

BRIERCREST

BLST 728 Hebrews: The Supremacy of Christ Winter 2021

Professor: Martin Culy
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Course Dates: February 1-5, 2021

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This exegetical, theological, and practical study of the book of Hebrews places special emphasis on its teachings regarding the person and work of Christ, the new covenant, its use of the Old Testament, the life of faith, and its distinctive warnings.

COURSE INTEGRATION

Through a careful study of the message of Hebrews, this course will provide a context for students to grow in their commitment to cultivating a teachable spirit, their desire to identify and participate more intentionally with God's people throughout the world, their ability to thoughtfully process competing theological positions through careful interaction with God's Word and God's people, their awareness of what it means to live "by faith," and their understanding of and appreciation for the matchless character of Jesus Christ.

COURSE TEXTS

Required:

Brother Andrew. *God's Smuggler*. Expanded edition. Bloomington: Chosen, 2015.

Guthrie, George H. *Hebrews*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

McKnight, Scot. "The Warning Passages of Hebrews: A Formal Analysis and Theological Conclusions." *Trinity Journal* 13 (1992): 21-59. Available online through Briercrest library.

Schreiner, Thomas R. "Perseverance and Assurance: A Survey and Proposal." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 2 (Spring 1998): 32-62. Available online:
<https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/journals/journal-of-theology/sbjt-21-spring-1998/perseverance-and-assurance-a-survey-and-a-proposal/>.¹

Recommended:

Bateman, Herbert W. IV., ed. *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007.

¹ For a fuller presentation of Schreiner's view, see Thomas R. Schreiner, and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2001).

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.mybriercrest.ca/seminary/documents/>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <http://briercrest.ca/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>; cf. <http://briercrest.ca/online/canvas>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE OUTCOMES

COGNITIVE—Upon successful completion of this course, students should have a good grasp of:

- the basic thesis and development of the argument of Hebrews
- the distinctive features of Hebrews' Christology
- the author's use of the Old Testament
- the distinctions between the new and old covenants that are highlighted in Hebrews
- the competing interpretations of the warning passages and their relative strengths and weaknesses

AFFECTIVE—Upon successful completion of this course, students should have a strong appreciation for:

- the relevancy of Hebrews' message for today
- the superiority of Jesus Christ in terms of both his person and his work
- the need to pay careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away
- the intimate relationship with God that is available through Jesus Christ
- the need to live by faith

SKILL DEVELOPMENT—Upon successful completion of this course, students should:

- be able to use Hebrews effectively in their ministry
- be able to articulate more clearly the need for perseverance in the faith
- be able to use the distinctions between the covenants to help construct a distinctively Christian worldview

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT (*working schedule*)

DATE	CLASS TOPIC
2/1 am	Introductory Matters; Hebrews 1:1-2:4
2/1 pm	Hebrews 2:5-3:6
2/2 am	Hebrews 3:7-4:13
2/2 pm	Hebrews 4:14-6:3
2/3 am	Hebrews 6:4-7:3
2/3 pm	Hebrews 7:4-8:13
2/4 am	Hebrews 9:1-10:18
2/4 pm	Hebrews 10:19-11:40
2/5 am	Hebrews 12:1-17; Warning Passages
2/5 pm	Hebrews 12:18-13:25

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments (45%): Due February 1, 2021, 9:00am

Each student will send the instructor an email confirmation that they have completed the reading assignments (Hebrews, *God's Smuggler*, commentary readings, and Guthrie). If you do not complete the reading assignments, please indicate what total percentage of all of the assignments combined you completed. Your grade for the reading assignments will be based on the following scale:

Amount Read	Grade
100%	10
90-99%	8
80-89%	6
70-79%	4
60-69%	2
50-59%	1
49% or less	0

1. **Reading Hebrews:** Prior to coming to class, read through Hebrews twice. It is important that you read through the entire book in one sitting each time, if at all possible. The first time through, please use the ESV, NRSV, or NIV. Listen for the overall message of the book and try to identify the most important themes. For the second reading, choose an idiomatic translation, or modern version, such as the *New Century Version*, *Today's English Version*, *New Living Translation*, or *Contemporary English Version*. Again, focus on the overall message and key themes, and come to class prepared to share your thoughts. *As you read, also watch for places in Hebrews that are unclear to you. I highly recommend that you concentrate your "Commentary Readings" (see below) on these passages.*
2. **Reading *God's Smuggler*:** Prior to coming to class, read *God's Smuggler* alongside of Hebrews 11. Although there is no written assignment associated with this book, think about the faith lessons that you can learn from this book. Also consider what the author of Hebrews might have said had he included Brother Andrew in Hebrews 11 ("By faith, Brother Andrew ...")? In what ways have you been personally challenged by this Christian biography? Come to class prepared to share your reflections when we discuss Hebrews 11.
3. **Commentary Readings:** There are three parts to this assignment. (1) Prior to the week of class, choose three or more of the commentaries that have an asterisk by them in the bibliography below and read a total of 50 pages from these commentaries. Where the commentary includes less than one page on an issue you are examining, count that as a full page. You might, for example, end up fulfilling this assignment by consulting five commentaries on 10 passages or by consulting four commentaries on 12 or 13 passages, depending on the length of the explanations of those passages in the commentaries. The purpose of this assignment is to help you identify commentaries that will be useful to you in the future and give you practice using commentaries to help you better understand the biblical text. (2) Identify *two passages* where you found the commentary discussion to be particularly helpful and send an email listing those two passages to the instructor before the first day of class. (3) *Come to class prepared to share what you learned about those two passages from your commentary study (see below).*

4. **Guthrie Reading and Response (15%):** Prior to coming to class, read Guthrie's commentary in its entirety and identify three places in Guthrie where you would either commend or critique him for how he has handled a particular issue. (There should be at least one critique and at least one commendation.) The commendations or critiques should relate to specific ways that Guthrie sheds light (or fails to shed light) on a specific passage's meaning or contemporary application. Be sure to include both the Hebrews passage and the page number(s) in Guthrie that relates to your commendation or critique. Each commendation or critique should be expressed in a brief *single paragraph* and the three total paragraphs should not exceed two pages total (double-spaced). It should be clear what you are critiquing or commending without me needing to consult Guthrie. Your grade for this assignment will be based on completing the reading and the appropriateness and effectiveness of your commendations or critiques. *See also below under assignments during the week of class.*
5. **Warning Passages Readings and Essay (20%):** Read the articles by McKnight and Schreiner carefully. McKnight represents one of the most competent treatments of the warnings of Hebrews from an Arminian perspective, while Schreiner represents one of the most competent treatments from a Reformed perspective, in my view. In a brief essay (1000 words maximum), choose which of the two arguments you find the most compelling and support your view through careful engagement with the details of both articles. Your essay should show clear evidence that you carefully read, reflected on, and engaged the arguments of both authors. If you find neither essay compelling, you may take a third position and engage the two essays in the appropriate manner.

Mid-Course Assignments (20%): Oral Participation

- The instructor will call on each student to share one or two of their commendations or critiques of Guthrie's commentary when we come to the relevant passages. You will be free to read from your notes. Your critique or commendation must be clear and substantive.
- Each student will briefly share what they learned about two passages in Hebrews from their commentary study.
- Each student will demonstrate thoughtful engagement with pre-course readings and class lectures by engaging in class discussion through asking appropriate questions, sharing their own thoughts, responding to questions from the instructor, or engaging fellow students in discussion.

Post-Course Assignments (35%): Due April 2, 2021

Research Project: Following the course, prepare a 3000-3500 word research paper on any topic related to the Book of Hebrews or choose an alternative project from the list below (or an alternative approved project). The research paper option should be well researched (generally using no less than 10 scholarly sources) and carefully written. The paper should include a clear thesis statement in the introduction and most papers will benefit from headings and subheadings. A separate page with a thesis statement and outline is not required. I strongly suggest that you think about possible paper topics prior to coming to class. As you read the book of Hebrews and the assigned texts, watch for topics that interest you or particular portions of Hebrews that you would like to explore in more depth. I am open to a variety of research topics and would be happy to discuss potential topics with you to ensure that they are viable. I am also open to alternative formats (sermons, Bible studies, videos, etc.). Some possible projects include:

- An exegetical paper covering any approved portion of Hebrews (this option is generally only available to students with Greek proficiency)
- An examination of the author's use of Jewish liturgical language (high priest, temple, sacrifice, etc.) in reference to Jesus
- An examination of a topic found in Hebrews, such as "pilgrimage" as a way of life for Christians, Hebrews' teaching on perseverance, or suffering as divine discipline
- An examination of the warning passages in Hebrews
- A paper exploring ethics in the Book of Hebrews
- A paper on Hebrews' use of the Old Testament and/or typological exegesis
- A paper exploring how the themes and message of Hebrews can be incorporated into a counseling ministry
- An *annotated* (30 minute) sermon on a passage in Hebrews. The sermon should (1) be a "new" creation—i.e., not a sermon from your file; (2) clearly integrate new insights you have gained from class and readings; and (3) may be submitted in manuscript or video format but must include a clear (a) outline of the message; (b) a bibliography; and (c) *thorough* exegetical notes in footnotes or in list form with time markers (if you are submitting a video). The exegetical notes should demonstrate sound exegesis behind the sermon.
- A detailed Bible study teacher's guide covering a minimum of three chapters of Hebrews. You should make careful use of at least four credible commentaries in preparing your Bible study guide. The guide must include: (1) Key information the Bible study leader would convey to the class; (2) discussion questions designed to help students respond appropriately to the biblical text and/or grasp the meaning and significance of the text; (3) detailed notes explaining the anticipated answers to your discussion questions; (4) footnotes indicating how you have made use of the required commentaries or other scholarly sources in preparing your Bible study guide; and (4) a bibliography.
- A critical full-length book review of a recent scholarly treatment of some issue related to Hebrews that provides (1) a thorough overview of the content of the book; (2) a critical analysis/critique of the thesis and argument of the author; (3) a summary of how the book has enhanced your understanding of the message of Hebrews; and (4) a summary of how the knowledge gained from the book can be incorporated into your ministry. Please ask for approval of the book you want to review before beginning.

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current Seminary Calendar:

<https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/academics/calendar/>.

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Course Schedules

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

Students are accountable to perform each task according to principles of academic honesty. Please refer to pages 24-25 in the [academic calendar](#) for more information.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should discuss them with the course instructor after contacting the Director of the Academic Resource Centre in person (L234 in the Library), by telephone (1-306-756-3230) or by email (academicresourcecentre@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.).

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