

## **Introduction to the New Testament**

Fall Semester 2018

Religious Studies 112-001

Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-1:45

214 Farrah Hall

=syllabus subject to alteration=

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### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the Hellenistic world as the matrix in which Christianity appeared. The course examines the traditions about Jesus that were variously framed and organized in the writings of Paul among other letter writers, the Gospels and the Book of Acts, and the Book of Revelation. The stories, letters, and sermons that constitute this collection will be examined in light of their literary, historical, and cultural contexts. Particular emphasis will be placed on narratives and especially the literary qualities of the texts (for example: the uses of symbol, metaphor, repetition; typology and myth; dialogue, narrative technique, and type-scenes), though other approaches to the study of these texts will be considered throughout the semester.

### **Course Prerequisite**

This course carries a University Core Humanities [H] designation and has no prerequisites.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- + identify the principle methods advanced by the historical-critical approach to Biblical studies
- + recognize the various writing genres presented in New Testament
- + identify the rhetorical strategies of the different epistle and gospel writers
- + describe how the New Testament is structured and how this is related to the structure of the Hebrew Bible
- + explain the development of Hebrew Bible material in the New Testament
- + explain the historical spread of Christianity beyond the confines of Palestine during the first century

## Required Texts

- 1] *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).
- 2] Pheme Perkins, *Reading the New Testament: An Introduction, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (New York: Paulist, 2012).

## Web Resource

Bible Gateway: <https://www.biblegateway.com/>  
Bible Odyssey: <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/>  
New Testament Gateway: <http://www.ntgateway.com/>

## Course Presentation

This fifteen-week course is divided into five units. Part One examines the historical, cultural, and literary context of the New Testament. Part Two explores a selection of letters attributed to the apostle Paul. Part Three considers the gospel genre and the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. John and the extended narrative of Luke and Acts are the focus of Part Four. The final unit is devoted to other letters, sermons, and the Book of Revelation.

Assigned readings for each unit will include specific chapters from the textbook *Reading the New Testament* and appropriate selections from the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible. Lectures will both supplement and expand upon the readings. Focus questions will be posted on the course's Discussion Board; all participants are expected to respond to the issues these questions raise. At the end of each unit, learning outcomes will be measured by multiple-choice tests. Five tests will be offered; the four highest grades will count toward the final grade. In addition there will be a final exam.

## Course Requirements

Five multiple-choice tests of 150 points each. Of these, the highest four results will count toward the final grade = 600 points or 60%

Discussion board participation = 100 points or 10%

Final Exam = 300 points or 30%

EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS: You may earn up to 50 extra credit points by writing a response to lectures offered in the Religious Studies department or elsewhere on campus. Details are included with the extra credit guidelines.

Notes on Discussions: Good discussion is a sustained, wide-ranging-yet-focused, fun and exhilarating inquiry. It increases in quality and intensity as the semester progresses. Participation involves posting, reading, and responding to your classmates' postings. We have a great deal to learn from each other. Respond respectfully to your colleagues; answer their questions; build upon their comments. This is what a "liberal education" in the classic sense is meant to be. Use the blackboard discussion guidelines as a guide. You are required to participate in 4 discussions. Your score will be reduced by 25 points for every discussion less than the required 4. (See also "Attendance Policy" below.)

## Netiquette

Student-to-Student Etiquette. The following values should be affirmed during online discussions and when emailing fellow students:

1. Respect. Each student's opinion is valued as an opinion. When responding to a person during the online discussions, be sure to state an opposing opinion in a diplomatic way.
2. Confidentiality. When discussing topics be sure to be discreet in the mentioning of teachers and colleagues. Do not use names of people or names of facilities.

Student-to-Instructors Etiquette. In addition to the above values, each student shall submit completed assignments in a timely manner.

Instructors-to-Student Etiquette. Students can expect that the instructors will also follow the values listed above by checking and responding to emails and grading assignments in a timely manner.

## Attendance Policy

Attendance at all class meetings is expected. This is your responsibility. Tests will include material presented in the lectures and lectures will present material not available in the textbook. In addition, you may be called upon when your Discussion Group is scheduled to offer Feedback. **Absence on that particular occasion will result in a 25 point deduction from your grade.** *Caveat emptor.*

## UA Policies

Academic Honor Code: All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University of Alabama expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline.

Code of Academic Conduct: Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academic or related matter and any knowing or intentional help, attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following acts, when performed in any type of academic or academically related matter, exercise, or activity: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and misrepresentation.

See the Student Handbook for further details.

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act: In keeping with its mission and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, The University of Alabama is committed to providing persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from all programs and services conducted or sponsored by the University. See the Office of Disability Services web site for more information.

**Introduction to the New Testament  
Tentative Course Schedule**

**Week 1**

**PART ONE: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS**

August 23 Preliminary Matters: Introduction to the Syllabus

**Week 2**

New Testament, Old Testament, Graeco-Roman World

August 28 New Testament Overview; The Bible in the New Testament World  
read Perkins, ch. 1 & 2

August 30 Jewish and Greek Thought Worlds; Historical Background  
Perkins ch. 7

**Week 3**

September 4 Historical Background, continued; Jewish Context  
First Century Judaism  
Perkins, ch. 2 & 6  
Feedback: Discussion Group 11

September 6 **Test 1: The New Testament Texts and Contexts**

**Week 4**

**PART TWO: PAULINE TEXTS AND CONTEXTS**

September 11 Paul's World and Life  
Perkins, ch. 7 & 8  
1 & 2 Thessalonians; Philippians

September 13 Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians  
Perkins, ch. 9 & 10  
Feedback: Discussion Group 10

**Week 5**

September 18 1 & 2 Corinthians & Romans  
Perkins, ch. 10

September 20 Philemon and Pauline Tradition  
Perkins, pp. 140-142  
Feedback: Discussion Group 9

**Week 6**

September 25 **Test 2: Pauline Tradition**

September 27

**PART THREE: GOSPELS**

Intro to Gospels and Mark  
Theorizing the Life of Jesus: Christology  
Perkins, ch. 3, 4, 5, 6 & 12

**Week 7**

October 2            Mark  
Perkins, ch. 12

October 4            Mark  
Feedback: Discussion Group 8

**Week 8**

October 9            Matthew  
Perkins, ch. 13

October 11           Matthew  
Feedback: Discussion Group 7

**Week 9**

October 16           **Test 3: Mark and Matthew**

October 18           **PART FOUR: GOSPELS AND CHURCH HISTORY**

John  
Perkins, ch. 15

**Week 10**

October 23           John  
Feedback: Discussion Group 6

October 25           NO CLASS

**Week 11**

October 30           Luke-Acts  
Perkins, ch. 14 & 16

November 1           Luke-Acts

**Week 12**

November 6           Luke-Acts  
Feedback: Discussion Group 5

November 8           **Test 4: John and Luke-Acts**

**Week 13**                      **PART FIVE: LATER LETTERS AND REVELATION**

November 13                  Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles  
Perkins, ch. 11 & 18

November 15                  Hebrews, Peter, James, Jude  
Perkins, ch. 17 & 19  
Feedback: Discussion Group 4

**Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 14**

November 27                  Johannine Letters & Revelation  
Perkins, ch. 20 & 21

November 29                  Revelation  
Feedback: Discussion Group 3  
**Online Test 5: Later Letters and Latter Days**

**Week 15**                      REVIEW AND CANON

December 4                      Feedback: Discussion Groups 1 & 2

December 6                      Continued (if needed)

**Final Exam – Tuesday December 11, 11:30-2 IN CLASS**

**Introduction to the New Testament**  
***ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES***

**A. Multiple Choice Tests**

There are six multiple choice tests for this course: five shorter tests and one final exam.

**B. Discussion Board**

Significant contributions to four topics on the electronic Discussion Board will constitute full participation in this exercise. Please refer to etiquette guidelines on page 2-3 of syllabus.

**C. Feedback by Discussion Group**

Once every two or three sessions, members of a particular Discussion Group will be called upon to provide feedback on the readings and lectures. Please be prepared to identify concerns that have arisen within the group, or individually, regarding the course. Points of clarification, matters of confusion, issues of interpretation, requests for further reading, etc., should all be brought to the fore in these 5 to 10 minute forums. Absence from class on the day your group is scheduled to provide feedback will result in a reduction of 25 points from your overall grade.

## Guidelines for Extra Credit Assignments in the Department of Religious Studies

The guidelines below are meant to streamline expectations and requirements of extra credit assignments relating to public lectures in the Department of Religious Studies. Should a professor decide to offer extra credit opportunities, he or she shall set the parameters of specific assignments regarding due dates and points allowed and awarded. These guidelines, however, offer a framework to which students and faculty may refer in the construction and completion of such assignments.

Throughout each academic year, the Department of Religious Studies hosts and sponsors a number of public lectures by invited UA faculty and visiting scholars from other academic institutions. A student may receive extra credit for attending such a lecture and completing a written response to the talk.

Written responses must contain the two following components:

1. Engaged Summary: The student must demonstrate that he or she listened closely to the lecture, understood its basic points or themes, and stayed for the entire event. The student should offer a broad but cohesive outline of the speaker's topic and argument.
2. Critical Reflection: The student must reflect critically on the lecture, responding analytically to its points and argument(s). In this critical response, the student should offer his or her own claims, noting specific points of the lecture with which he or she agreed/disagreed, which points were effective or ineffective, and what he or she found to be the productive possibilities of the kind of work outlined by the lecturer for the academic study of religion. In this critical reflection, the student should demonstrate and apply knowledge and critical thinking skills developed within the Department of Religious Studies.

Responses should adhere to the following formatting guidelines:

- Responses should be no less than one full page.
- Responses should be typed, in 12-pt. font and double-spaced with 1-inch margins.

### Lecture Event During Fall 2018

**1. October 30 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm in Gorgas Library room 205**

**Prof. Teemu Taira, from the University Helsinki, will visit the University of Alabama in late October, to give the 2018-19 Day Lecture on Religion and Popular Culture. His talk is tentatively entitled "Reading Bond Through 'Religion.'" Prof. Taira works on such topics as religion and the legal system, atheism, and religion and the media.**