

COURSE OUTLINE **New Testament**

Course Description

RG 190. New Testament. 3 hours credit. This course will enable the student to develop a critical perspective on the development of Christianity and its texts. To this end the student will examine the various factors that impacted Christianity's foundation and development through the 1st century CE. The student will apply resources and methods to biblical texts that increase comprehension both of the historical setting and the contemporary significance of those texts with an examination of how the religion functions in contemporary society.

Course Relevance

The academic, objective study of the New Testament provides the student the opportunity to develop his or her skills in the areas of critical thinking, historical interpretation and written communication, all of which enhance the student's skill in understanding the complex issues of contemporary life. This course is designed to provide the student with a foundation for the development of a mature, global perspective which entails the improvement of his or her cross-cultural awareness and a deeper understanding of current world events.

Required Materials – Traditional lecture and online

Harris, S. L. (2009). *The new testament: A student's introduction*. (6th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

Sader, T. (2006). *Reading for interpretation: A brief guide to critically understanding religious exposition*. Mason, Ohio: Thomson Custom Publishing.

Supplemental Materials

The choice of a particular translation of a New Testament book to be purchased/acquired by the student is left to the discretion of the individual instructor.

Learning Outcomes

The intention is for the student to be able to:

1. Develop an historical, critical perspective in the study of a world religion and its texts.
2. Develop an historical understanding of a world religion by analyzing the factors that impacted its foundation and development.
3. Apply resources and analytical methods to religious texts that increase comprehension both of their historical setting and of their contemporary significance.

Learning PACT Skills that will be DEVELOPED and/or documented in this course

Through the student's involvement in this course, he/she will develop his/her ability in the following PACT skill areas:

Analytical Thinking Skills

1. Critical thinking

- Through the production of a research paper, the student will exercise his/her skills in gathering, analyzing and integrating data and applying a scholarly method in the study of biblical texts.

Communication Skills

1. Creation and delivery of messages

- Through a variety of types of written work, the student will practice his/her writing skills, including his/her use of standard English wording and phrasing and his/her knowledge of standard English spelling and punctuation and grammar.

Technology Skills

1. General computer use

- Through the production of a major summative assessment task that requires that the text document be word processed and that the student make use of the internet to find information useful to his or her purposes, the student will use a computer to do research on his/her topic, to create a complete document, to make revisions in the document until it is in its final form and to produce a hard copy of the document to be turned in to the instructor.

Major Summative Assessment Task(s)

These learning outcomes and the Learning PACT skills will be demonstrated by

1. Preparation of a computer-generated (T skill) four to six page written (C skill), critical analysis of the historical, critical differences and similarities between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels (A skill) to be followed by a presentation, analysis and discussion of the student's thoughts on how the historical, critical approach influences his/her contemporary understanding of the New Testament.

Course Content

- I. Skills/Competencies – Actions that are essential to achieve the course outcomes:
 - A. Develop an historical, critical perspective on belief systems
 - B. Formulate an historical understanding of belief systems
 - C. Apply resources and analytical methods to texts that increase comprehension both of the historical setting and the contemporary significance of these texts
 - D. Discuss how beliefs function in contemporary society
 - E. Demonstrate his/her understanding of these issues in discussion and/or written work
- II. Themes – Key recurring concepts that run throughout this course:
 - A. The historically conditioned context of human life, including human thought and action
 1. The deeply historical nature of the New Testament and Christianity
 2. The historical development of the New Testament literature from its origins in the critically important early manuscripts to its final canonical form
 3. The crucial role played by significantly influential individuals, situated within their own historical context, on the development of New Testament literature and upon Christianity

- B. The suprahuman conditioning of the historical context of the human world in the above three forms
- III. Issues – Key areas of conflict that must be understood in order to achieve the intended outcome:
 - A. Personal interpretation versus varied interpretations of the New Testament
 - B. The belief in an historically conditioned versus a suprahuman conditioned
 - C. context of the human world
- IV. Concepts – Key concepts that must be understood to address the issues:
 - A. Biblical exegesis
 - B. Methods of research
 - C. Types of biblical interpretation/analysis

Learning Units

- I. Three methods of research concerning the canonical gospels
 - A. Literary criticism
 - B. Historical criticism
 - C. Theological analysis
- II. Factors influencing the foundation and development of Christianity
 - A. Philosophical ideas in that geographical environment
 - B. Religious ideas and practices in that geographical environment
 - C. Political ideas and practices in that geographical environment
- III. Factors influencing early Christianity's transition from a system that had developed from within Judaism into an independent religion
 - A. Practices within early Christianity
 - B. Experiences within early Christianity
 - C. Issues and ideas within early Christianity
- IV. Significant aspects of the life of Jesus
 - A. The early years of Jesus' life
 - B. His baptism, temptation and public ministry
 - C. The last week of his life, including his arrest, trial and crucifixion
 - D. The resurrection and ascension
- V. Significant aspects of the teachings of Jesus
 - A. The various forms of Jesus' teaching
 - B. His teachings concerning himself
 - C. His teachings concerning man's duties and relationships, including his relationship to God and his relationship to other men
- VI. The expansion of Christianity from Palestine to areas of Africa, Asia-Minor and Europe
 - A. Reasons/explanations for the expansion
 - B. Methods of expansion

- VI. Issues related to the production of the early manuscripts
 - A. The materials and the format of the ancient books
 - B. The transcribing of the manuscripts
 - C. Important early manuscripts of the New Testament

- VII. The formation of the canon of the New Testament
 - A. The process of the canonization of the New Testament literature from its
 - B. Differences between the canons of the Western church, the Eastern church and the Syrian church
 - C. The criterion for the acceptance of particular writings as sacred

- IX. The principal and distinguishing features of Christianity
 - A. Its major customs, beliefs and practices
 - B. Their function in contemporary society

Learning Activities

Independent and collaborative learning activities will be assigned to assist the student to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Learning activities will be geared toward practices that will be useful not only in the comprehension and critical analysis of assigned class readings but also in the analysis of other types of written communications. The learning activities will emphasize the importance of good writing skills which is a benefit to students both inside the classroom and outside the college classroom in a variety of situations. Examples of activities which contribute to the learning process include: instructor lectures, class discussions, panel discussions, audio-visual aids, films followed by group discussion, guest speakers, daily exercises, reading assignments, handouts, study guides, field trips and individual conferences with the instructor. Other activities include: tests, both essay and objective (including quizzes, chapter or unit tests and comprehensive examinations), writing assignments (both inside and outside of class), research papers, student projects, student presentations, attendance and class participation. These methods and other methods deemed suitable may be used individually or in combination by all instructors.

Online course instruction is based on the use of the computer as a distance learning/communication tool. This course also may include other avenues to student learning as deemed suitable by the instructor.

Grade Determination

The student will be graded on assessment tasks as well as additional learning activities employed at the discretion of the individual instructor.