

Introduction to the New Testament

Fall 2021

Religious Studies 112-001

Monday & Wednesday 2-3:15

132 Lloyd Hall & Online via Zoom®

=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 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
- + recognize the way various authors use 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 Text

1. *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

Recommended Texts

1. Harry O. Maier, *New Testament Christianity in the Roman World* (New York: Oxford, 2019).
2. Pheme Perkins, *Reading the New Testament: An Introduction*, 3rd Edition (New York: Paulist, 2012).

Web Resource

Bible Gateway: <https://classic.biblegateway.com/>
 Bible Odyssey: <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/>
 Bible Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0BrP8bqj0c>
 New Testament Gateway: <http://www.ntgateway.com/>

Course Presentation

This course is divided into five units. Part One examines the historical, cultural, and literary contexts into which the New Testament appears with special emphasis on its literary relationship to the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Part Two considers the gospel genre and the Gospels of Mark and John. The Gospel according to Matthew 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 to the remaining writings and the Book of Revelation.

Assigned readings for each unit will include the many books of the New Testament, selections from the Hebrew Bible, and, optionally, appropriate chapters from the textbook *Reading the New Testament*. Lectures will focus on specific aspects of the readings that will be the basis of the tests throughout the semester. Discussion questions will be posted in response to the readings and lectures; all participants are expected to respond to the issues these questions raise in small, on-line discussion groups. 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

1. FIVE multiple-choice tests of 125 points each. Of these, the FOUR highest results will count toward the final grade = 500 points or 50%
2. FIVE Discussion board questions of 50 points each. Of these, the FOUR highest results will count toward the final grade = 200 points or 20%
3. ONE Final Exam Review Assignment containing at least five well-formulated questions in advance of the final exam = 50 points or 5%
4. Final Exam = 250 points or 25%

1000 points

5. EXTRA CREDIT OPTION: You may earn up to 140 extra credit points by writing brief responses to various questions related primarily to optional readings from the recommended texts. A total of eight assignments will be made available over the course of the semester. Your seven highest grades will count toward your final grade.

Grading Scale

A+	990 – 1140	C+	775 – 799
A	930 – 989	C	730 – 774
A-	900 – 929	C-	700 – 729
B+	875 – 899	D+	675 – 699
B	830 – 874	D	630 – 674
B-	800 – 829	D-	600 – 629

Please note that the baseline for the A+ grade is slightly elevated in this grading scale. This is because of the plethora of extra credit opportunities that are available throughout the semester.

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 careful reading of the discussion text, posting, 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. Please refer to the BlackBoard™ discussion rubrics (on the Course Page) for additional information concerning the method of evaluation that will be employed to determine the grades for Discussion Group participants.

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

All students are expected to attend the lectures during the scheduled class period. On occasion, particularly if the coronavirus renders a segment of the class incapable of attending class, recorded lectures will be made available on BlackBoard. Tests will include material presented in the lectures and lectures will present material not available in the optional textbook.

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.

Additional Logistical Concerns Health and Safety under Threat of Plague

All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. In the interest of your health and safety and that of all UA students, faculty and staff, the University reserves the right to change the mode of instruction or schedule of instruction at any time, based upon prevailing public health and other guidance. While the method of delivery may change, educational instruction and opportunities will continue. As such, the University will not provide a refund of tuition, in whole or in-part, based on any such changes. Detailed information on changes in format or schedule can be found at studentaccounts.ua.edu and financialaid.ua.edu.

UA students, faculty and staff are required to comply with [UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Task Force](#) guidance regarding social distancing, face coverings and other measures.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to [protect yourself and our herd](#). COVID-19 vaccines are being administered by the [University Medical Center, the Student Health Center](#) and various businesses and healthcare providers. Students who [report proof of their vaccination status](#) will receive Bama Cash as a thank you gift for doing their part.

NOTE: If you intend to take this course, PLEASE COMPLETE THE CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE and submit it on the Journals Page. The Questionnaire can be accessed on the Journals Page as the last assignment in the series. It is also available on the Course Page as a Word document that can be submitted on the Journals Page.

Introduction to the New Testament Tentative Course Schedule

PART ONE: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Week 1

Aug 18

Preliminary Matters: Introduction to the Syllabus; the Bible
Lecture 0 & Lecture 1, Part 1

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. *HarperCollins Study Bible*, xiii-xlii, especially Barton, "Strategies for Reading Scripture," "Israelite Religion," and "The Greco-Roman Context of the New Testament "
2. "Books of the Bible" handout on BlackBoard
3. (optional) Perkins, ch. 1

Week 2

Aug 23

What is the Bible?: Strategies for Reading Scripture
Lecture 1, Parts 2 & 3

assignment [for next meeting]:

same as August 18, plus:

1. "Crucial Events and Dates" handout on BlackBoard

Aug 25

Jewish and Greek Thought Worlds; Historical Background
Lecture 1, Part 4 & Lecture 2

assignment [for next meeting]:

same as August 23, plus

1. (optional) Perkins, ch. 2

[Aug 27]

[DUE: Extra Credit 1 on Friday Aug 27 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 3

Aug 30

Greco-Roman and Jewish Context; First Century Judaism
Lecture 3

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. Study Guide 1

Sept 1

Review and Test

**Test 1: The New Testament Texts and Contexts
IN CLASS**

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. Gospel of Mark (please read the entire gospel at least once)

2. (optional) Perkins, ch. 12
3. (optional) Perkins, [skim] chs. 3-6

[Sept 3] [DUE: Extra Credit 2 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 4

Sept 6 **NO CLASS: LABOR DAY**

PART TWO: GOSPELS I

Sept 8 Intro to Gospels and Mark
Lecture 4 & Lecture 5, Part 1: Mark 1-6.29
Key concepts: "Son of Man" [ch. 2] and "Lord" ch. [5]

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. "Structure of the Gospel of Mark" handout on BlackBoard

DUE: A preliminary response to **Discussion Question 1** is due at 11:59 PM

Week 5

Sept 13

Mark

Lecture 5, Part 2: Mark 6.30-14.9

Key concepts: "Lord" Part 2 and "Bread" [ch. 7]; "Son of Man" Part 2 [ch. 8]; and the "Messiah-Christ-Anointed One" [compare chs. 8 & 14]

Sept 15

Mark: The Message from the Tomb and its Messengers

Lecture 5, Part 3: Mark 14.10-16.8

Key concepts: "Forsaken" [compare chs. 4 & 14] and "Go Tell" [chs. 4 & 16]

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. Gospel of John (please read the entire gospel at least once)
2. (optional) Perkins, ch. 15

DUE: The **Discussion Question 1 Forum** closes at 11:59 PM

[Sept 17] [DUE: Extra Credit 3 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 6

Sept 20

Mark (completed) & John: The Word made Flesh

Lecture 5, Part 4; Lecture 6, Parts 1 & 2: Introduction & Book of Signs

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. "Peculiarities of the Gospel of John" handout on BlackBoard
2. (optional) Perkins, ch. 15

Sept 22 John: The Word made Flesh
Lecture 6, Part 3: Book of Glory

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)
1. Study Guide 2

[Sept 24] [DUE: Extra Credit 4 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 7

Sept 27 Review and Test
Test 2: The Gospels, Mark, and John
IN CLASS

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)
1. Gospel of Matthew (please read the entire gospel at least once)
2. "Structure of Matthew and Luke-Acts" handout on BlackBoard
2. (optional) Perkins, ch. 13

PART THREE: GOSPELS 2 AND CHURCH HISTORY

Sept 29 Matthew: Son of David and Teacher
Lecture 7

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)
1. Gospel of Luke (please read the entire gospel at least once)
2. (optional) Perkins, ch. 14

DUE: A preliminary response to **Discussion Question 2** is due at 11:59 PM
assignment [for next meeting]: Matthew; (optional) Perkins, ch. 13

[Oct 1] [DUE: Extra Credit 5 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 8

Oct 4 Luke-Acts: Exodus to Empire
Lecture 8: Luke

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)
1. Book of Acts (please read the entire narrative at least once)
2. (optional) Perkins, ch. 16

[midterm grades due]

Oct 6 Luke-Acts: Transition from Peter to Paul
Lecture 9: Acts

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)

1. Study Guide 3

DUE: The **Discussion Question 2 Forum** closes at 11:59 PM

Week 9

Oct 11

Review and Test

**Test 3: Matthew and Luke-Acts
IN CLASS**

assignment [for next meeting]: required

1. 1 & 2 Thessalonians; Philippians; Galatians
2. (optional) Perkins [skim], chs 7-10

PART FOUR: PAULINE TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Oct 13

Paul's Life and Letters: 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Philippians
Lectures 10 & 11 & 12

assignment [for next meeting]: required

1. 1 & 2 Corinthians and Romans
2. (optional) Perkins [skim], chs 7-10

DUE: A preliminary response to **Discussion Question 3** is due at 11:59 PM

[Oct 15]

[DUE: Extra Credit 6 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 10

Oct 18

Galatians & 1 & 2 Corinthians
Lectures 13 & 14

assignment [for next meeting]: required

1. Romans and Philemon
2. (optional) Perkins [skim], chs 7-10

Oct 20

Romans and Philemon
Lecture 15

assignment [for next meeting]: required

1. [skim] Ephesians; Colossians; 1 & 2 Timothy; Titus
2. (optional) Perkins, chs. 11 and 18

DUE: The **Discussion Question 3 Forum** closes at 11:59 PM

[Oct 22]

[DUE: Extra Credit 7 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 11

Oct 25 Pauline Tradition
Lecture 16

assignment [for next meeting]: (required)
1. Study Guide 4

Oct 27 Review and Test
Test 4: Pauline Tradition
IN CLASS

assignment [for next meeting]: required
1. Hebrews and James
2. (optional) Perkins, chs. 17, 19

DUE: A preliminary response to **Discussion Question 4** is due at 11:59 PM

PART FIVE: LATER LETTERS AND REVELATION

Week 12 ONLINE via BlackBoard

Nov 1 Hebrews & James
Lecture 17, Part 1 [may be viewed at any time]

assignment [for next meeting]: required
1. [skim] 1 & 2 Peter; 1, 2 & 3 John; Jude
2. Revelation (please read the entire narrative at least once)
3. (optional) Perkins, ch. 19, 20, & 21

Nov 3 The Catholic Epistles and Revelation
Lecture 17, Part 2; Lecture 18, Part 1 [may be viewed at any time]

assignment [for next meeting]: required
1. Revelation (please read the entire narrative at least once)
2. "Structure of Revelation" handout on BlackBoard

DUE: The **Discussion Question 4 Forum** closes at 11:59 PM

MAKE UP TEST:

This Test is based on materials presented in Tests 1 through 4 and will be offered to anyone who has missed one (or more) of the first four tests.

Available online starting at 2:00 PM. Once started, you will have 30 minutes to complete the test. The test must be completed by 3:30 PM

Week 13

Nov 8 Revelation
Lecture 18, Part 2

Nov 10 Revelation
Lecture 18, Part 3
DUE: A preliminary response to **Discussion Question 5** is due at 11:59 PM

assignment [for next meeting]: required
1. Study Guide 5

[Nov 12] [DUE: Extra Credit 8 due at 11:59 PM]

Week 14

Nov 15 Review and Test via ZOOM and BlackBoard
Test 5: Hebrews, The Catholic Epistles, and Revelation
Available online starting at 3:30 PM. Must be completed by 11:59 PM

Nov 17 No Class

DUE: The **Discussion Question 5 Forum** closes at 11:59 PM

Week 15

Nov 22 No Class

DUE: **The "Final Exam Review Assignment"** is due at 11:59 PM

assignment [for next meeting]: required
1. Final Study Guide

Week 16 (Dead Week)

Nov 29 REVIEW

Dec 1 REVIEW & FAREWELL

*** Dec 6**

THE FINAL EXAM: 10:30 AM-12:30 PM

This comprehensive, multiple choice test will take place on Monday, December 6, starting at 10:30 AM. Please arrive on time and bring a pencil.

Notes on Assignments

1. All Extra Credit assignments are optional. They are due on designated Fridays as noted in the Course Schedule above. Submissions should be made as an entry on the appropriate Journals page accessible through the Tools Panel on Blackboard.
2. Test 5 (November 15) and Discussion Question 5 (November 10 and November 17) are technically optional, as only four Tests and four Discussion Questions are counted toward the Final Grade. If five tests are taken or if five Discussion Forums are contributed to, the four highest grades in each case will be applied toward the Final Grade.
3. All Discussion Questions are available on the Groups page accessible through the Tools Panel on Blackboard.
4. The "Final Exam Review Assignment" (due Monday, November 22—a day when there is no class meeting scheduled) is required. Submissions should be made as an entry on the appropriate Journals page accessible through the Tools Panel on Blackboard.

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. Tests 1-4 and the Final will take place in class. Test 5 will be available on BlackBoard.

To accommodate people who may have been stricken by the Delta variant of the coronavirus or other maladies, a Make-Up Test will be made available online during the scheduled class time, 2-3:15 PM, on Wednesday, November 3. This test will include material from throughout the semester as signaled in the Study Guides 1-4. As noted on page 3 of the syllabus, a total of five shorter multiple choice tests may be taken this semester and the four highest grades on these tests will count toward the final grade.

B. Discussion Board (due on Wednesdays)

Significant contributions to four topics on the electronic Discussion Board will constitute full participation in this exercise. Full participation includes a thoughtful response to the proposed Discussion Question as well as two interactions with one or more of the members of your group. Please refer to the etiquette guidelines on pages 3 and 4 of syllabus. Five questions will be advanced over the course of the semester. Of these, the four highest grades will count toward your final grade. The following structure will be applied to all Discussion Question Forums: You must submit your initial response to each Discussion Question one week before the Discussion closes. You may make later contributions to the discussion for partial credit, but your grade will be reduced by 10 points if you have not submitted an initial response by 11:59 PM on the Wednesday before the Discussion closes.

To put this in concrete terms:

- A preliminary response to Discussion Question 1 is due on September 8 at 11:59 PM; The Discussion Question 1 Forum will close at 11:59 PM on September 15.
- A preliminary response to Discussion Question 2 is due on September 29 at 11:59 PM; The Discussion Question 2 Forum will close at 11:59 PM on October 6.
- A preliminary response to Discussion Question 3 is due on October 13 at 11:59 PM; The Discussion Question 3 Forum will close at 11:59 PM on October 20.
- A preliminary response to Discussion Question 4 is due on October 27 at 11:59 PM; The Discussion Question 4 Forum will close at 11:59 PM on November 3.
- A preliminary response to Discussion Question 5 is due on November 10 at 11:59 PM; The Discussion Question 5 Forum will close at 11:59 PM on November 17.

C. Final Review Exercise

With the disruption of face-to-face engagements owing to the contagion, a final review assignment will constitute the class participation grade accounting for 5% (50 points) of the final grade (see item 3 under "Course Requirements" on page 3 of this syllabus). The assignment is posted on the Journals Page in Blackboard and is due at 11:59 PM on Monday, November 22.

D. Extra Credit (due on Fridays)

Eight assignments are offered throughout the semester and the seven highest scores will count toward the final grade (see item 5 under "Course Requirements" on page 3 of this syllabus). These assignments are posted on the Journals Page in Blackboard and are due at 11:59 PM on various Fridays throughout the semester.