

Introduction to the New Testament

Fall Semester 2019

Religious Studies 112-001

Tuesday and Thursday, 2-3:15

Lloyd Hall 132

=syllabus subject to alteration=

Instructor Theodore Louis Trost, Ph.D.
Professor of Religious Studies and New College
E-mail: ttrost@ua.edu
Phone: 348-7534
Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:30 PM and by appointment
Lloyd Hall 214

Teaching Assistant Matthew McCullough
Graduate Teaching Assistant, Religious Studies
E-mail: msmccullough@crimson.ua.edu
Phone: 348-3467
Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-5 PM and by appointment
Manly Hall 200

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 Gospels and the Book of Acts, the writings of Paul among other letter writers, 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 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
- + account for some of the diversity apparent in the various New Testament writings

Required Texts

1. *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).
2. PHEME PERKINS, *Reading the New Testament: An Introduction*, 3rd 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 considers the gospel genre and the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. The Gospel according to John and the extended narrative of Luke and Acts are the focus of Part Three. Part Four explores a selection of letters and sermons attributed to the apostle Paul and others. The final unit is devoted primarily to 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 in advance of the readings and lectures and will be discussed, on occasion, in class; 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 125 points each. Of these, the highest four results will count toward the final grade = 500 points or 50%
Discussion board and class participation = 150 points or 15%
Final Exam = 350 points or 35%

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 reading, 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, on one or two occasions, you may be called upon when your Discussion Group is scheduled to offer Feedback. **Absence on those days 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**

PART ONE: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Week 1

August 22

Preliminary Matters: Introduction to the Syllabus; the Bible

assignment [for next meeting]: HarperCollins Study Bible, xiii-xlii; Perkins, ch. 1; "Books of the Bible" handout on BlackBoard

Week 2

August 27

What is the Bible?: Strategies for Reading Scripture

assignment [for next meeting]: read HarperCollins Study Bible, xliv-lxv1; "Crucial Dates" handout on BlackBoard; Perkins, ch. 2

August 29

Jewish and Greek Thought Worlds; Historical Background

assignment [for next meeting]: Perkins, ch. 2

Week 3

September 3

Greco-Roman and Jewish Context; First Century Judaism

NOTE: 15-minute discussion based on input from Group 1

assignment [for next meeting]: review for test

September 5

Test 1: The New Testament Texts and Contexts

assignment [for next meeting]: Gospel of Mark

PART TWO: GOSPELS

Week 4

September 10

Intro to Gospels and Mark

Theorizing the Life of Jesus: Prophet, Beloved Son, Kingdom of God; Healer; Teacher

assignment [for next meeting]: Gospel of Mark; Perkins, ch. 12; Perkins, [skim] ch. 3-6

September 12

Mark: Son of Man and Lord

assignment [for next meeting]: Gospel of Mark; Perkins, ch. 12

Week 5

September 17

Mark

NOTE: 15-minute discussion based on input from Group 2

assignment [for next meeting]: Matthew; Perkins, ch. 13

September 19

Matthew: Son of David and Teacher

assignment [for next meeting]: Matthew; Perkins, ch. 13

Week 6

September 24

Matthew

NOTE: 15-minute discussion based on input from Group 3

assignment [for next meeting]: review for test

September 26

Test 2: Mark and Matthew; New Testament World

assignment [for next meeting]: John; Perkins, ch. 15

PART THREE: GOSPELS AND CHURCH HISTORY

Week 7

October 1

John: The Word made Flesh

assignment [for next meeting]: Luke; Perkins, ch. 14 & 16

October 3

Luke-Acts: Exodus to All Lands

assignment [for next meeting]: Acts; Perkins, ch. 16

Week 8

October 8

Luke-Acts

NOTE: 15-minute discussion based on input from Group 4

assignment [for next meeting]: review for test

October 10

Test 3: John and Luke-Acts

assignment [for next meeting]: 1 & 2 Thessalonians; Philippians; Galatians; Perkins [skim], chs 7-10

PART FOUR: PAULINE TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Week 9

October 15

Paul's World and Life: 1 & 2 Thessalonians; Philippians; Galatians

assignment [for next meeting]: 1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans; Perkins [skim], chs 7-10

October 17

1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans

assignment [for next meeting]: Perkins [skim], chs 7-10; review Tests 1-3 and prepare test questions

Week 10

October 22

REVIEW SESSION: Tests 1 - 3 + Paul's World

NOTE: 15-minute discussion based on input from Group 5

assignment [for next meeting]: review for test

October 24

No Class

Week 11

October 29

Test 4: New Testament World; The Gospels, Acts, Paul's World

assignment [for next meeting]: Romans, Philemon; Perkins, pp. 140-142

October 31

No Class: Fall Break

Week 12

November 5

Romans, Philemon and Pauline Tradition

assignment [for next meeting]: Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles; Perkins, ch. 11 & 18

PART FIVE: LATER LETTERS AND REVELATION

November 7

Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles

assignment [for next meeting]: Hebrews, Peter, James, Jude; Perkins, ch. 17 & 19

Week 13

November 12

Hebrews, Peter, James, Jude

NOTE: 15-minute discussion based on input from Group 6

assignment [for next meeting]: review for test

November 14 **Test 5: Pauline Tradition and Later Letters**

assignment [for next meeting]: Johannine Letters & Revelation; Perkins, ch. 20 & 21

Week 14

November 19 Johannine Letters & Revelation

November 21 Revelation

Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

December 3 The New Testament as Canon

December 5 REVIEW: Including three questions from each group

Final Exam – Thursday December 12 at 8 AM 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 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 10 to 15 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 2019

1. Dr. Roshan Abraham will be our 7th annual Day Lecturer. His lecture, titled "Reimagining the Biblical Flood in Contemporary American Comics"

Date: Tuesday, Oct. 15, 2019 @ 7 pm.

Location: ten Hour Hall, rm. 30