



Grace Communion Seminary

NT503: Acts of the Apostles

Short Syllabus

Professor: Dan Rogers, PhD

To send a message to the instructor, see Appendix B, which starts on page 10.

Course description

This course chronicles the characters and events in the book of Acts to study the early development of the Christian church from its Jewish base to the inclusion of all peoples. The lives of the apostle Peter and apostle Paul set the background for studies of the General Epistles and Pauline Epistles.

In order to well in this course, students are expected to put in at least 13 hours each week.

Required textbooks

Gallagher, R. and P. Hertig, editors. *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004. ISBN 157075-493-4 (about \$27)*

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006. ISBN 0-8146-5807-5 (about \$30)*

Soards, Marion L. *The Speeches in Acts*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994. ISBN 0-664-25221-4 (about \$17)*

Please obtain these books before the class begins. *Costs estimated in July 2017. To find the lowest online price, use bookfinder.com.

Recommended: a commentary on the Book of Acts (your choice).

Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2007.

Bruce, F.F. *The Book of Acts: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988.

Peterson, David G. *The Acts of the Apostles*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009.

Student learning outcomes

Through this course, students will...

1. exegete passages in Acts based on the culture of the event and audience in order to relate the message to today's culture.
2. exegete narrative and sermons in Acts paying close attention to structure and plot, theological perspectives and themes.
3. analyze and reflect on the work of God, the Holy Spirit, in his action in establishing the early church and see application for the work of the Spirit in the Body of Christ today.
4. evaluate how the book of Acts illuminates the spiritual pilgrimage of the individual believer and guides the development of today's congregation.

For more details, see Appendix C.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lectures.** Lectures will be posted on Mondays. See the *Academic Catalog* for study suggestions. You should look up any scripture references in the lectures.
2. **Participate.** In most courses, part of the learning that occurs comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online

class, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. This counts for 5 percent of the final grade.

3. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 895 pages, or about 90 pages each week.
4. **Papers.** These count for 95 percent of the final grade. We estimate that you will need about 60 hours to work on these papers – an average of 5-6 hours per week – some weeks more, some less. For a guide to formatting your papers, see “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted at <http://www.gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23>.

Paper #1) Read the book of Acts and post a synopsis of chapter headings, grouped as you determine. (Due for second class)
Explain the rationale for your groupings (e.g. geographical, topical, missional, etc.)

Papers #2, 3) Two sermon analyses: Analyze two assigned sermons/speeches in Acts. These papers are due the week the lecture covers the chapters with the selected sermon and the text book chapter. You can see the selections on the first chart later in this syllabus. Please select at least one sermon in the list from Acts 1-14 so that you can get some feedback on your work within the first half of the course.

- i. Each sermon passage, which will accompany a chapter in our text *Mission in Acts*, will be assigned by Thursday after the first class; two individuals may have to post their papers by the third class, so it will be important that assignments are made shortly after the first class.
- ii. A model will be provided as an example in the second class for your study. Although you are free to develop your analysis of the sermon to fit that unique passage, be sure to give the context, analyze the purpose and content of the message, and its central theological point(s). The model we have provided may go into more detail than is the context of your passage, so adapt accordingly. Be sure to read and utilize L.T. Johnson’s commentary as a

guide and help with these sermon passages. Each paper must be a minimum of one page in length.

- iii. Post your sermon analysis on the shared comments for the whole class – feel free to download or print the analysis of others to develop a notebook or file on Acts. Our purpose is to share the load as we study the book of Acts.

Papers #4, 5) Two chapter reviews in *Mission in Acts* that relate to your two selected sermon passages in Acts: At the same time that you post each sermon analysis, you will provide a review of the accompanying chapter in *Mission in Acts*, as seen on the chart. You may find that the material on the content of the sermon greatly informs your chapter reviews.

Papers #6, 7) Review one of the following chapters in *Mission in Acts*. If you disagree with the author on any point, be sure to explain your reasons. In a separate paper analyze and exegete the narrative in Acts that corresponds to the chapter. These can be seen on the second chart later in this syllabus. You will select a chapter after the first lecture is posted. All papers submitted for this class are expected to be at least one page in length.

- iv. An inductive study of a narrative passage is necessary here. Summarize, analyze, and exegete the narrative passage being dealt with, Be sure to utilize the commentary by L.T. Johnson to help you with this work. Then, summarize and analyze the chapter in the textbook, and discuss its application for ministry.
- v. Post your work on the shared site the class date that the chapter is to be discussed.
- vi. Chapters in *Mission in Acts* with corresponding passages:
 3. Dismantling Social Barriers (Acts 2:42-42)
 6. Cross-Cultural Mediation (6:1-7; 5:33-42)
 9. Magic and Materialism (8:4-25)

10. The Ethiopian Eunuch (8:26-40)
11. Paul's Call to Mission (9:1-22)
13. Crossing Racial, Cultural, and Class Barriers (11:19-30; 13:1-3)
14. Hope in the Midst of Trials (12:1-11)
15. Magical Contests (13:6-12)
16. Urban Mission Strategy (14:1-28)
18. Finding the Will of God (16:1-30)
20. Servant Leader (18:1-28; 20:17-38)
21. Power of the Holy Spirit (19:1-22)

Paper #8) Write what you believe to be seven of the most important lessons you have learned from this study on Acts and how they will impact and affect your ministry.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading the syllabus and lectures	15	0
Reading forum discussions and making responses	5	5
Reading the textbooks	60	0
Synopsis of chapter headings – paper #1	5	5
Writing research/review papers #2 - 7	65	84/14each
Final reflection paper on learning – paper #8	5	6
Total – about 13 hours each week	155	100

* A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers, and vice versa. Some students will finish in less total time, and some will take more.

Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

Week	Topic/ week work due	Sermons/speeches in Acts	Mission in Acts Reviews	Mission in Acts Readings to be done
1	Background to Acts; Acts 1:1-3			1. Introduction: Background
2	The Ascension: Acts 1:4-11; Acts of the Apostles: Acts 1:12-26	1:4-11 / Jesus 1:16-25 / Peter		
3	Acts of the Holy Spirit: Acts 2-3	2:14-40 Peter 3:12-26 Peter	2. Launching of Mission 4. Holistic Ministry	3. (2:42-47) Dismantling Social Barriers
4	Acts in Jerusalem and Judea: Acts 4-8	4:24-30 Peter 7:2-56 Stephen	5. From Doing to Being 7. Immigrant Congregations	6. (5:33-42; 6:1-7) Crosscultural mediation 9. (8:4-25) Magic and

				Materialism 10. (8:26-40) Key Transitions
5	Acts across racial barriers: Acts 10-12	10:28-47 Peter 11:5-17 Peter	12. Peter's Conversion	13. (11:19-30; 13:1-3) Crossing Racial, Cultural, and Class Barriers 14. (12:1-11) Hope in the Midst of Trial
6	Acts of Jesus in Paul: Acts 9			11. (9:1-22) Paul's Call to Mission
7	Acts of grace in Asia Minor: Acts 13-15	13:16-41 Paul 14:15-17 Paul 15:7-21	8. Preaching for Mission 17. Contextualization	15. (13:6-12) Magical Contests 16. Urban Mission Strategy
8	Part II in Asia Minor and Greece: Acts 16-18	17:22-31 Paul	19. Cross-Cultural Evangelism	18. (16:1-30) Finding the Will of God 20. (18:1-28; 20:17-38) Servant Leader
9	Part III in Ephesus and Greece: Acts 19-22	20:19-35 Paul 22:1-21 Paul	22. For Missionaries and Leaders 24. Translation of Christianity	21. (19:1-22) The Fourth Pentecost
10	Acts in chains: Acts 23-28	24:10-21 Paul 27:22-34 Paul	23. Do the Right Thing 25. Acts of Power 26. Discontinuities	

		28:17-29 Paul	lead to Continuities	
11				
12	Final paper must be turned in by the end of the 12th week: on or before Monday, December 4.			

Appendix A: Grading standards

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- A to A- = Outstanding work: Above and beyond the requirements; outstanding effort and significant achievement are evident. Some measure of *remarkable* skill, creativity, or energy is also evident. Although most students in this class do great work, we cannot give an A to every student who does well.
- B+ to B = Above average work: Fulfills all aspects of the assignment and goes a bit beyond minimum competence to demonstrate reflection, research, and integration of the texts that show extra effort, achievement or improvement. This is a very honorable grade.
- B- to C = Average work: Fulfills all aspects of the assignment with competence. Assignments are completed as assigned. This is also an honorable grade.
- C- = Below average work: Below average either because some aspect of the assignment has not been fulfilled or because the number of errors interferes with clear communication. A grade of C- may also indicate failure to follow directions, failure to follow specific recommendations, or failure to demonstrate effort and improvement.
- D = Not acceptable.
- F = Not acceptable, either because the student did not complete the assignment as directed, or because the level of performance is below an acceptable level for graduate level work.

The final grade will be calculated based on a 100-point scale. Letter grades are assigned as follows:

95 - 100 % = A	77 - 79 % = C+
90 - 94 % = A-	74 - 76 % = C
87 - 89 % = B+	70 - 73 % = C-
84 - 86 % = B	60 - 69 % = D
80 - 83 % = B-	00 - 59 % = F

Appendix B: Course policies

To contact the instructor: Log in to our website, go to the main page for this course, and in the right column you will see a section named “Message My Professor.” Click on my name there to send a message to me (your message will not be visible to any other students). We want all class-related communications to be sent through the website, rather than email.

Late papers will be penalized 10 percent for each day they are late, so only in rare cases will it be advantageous to take an extra day to do a better job. Most GCS students are involved in pastoral work, and emergencies are common in this line of work, so you need to allow for the possibility. Other students need your work, so if you are tardy it can inconvenience them.

Late discussion forum assignments will be penalized 20 percent for each day they are late. The discussions are opportunities for other students to learn from you. But we cannot have a *discussion* if your comments are late.

Plagiarism is representing the words, ideas, or work of someone else as if they were your own. It does not matter whether this is done intentionally or accidentally. In general, any quote of more than five words in a row should be put within quote marks, and the source noted. The penalty for plagiarism is a grade of zero on the assignment. The penalty for a second infraction is a failure of the entire course. See the *Academic Catalog*, section V.K.1. No more than 20 percent of your paper should be quotes—we want to see *your* thoughts, not how much you can copy.

Nondiscrimination policy: Grace Communion Seminary admits students of any race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

Class confidentiality: Grades are confidential; we do not report your

grades to your employer or to anyone else outside of GCS administration. Materials posted in the class, including lectures and discussion forums, are for class use only. Students are to protect the confidentiality of all classroom materials and should not share any classroom materials without written permission of the person quoted and the instructor.

Library resources

For doing research and writing papers, you will find it helpful to use a few modern scholarly books. Some students already have access to appropriate books; others will need to plan ahead, to obtain these books at a local seminary library, through interlibrary loan at a public library, or by mail from the GCS library.

You should also consult the document on our website, “Research Resources Available off Campus.” Go to the “Public Information” section of our website: <http://gcs.edu/course/view.php?id=23>. Look for “Research Resources.” While you’re there, look at the GCS library catalog, too. We’d be happy to share our resources with you. For details on how our library works, see the *Academic Catalog*, section VI.H.

Appendix C: Student Learning Outcomes

GCS mission statement

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

Grace Communion Seminary has five core learning outcomes for its students. This course serves largely to support the SLO 1 outcome.

GCS Student Learning Outcome (SLO) 1: Students will be able to explain the revelation of the Bible in its historical and cultural setting as it relates to God, Jesus Christ and salvation, and its application for faithful living today.

Course SLO 1: Students will exegete passages in Acts based on the culture of the event and audience in order to relate the message to today’s culture.

This is met through the assignment to record chapter headings through a reading of the book of Acts, analysis of two sermons recorded in Acts and one narrative passage, as well as the posting of these papers on the site to be shared among class members.

Course SLO 2: Students will exegete narrative and sermons in Acts paying close attention to structure and plot, theological perspectives and themes.

This is met through the assignment to analyze two sermons in Act, by student papers posted on the site to be shared among class members, and by the final paper on the lessons learned through the book of Acts.

GCS SLO 2: Reason from a sound theological basis as new covenant

Christians centered in Trinitarian Incarnational faith.

Course SLO 3: Students will reflect on and analyze the work of God, the Holy Spirit, in his action in establishing the early church and see application for the work of the Spirit in the Body of Christ today.

This is met through the assignment to analyze two sermons in Acts, by student papers posted on the site to be shared among class members, and by the final paper on the lessons learned through the book of Acts.

GCS SLO 3: Model the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit in congregations.

Course SLO 4: Students will evaluate how the book of Acts illuminates the spiritual pilgrimage of the individual believer and guides the development of today's congregation.

This is met through forum discussions, analysis of two sermons in Acts, by student papers posted on the site to be shared among class members, and by the final paper on the lessons learned through the book of Acts.