1 Peter: God in Our Suffering, We in His	Jobes, 300-352; 1 Peter 2:1-5:14; Instructor's Lecture	
C. 2 Peter: Are we There Yet?	Jobes, 354-391; 2 Peter 1:1-3:18 Bible Project's Video Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post Unit 3 Exam Eschatology Project Proposal
<b>Unit 4: 1, 2, 3 John</b>		
A. 1 John: Split Jesus, Split the Church	Jobes, 396-435; 1 John 1:1-5:21; Bible Project's Video Instructor's Lecture	Post-Lecture Forum Post

B. 2 John: Loving One Another in the Truth	Jobes, 438-444; 2 John; Instructor's Lecture	
C. 3 John: Loving Strangers	Jobes, 444-450; 3 John; Instructor's Lecture	
Unit 5: Jude		
A. Self-Shepherds, False Christians	Jobes, 234-263; Jude; Bible Project's Video Instructor's Lecture	
B. Contending for the Faith	Jude 20-25 Instructor's Lecture	Post-Lecture Forum Post Units 4 and 5 Exam
Unit 6: Revelation		
A. How Should We Read Revelation?	Powell on Rev.; Rev 1:1-20 Bible Project's Videos Instructor's Lecture	Pre-Lecture Forum Post
B. The Letter to Laodicea	Rev 2:1-3:22 Instructor's Lecture	Post-Lecture Forum Post
C. The Throne Room	Rev 4:1-5:14 Instructor's Lecture	
D. Judgment, Conflict, Salvation	Rev 6:1-18:24 Instructor's Lecture	
E. The End, the New Beginning	Rev 19:1-22:21 Instructor's Lecture	Post-Lecture Forum Post Unit 6 Exam Eschatology Project Canonical Integration Assn. History of Interpretation Assn. Reading Report Course Evaluation

## IX. Appendix

### A. Literary Analysis Assignment

The instructions below concern your first assignment in the book of James, and are included here as an illustration (the instructions for the second assignment in Hebrews is on Brightspace).

- This assignment is to be approximately 1000 words in length (4 pages double-spaced).
- Submit the completed questions via Word doc or PDF on Brightspace.
- Do not use outside sources to complete this assignment.
- This assignment is graded by its attention to detail, thoroughness, and thoughtful, close reading of the text. Provide chapter and verse references throughout as needed.

*First, observe features of James 3:13-18:*

1. Identify all repetition of terms, phrases, etc. (create an exhaustive list, specify where they occur)
2. Identify all contrasts/comparisons (whether individual words, ideas, etc.)
3. What is the main point of this passage?
4. What is the role of 3:16 in relation to 3:15, and to the whole of 3:13-18?
5. What is the role of 3:18 for 3:13-18? Why does James add it as the last comment of this section?

*Second, consider the role of James 3:13-18 within its context in the letter.*

What is the relationship between 3:13-18 and 3:1-12? Compare the themes/key words and main points of both. Is anything repeated? Is there development of themes or arguments? How would you describe that development as specifically as possible?

What is the relationship between 3:13-18 and 4:1-6? Compare the themes/key words and main points of both. Is anything repeated? Is there development of themes or arguments? How would you describe that development as specifically as possible?

Why does James need 3:13-18 in this letter in order to communicate his message? What does it uniquely contribute to the argument of the whole letter?

## B. Eschatology Project Assignment Instructions

In this assignment you will think theologically with key texts from scripture to define what it means to live faithfully in your context with a biblical eschatological perspective. You will define how to live faithfully in light of four aspects of this eschatological perspective: (1) the “already” of God’s work in Christ and ongoing work now, (2) the “not yet” of the present, (3) the reality of future judgment, and (4) the hope of future salvation.

**Read these instructions carefully! All students must have a proposal for this project approved by the instructor (see details below).**

The final form of this project is up to you, and I encourage you to adapt it for the setting in which you are living: it could be an essay (1000-1250 words), but also a piece of visual art, a song, a poem, a video, etc. If the final form is not an essay, a 300 word summary is required giving an explanation of the project.

At the beginning of your written summary or essay, you will identify (1) the key scriptural texts that guide the project, (2) your particular life setting that is the focus of reflection, and (3) another person within that setting who can reflect with you and offer feedback on the project:

- (1) Each project must choose key scriptural texts that guide the project; state clearly at the beginning which texts you chose and why. Begin by reflecting on the course as a whole, and identifying 3-5 scriptural texts that have been particularly striking to you, texts that speak in some way about eschatology, whether the final end of Jesus’ second coming, or the present tension of life in between the comings of Jesus (e.g., Revelation 21-22; Hebrews 12; 2 Peter 3:3-18). At least two of these texts must be from Hebrews-Revelation, but others may come from elsewhere in the Bible (both OT and NT). These texts you choose are the source and norm of your reflections about living faithfully in eschatological perspective, and you must show this influence in your project (think of this like choosing texts for a sermon).
- (2) Each project must concern a particular life setting, e.g., involving a particular job, and/or a set of relationships (church or family), etc. You will be thinking theologically about this life setting, and what faithfulness looks like within that setting. This setting must be very specific and personally relevant to you. Any setting is a valid choice, the important thing is to be specific, so that you can think with specificity upon what faithfulness means in this setting. The following examples are illustrative: a mother caring full-time for three young children, an entrepreneur running a small business, a youth minister at an inner-city church, a college athlete competing in sports, etc. Examples of settings that are too general include: church life in North America, relationships at work, friendships in general.
- (3) Each student must find a person from the particular setting chosen who can reflect with the student about the project and offer feedback. After completing the project, the student will ask for feedback from this partner based on the following questions: (a) Is the project realistic? Does it fit the life setting of the student, and is the vision cast in the project actually livable? (b) What would you offer in encouragement and constructive criticism to the student in light of this project?



**All students must submit a proposal for this project in Unit 3, giving me a summary of your chosen texts, your setting, the person who will work with you, and your choice of final form of the project.**

The following four elements of a biblical eschatological perspective should structure your response (if you are writing an essay, you can structure the essay according to these four elements after your introduction to the project). In the project as a whole, you must address each of these four aspects as you define what faithfulness looks like in your specific life setting. Perhaps your chosen texts don't address all four of these, that is fine; go on to address all four anyway.

- **Already:** With our head (our beliefs, our knowledge, our thinking), heart (our emotions, our choices), hands (practices, behaviors), and our relationships with others, how do we live with awareness that God has already acted decisively in Jesus Christ to defeat sin and to redeem humanity and all of creation, and is currently at work by his Spirit in this saving work? How do we see God at work today and how do we join in that saving work in our particular life settings?
- **Not Yet:** With our head, heart, hands, and relationships, how do we live with awareness that we are not yet at the End, i.e., that the present time can never be the end goal, because of the great future God is bringing? If we viewed our present in this way, how would that change the way we live in our particular life settings (no room for the prosperity gospel)?
- **Future Judgment:** With our head, heart, hands, and relationships, how do we live faithfully in recognition that God will finally judge all sin and hold everyone to account for their deeds in our particular life settings?
- **Future Salvation:** With our head, heart, hands, and relationships, how do we live faithfully in recognition that the End is certain: God will finally defeat all evil, sin, and injustice, pain, sadness, and will bring about the restoration of all creation when Jesus comes again? If we had such a hope, how would that affect the way we live in our particular life settings, e.g., in experiences of fear, in care for others who suffer?

### C. Canonical Integration Assignment Instructions

The prompts below are designed to put two or more biblical passages in tension. In this assignment you will **choose one of the prompts below and offer an essay response to it**. You are to think critically about the prompt, and offer a response that (1) clarifies the meaning of the biblical passages discussed in the prompt and (2) proposes the proper way to understand their relationship with one another, and why (For example, are they in contradiction? Do they feature a difference in emphasis? Is there no real difference at all?).

This essay is an argument about the meaning of biblical texts, so it is important that your response concerns these biblical texts and uses substantial evidence from these texts.

This essay is to be a minimum of 1000 words in length (~4 pages double spaced), submitted as a Word document or PDF.

You may consult and cite secondary sources, but only to support your main argument; the focus of this essay is on providing your own critical thoughts on the relationship between biblical passages (if more than half of the essay consists of citing others' thoughts, you will be penalized).

#### ***Prompts:***

1. Do we have two different Jesus's in the Gospels and in Revelation? How is it to be understood that the same Jesus who died on the cross for his enemies, praying to God for their forgiveness (Lk 23:34), is also the one who sends plagues of judgment to torture and punish the same enemies (e.g, Revelation chs. 6-7), and the one who comes riding a white horse, bathed in the blood of those enemies (Revelation 19:11-16)?  
In your answer, draw upon specific textual evidence in Revelation and in one or more of the Gospels (all of the gospels and all of Revelation are fair game to draw upon). Remember to think critically about the question and its assumptions, and factor these into your response.
1. In First Corinthians 8-10, it appears the apostle Paul allows some believers with sufficient maturity to eat food that had been previously sacrificed to pagan gods (idol food). Yet in Revelation, the risen Lord Jesus condemns those who lead others to eat such idol food as false prophets (2:14, 20). Would Jesus call Paul a false prophet?  
In your answer, draw upon specific textual evidence in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Revelation 2-3. Remember to think critically about the question and its assumptions, and factor these into your response.
2. In Hebrews, the author claims, "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (10:4). Yet in Leviticus 16, in the law concerning the Day of Atonement, the author claims, "On this day atonement shall be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord." (16:30). Does Hebrews contradict Leviticus?  
In your answer, draw upon specific textual evidence in Hebrews 9-10 and Leviticus (ch. 16 and elsewhere if needed). Remember to think critically about the question and its assumptions, and factor these into your response.

3. In Romans 8, Paul confidently proclaims that there is nothing that can “separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:39), for God is the creator and sustainer of the whole process of salvation. As Paul claims here, “those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to become conformed to the image of his son . . . and those whom he predestined, he also called, and those whom he called, he also justified, and those whom he justified, he also glorified . . . If God is for us, who can be against us?” (8:29-31). Yet in Hebrews, the author warns his recipients of the danger of apostasy, clearly concerned that some were in danger of falling away from salvation. He claims “If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment.” (10:26). Can our own sin separate us from God’s love?  
In your answer, draw upon specific textual evidence in Hebrews and Romans (ch. 8 and elsewhere if needed). Remember to think critically about the question and its assumptions, and factor these into your response.

#### D. History of Interpretation Assignment Instructions

In this research assignment you will gain perspective on a biblical passage by examining its history of interpretation. You will study and summarize five different interpretations of a given biblical passage, with at least 4 of these being from the pre-modern period (Reformation period and before).

For each interpretation, you will provide a brief 1-2 sentence description of the interpreter, including his/her name, date, location, and occupation. As you summarize, you will also identify one aspect of each interpretation that is helpful for understanding the passage today, and you will also offer one or more critiques of each interpretation. Each interpretation will receive two paragraphs (one for introducing the interpreter and summarizing the interpretation, one for appreciation and critique), making this paper 5-6 pages in length, 1250-1500 words. A bibliography of sources used for research is also required.

Possible passages to study (you may propose others by emailing the instructor):

- The Millennium: Revelation 20:4-6
- Saving Baptism: 1 Peter 3:21
- The Obsolete Covenant: Hebrews 8:13
- James on faith and works: James 2
- Jude's Use of the Extracanonical 1 Enoch: Jude 14-16
- Christians Don't Sin: 1 John 3:4-10

Suggested research resources (contact the instructor by email for further help):

- Christian Classics Ethereal Library (ccel.org; Free, online)
- EBSCOHost's ATLA Religion Database, online via the Prairie College Library: <https://prairie.edu/current-students/library/>\*
- Biblical Commentaries (often they will summarize preceding views)
- *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 29 vols. (InterVarsity Press)
- *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, 15 vols. (InterVarsity Press)
- *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (De Gruyter)

\*To access EBSCO, you will need a Prairie College library account. If you do not already have one please contact the Reference Librarian, Bill Nyman ([bill.nyman@prairie.edu](mailto:bill.nyman@prairie.edu)), and he will assist you.

Please use the "Search Databases" button within the "Search online databases (off-campus access)" section of the Library webpage.