

Associated Canadian Theological Schools***BIE 692/HIS 691 –ACTS IN JEWISH AND GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT***

Dr. Brian M. Rapske
Spring, 2012
3 Credit Hours
Prerequisite: BIE 505

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Wednesdays
2:30 am – 5:10 pm

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Over thirty years ago, W.C. van Unnik wrote, “I am becoming more and more convinced that much critical study of Acts has been done at a distance from, or even without *living* contact with, Luke’s world.”¹ The growing trend to explore the book of Acts against the backdrop of antiquity (both Jewish and Greco-Roman) has begun to redress the lack. This course is set to “gather the gains” of more recent work on Acts in the setting of antiquity. The process will call for a first step in laying out specific aspects of Jewish and Greco-Roman backgrounds that are roughly contemporary to the book of Acts. Second, selections of the Lukan narrative will be considered to see how the discoveries related to the ancient context inform and advantage present understanding, leading ultimately to better understanding and application. While facility in Greek is not a prerequisite to taking the class, it is expected that students who have Greek will make sure that it informs their written and presented work.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to help the student to:

- A. Become thoroughly mindful that the book of Acts, while carrying a timeless message with contemporary impact, is an ancient text needing to be approached on those terms;
- B. Grasp how knowledge of first century Jewish and Greco-Roman background materials and the contemporary literature that describes the methods of its use leads to a better understanding of Luke’s account in Acts;
- C. Move from sound interpretation of Acts in ancient context to its appropriate application to analogous issues and concerns in the church and world today; and

¹ W.C. van Unnik, “Luke’s Second Book and the Rules of Hellenistic Historiography,” in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, Rédaction, Théologie*, ed. J. Kremer (Gembloux: J. Duculot/Leuven: LUP, 1979) 60.

- D. See the varied witness to Jesus in antiquity as described by Luke in Acts as both a worthy subject for study and a worthy model to emulate.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- A. *The Bible*, preferably a translation such as the *NIV* or *NRSV*.
B. Ferguson, E. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd edn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. [620 pages.]
C. Darrell L. Bock. *Acts* BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. [Read 350 of the text's 759 pages]
D. Calvin J. Roetzel. *The World that Shaped the New Testament*. rev. ed., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002. [168 pages]

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Typically, approximately 40 hours is required to complete the work necessary to earn 1 semester hour of credit—hence, 120 hours for a 3 credit course. Assignments must be completed and submitted on time in order to receive credit without penalty for this course. Assignments not submitted by the last day of classes, unless otherwise specified in the syllabus, will not be accepted. The professor marks to the following standard:

A+ = 97-100	B+= 85-89	C+= 70-74	F = 0-59
A = 93-96	B = 80-84	C = 65-69	
A- = 90-92	B- = 75-79	C- = 60-64	

A. Readings (15%)

The formal reading requirement of the course is satisfied by reading Ferguson and Roetzel in their entirety as well as a strategic 350 pages of Bock's commentary. A reading report will be required at the end of the course. **Report Due: Apr 11/12**

B. Written and Presented Work (85%)

Submission of Assignments. The grades for written work will be determined on the basis of close compliance with the instructions given, organization, content, and style. The professor prefers to accept written work that has been *electronically posted to the MyCourses website* (<https://courses.mytwu.ca/>) in the "Workspace" files there noted. Please remember if you post to the workspace that you should "toggle" your work for security. Alternately, you may wish to submit your work in *hardcopy* format. Faxed course work is unacceptable. As a precaution against the potential of a catastrophic loss, it is most strongly advised that you *maintain current copies of all e-documents and/or keep hardcopies of all submitted assignments.*

Paper Formatting and Academic Honesty. Please consult the "Important Academic Notes from ACTS" supplement at the end of the syllabus.

Contact Information. The professor is also available to advise on all course-related matters: *Campus office:* 1st floor SW corner in the Fosmark Building, NBS office #128; *Office Phone:* (604) 888-7592 extension 3868; *E-mail:* brian.rapske@twu.ca.

1. Exegetical Paper (35%)

Choose a passage of manageable length from the book of Acts and produce a well-researched and appropriately footnoted exegetical paper (body = 12-15 typewritten double-spaced pages) that is sensitive both to exegetical and to Jewish and/or Greco-Roman backgrounds issues, working out the implications of these to a “best” understanding and strong contemporary application. Engage and test the work of others against the text of scripture, including a clear indication of your own views and the text-based arguments supporting them. *Beyond the assigned reading, your paper must make use of at least five (5) intermediate to advanced commentaries, five (5) appropriate journal/periodical articles and relevant specialist studies, and five (5) specifically backgrounds-focused resources that help clarify the text.*²

Due Date: Apr 11/12

2. Book Review and Critique (15%)

Write a review and critique of Calvin J. Roetzel’s, *The World that Shaped the New Testament*. It should be no more than 8 typewritten double-spaced pages in length with approximate proportions of 2/3 review (accounting for the content of the text) and 1/3 critique (giving your assessment).

Due Date: Feb 01/12

3. Background Presentations (30%)

James Jeffers writes: “If we try to make sense of the Bible with no knowledge of the people who wrote it, those who read it and the society in which they lived, we will be inclined to read into the Scriptures our own society’s values and ideas. This would be a major mistake”³ Several opportunities have been strategically set in the course schedule (see below) for students to research, write up, and present material on a Jewish/Greco-Roman backgrounds subject so as to avoid this “major mistake” in the case of the book of Acts. The plan should be to set an outline in consultation with the professor for an adequate coverage of the background issue undertaken with focus to material from the book of Acts into which you believe it speaks.

Research and Write-up. Collect the most current available resource material on your topic. Beyond the course textbooks, you should make use

² Search protocol to access TWU online periodicals: 1) www.twu.ca/library/ 2) choose “Periodical Indexes & Full-Text Databases” 3) choose “Periodical Index & Databases Full-Text” 4) choose EBSCO Host “ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials” 5) Click “Scriptures” or “Keyword” → etc.

³ J. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999) 11.

of at least twelve (12) additional resources on the subject. The write-up will carry a title page and table of contents. The body of the paper will contain an introduction, a write-up of the research findings, and a conclusion. The paper write-up should total no more than ten (10) double-spaced pages. All resources consulted will be included in the bibliography.

Oral Presentation & Discussion. On the agreed presentation date, you will give an oral presentation and lead the class in a discussion of the findings and their implications for better understanding the events and circumstances of Luke’s description. You will resource the students with an annotated outline (you may further enhance the presentation with *PowerPoint*) and budget for a total presentation, including a directed discussion, of *not more than 40 minutes total time*.

Evaluation. Two thirds of the grade for the background project (30%) will be based upon your write-up and will be assessed by the professor; the other one third (10%) will be based upon your oral presentation and oversight of the class discussion and will be assessed by the professor with input from your fellow students. ***Schedule to be set for Due Dates***

4. On Line Forum (5%)

There will be one internet-based discussion forum in the week of March 25/12 to 31/12. It is accessible on the *MyCourses* webpage. You will be assigned to one of several forum discussion groups. A forum question will be found on the webpage. *Keep the forum question in mind as you are reading the assigned textbook pages and any other resources consulted that week.* Your contributions to the forum discussion should be concise, to the point and several—avoid “windy” monologues. The goal of the forum is to engage the issue/question in a way that fosters interaction with and mutual enrichment of colleagues who are also taking this course. You should aim to enter the forum discussion prepared, beginning on the Wednesday of the week of the online forum. The professor will begin to monitor these discussions beginning on the Thursday as he is able. He may also give (re)direction to the discussion, and/or add his own observations/insights as appropriate.

No final examination will be given in this course.

V. SCHEDULE

Week	Lecture Topic/Passage	Assignment Due Dates/Reading
<i>Jan 11</i>	<i>Syllabus The Broad Sweep of History and Acts</i>	BEC 1-47, 396-430

Jan 18	<i>Ancient Literature and Acts</i>	BEC 113-137, 431-513
Jan 25	<i>Jerusalem Institutions (Temple and Synagogue) and Acts</i>	BEC 562-582
Feb 01*	<i>Jewish Ruling Elites and Acts</i>	BEC 513-561 Review & Critique Due
Feb 15*	<i>Household & House Church and Acts</i>	BEC 66-82, 96-113, 137-147
Feb 22*	<i>Hellenistic Jews, Samaritans, God-Fearing Gentiles and Acts</i>	

February 27 – March 2 – Reading Break & Modular Courses

Mar 07*	<i>Trade, Travel and Shipwreck and the Gospel's Spread in Acts</i>	BEC 82-96
Mar 14*	<i>Greco-Roman Ruling Elites and Acts</i>	BEC 55-66
Mar 21*	<i>Greco-Roman Religion, the Imperial Cult and Acts</i>	BEC 148-318
Mar 28 (Online)	<i>Greco-Roman Philosophy and Acts</i>	BEC 319-395
Apr 4*	<i>The Army of Kings & Governors, Official & Unofficial Violence, and Acts</i>	BEC 48-55, 583-620
Apr 11	<i>(No Class)</i>	Reading Report Due Expositional Paper Due

November, 2011

Supplement: Important Academic Notes from ACTS

Web Support – Student Portal <https://students.twu.ca>

All students at TWU have a TWUPass username and password. This is determined at the time of an online application or can be managed through the computing services help desk or the link on the student portal. Your student email account is also available through this student portal and is vital for communication about grades, account statements, lost passwords, sign-up instructions, etc. If you do not know your account or password, there is a link at the login area called “I forgot my password.” When you click on that link, you will be walked through the process of retrieving your account information.

Campus Closure

In the event of deteriorating weather conditions or other emergency situations, every effort will be made to communicate information regarding the cancellation of classes to the following radio stations CKNW (980 AM), CKWX (1130 AM), STAR FM (107.1 FM), PRAISE (106.5 FM) and KARI (550 AM). As well, an announcement will be placed on the University’s campus closure notification message box (604.513.2147)

and on the front page of the University's website (<http://www.twu.ca> – also see <http://www.twu.ca/conditions> for more details).

An initial announcement regarding the status of the campus and cancellation of classes is made at 6:00 AM and covers all classes beginning before 1:00PM. A second announcement is made at 11:00AM that covers all classes which begin between 1:00PM and 5:00PM. A third announcement is made at 3:00PM and covers those classes which begin after 5:00PM.

Paper Formatting

Students need to adhere to Turabian Notes (Bibliography) format except for in counselling courses, for which APA format is used and for CanIL courses.

Students are strongly encouraged to use RefWorks (available through the library home page www.twu.ca/library) as their bibliographical manager and as a tool for formatting bibliographies. They will need to be aware of the need to “clean up” most bibliographies generated by this program. Students are encouraged to view the documents on the following websites for format samples: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html or www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. Note that in RefWorks the available formatting styles are those of Turabian (Notes), 7th edition, and APA – American Psychological Association, 6th edition. For Turabian, note that there are two formats – Notes (or Bibliography Style) and Reference List (a short format citation style). ACTS uses the Notes (Bibliography) format, not Reference List.

Counselling students are expected to purchase the APA Publications Manual. More information found at the following website. <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

For free online programs that will enable you to create properly formatted bibliography citations, go to <http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/> ("Chicago stands for "Turabian") or <http://www.sourceaid.com/citationbuilder/>

CANIL students can locate this on the CANIL intranet, under the “student” side. A hard copy is given to incoming students in the fall.

Please check with your professor to see which one he/she recommends you use!!

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are an important aspect of improving teaching outcomes and for students and faculty professional development. Therefore, completion of course evaluations are considered a course expectation. Professors will schedule time to fill out the online course evaluation (20-30 minutes) during their last scheduled class of the semester, for students to complete on their personal laptop or a collegium computer. Students who are absent or otherwise unable to complete the online course evaluation in the last class, will be expected to make every effort to do so by the last day of exams. Information about how to access online evaluation forms will be provided to the faculty and students prior to the last week of classes by the ACTS Administration.

Research Ethics

Please note that all research projects involving human participants undertaken by members of the TWU university community (including projects done by ACTS students to satisfy course or degree requirements) **MUST** be approved by the Trinity Western University Research Ethics Board. Information and forms may be found at <http://www.twu.ca/academics/research/ethics/>

Those needing additional clarification may contact the ACTS Academic Dean's office. Please allow at least three (3) weeks from the date of submission for a review of the application.

Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism at TWU

As Christian scholars pursuing higher education, academic integrity is a core value of the entire TWU community. Students are invited into this scholarly culture and required to abide by the principles of sound

academic scholarship at TWU. This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding all forms of plagiarism and cheating in scholarly work. TWU has a strict policy on plagiarism (see academic calendar 2008-09, pp. 37-38). Further details on this subject are contained in the ACTS Student Handbook in section 4.12. The handbook is available online on the ACTS webpage (www.acts.twu.ca) at the following link: www.acts.twu.ca/Handbook.html.

Learning what constitutes plagiarism and avoiding it is the student's responsibility. An excellent resource describing plagiarism and how to avoid it has been prepared by TWU Librarian William Badke and is freely available for download (PPT file) or used as flash (self-running) tutorials of varying lengths from:

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/plagiarism.ppt>

<http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism.swf> (14 minute flash tutorial)

http://acts.twu.ca/library/Plagiarism_Short.swf (8 minute flash tutorial)

Equity of Access

It is the responsibility of a student with a learning disability to inform the ACTS Director of Student Life of that fact before the beginning of a course so that necessary arrangements may be made to facilitate the student's learning experience. We are unable to accommodate any student who informs the Director of Student Life of a disability after the beginning of class.