

Boston University School of Theology. Track 1: Biblical and Historical Studies

Primary Field of Study: New Testament Studies Concentration (NTS)

Faculty: Shively T. J. Smith, Luis Menéndez-Antuña

Website Link: <http://www.bu.edu/sth/academics/degree-programs/doctor-of-philosophy/>

DESCRIPTION OF NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES AT BUSTH

New Testament Studies (NTS) at BUSTH is approached as a literary-historical and socio-theological discipline with the aim to critically examine New Testament *texts in contexts*, both ancient and contemporary. As such, the NTS Program at BUSTH is interdisciplinary in nature and attentive to the wide variety of approaches current and emerging in the field in terms of textual analysis, theoretical traditions, methodological diversity, and global developments.

The aim of this concentration is to account for how texts and their meanings derive from, communicate, propose, and shape contexts from the past and the present. The program strives to examine and engage the diverse writings of the New Testament and other related literature in its literary, historical, and socio-theological environments and contextual perspectives *in conversation with* communities of interpretation who have received and interpreted those texts in their own particular literary, historical, and socio-theological environments informed by their own contextual perspectives.

We understand the New Testament as:

- A field of study that seeks to understand biblical texts in their literary and rhetorical, historical and socio-cultural, theological and ideological contexts in conversation with the contexts in which they are received.
- A field of knowledge that is interdisciplinary in nature, engaging critically the disciplinary intersections of archaeology, textual and rhetorical analysis, literary interpretation, social and cultural history. Each of these areas is in itself a complex field of knowledge with important recent developments within the global world.
- A field of texts and contexts, examining New Testament literature and other related religious writings (early Christian texts, Second Temple Jewish texts, the Septuagint, etc.) as texts read, engaged, experienced, and re-created by ancient and contemporary faith-based communities and as texts studied within a variety of academic disciplines.
- A field of methodological diversity and innovation. In the last fifty years an explosion of new methodologies has challenged the once-hegemonic historical-criticism method while

expanding the kinds of research questions that interpreters and communities of interpretation put to canonical and noncanonical religious literature. Womanist, Feminist, Marxist, Postcolonial and Queer Theories, and ecological studies (just to name a few) have brought to bear new agendas on the field of biblical criticism as a whole. Such methodological diversity has expanded what is considered “history,” creating new methodological problems, and discovering previously unseen blind-spots in traditional theories of interpretation while also leveraging forms of analysis such as grammatical and linguistic, narrative and genre, tradition-historical, the social-sciences, etc.

PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS’ PROFILE

Doctoral students interested in pursuing a PhD in New Testament at BU School of Theology should ideally be interested in exploring interdisciplinary conversations, traditions, and theoretical frameworks within and outside our discipline while being attentive to the ethical and political dimensions of biblical hermeneutics. In addition, we are particularly excited about mentoring students who are invested in the relationships between biblical interpretation and specific interpretive communities. Their research questions and studies seek to construct thick descriptions of the interpretative histories of biblical texts, both ancient and contemporary--with close attention to social-historical, linguist and rhetorical, literary and existential meanings and implications.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (see webpage for details)

<http://www.bu.edu/sth/academics/degree-programs/doctor-of-philosophy/>

MENTORING PHILOSOPHY

The concentration faculty are aware of the job market challenges and how a successful position, both in academia or in other professional areas, requires a set of skills that can only be developed in the context of a comprehensive mentoring program. For this reason, program faculty accompany candidates as they navigate the job search process, especially in networking with institutions and foundations specialized in helping doctoral students to thrive in the professional world. In particular the NTS faculty, together, are connected to mentoring and support organizations such as the Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE), Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI), Fulbright, the Wabash Center for Teaching, the Louisville Institute, Ford Foundation, Calvin Institute, and others. Doctoral students are mentored in fellowship writing and network building. Mentoring in the program involves deepening students’ grasp of the field, expanding pedagogical approaches, building a research plan that includes grant writing, and cultivating institutional networks and partnerships as integral components of academic life.

TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to developing a critical and in-depth knowledge in the field of New Testament texts and contexts, the concentration further prepares students to translate that knowledge in the classroom and engage non-specialists as well as specialists in the conversation of New Testament studies and interpretation. To that end, concentration faculty are committed to shaping students as scholars and teachers of communities. Students are expected to serve as Teaching Fellows across the biblical studies programming of BUSTH, especially for NT and HB survey courses, as well as to support teaching biblical languages (if requested). This will be an advisory process in which students will be in constant conversation with advisors and concentration faculty about their teaching philosophies, pedagogies, and developments.

SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR MINORITIZED STUDENTS

BUSTH is a member of the Hispanic Theological Initiative and the Forum for Theological Exploration Institutional Doctoral Network, both of which provide support to our students of color. PhD students of color are provided additional funding to assist them with transitioning to Boston once accepted into the program and are automatically eligible for the PhD Students of Color Reading Retreats held each summer. All admitted PhD students are provided full tuition, health insurance, fees, and an 8-month annual stipend (currently at \$22,660) for five years. This includes a 20 hour/week teaching and research internship each semester during years 2-5 (though service-free dissertation fellowships are available in year 5). For more information, see: <http://www.bu.edu/sth/admissions/paying-for-seminary/>.

BUSTH NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES FACULTY

Together, the faculty of BUSTH's New Testament concentration examines New Testament and other early Christian writings as *texts in contexts*, both ancient and contemporary. By deploying a variety of methodological configurations and engaging a variety of biblical and non-biblical source materials, NT faculty engage texts in their historical, social, literary, and ideological dimensions. While they both have their primary areas of interest in the NT (see below), both faculty work across the NT canon and beyond it. Moreover, faculty work together to support doctoral students' development and matriculation through the program, identifying students' areas of strengths and weaknesses and creating doctoral processes that deepen students' scholarly craft in research, teaching, writing, grant writing, and presentations. We value collegiality and relationship-building.

Dr. Shively T. J. Smith

Research Interests: General Letters of New Testament and its reception histories, socio-rhetorical and socio-historical approaches to biblical texts, Diaspora Studies and the biblical theologies, history of interpretation with particular attention to Womanist and African American histories and hermeneutics, and the writings of Howard Thurman.

Dr. Luis Menéndez-Antuña

Research Interests: John's Apocalypse, Methods and Hermeneutics, Critical Theory, Ideological Criticism, Socio-rhetorical criticism, Queer and Postcolonial Theory, Liberation Hermeneutics, Art theory and biblical interpretation.

Get to know us better through our introductory video posted at:

<https://www.sbl-site.org/educational/ResourcesSupportingStudentsofColor.aspx>