

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
BNT 530 New Testament Introduction

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COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introduction to the content and background of the New Testament, including the critical issues involved in the discipline of New Testament Introduction.

OBJECTIVES

At the successful completion of this course the student should be able to:

Knowledge

1. Outline and describe key events in political history of Judaism in the Hellenistic Period
2. Describe and discuss the basic social structures that permeated the world of the New Testament.
3. Identify and describe the various forms of Judaism in Palestine and in the Diaspora including their beliefs and practices.
4. Discuss the major religions and intellectual movements of the Hellenistic-Roman World at the time of the New Testament.
5. Identify and describe the various methods/approaches to New Testament interpretation, their goals, presuppositions and general practice.
6. List and discuss the major interpretive and introductory issues pertaining to the major portions of the New Testament: Synoptic Gospels, Luke-Acts, John's Gospel, The Pauline Corpus, Hebrews, The General Epistles and Revelation.

Skills

1. Integrate the New Testament events and writings into the broader cultural-historical matrix of the era.
2. Analyze and evaluate the impact of Judaism and Hellenism on the language and culture of the Early Church as expressed and revealed in the literature of the New Testament.
3. Critique and evaluate the various methods of New Testament interpretation assessing both their positive contributions and limitations for New Testament exegesis.

Attitudes

1. Appreciate the rich diversity of the New Testament in regard to literary genre, historical setting, and theological perspective.

2. Acknowledge that the writings of the New Testament stand in both continuity and contrast to many cultural-historical elements in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world.
3. Recognize that critical methods of New Testament interpretation are not autonomous, nor self-directing, but should operate within presuppositional parameters consistent with clear biblical teaching.

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005 rev.ed.

Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. 3rd edition Grand Rapids: William. B. Eerdmans, 1987.

Hernando, James D. *Dictionary of Hermeneutics: A Concise Guide to Terms, Names, Methods and Expressions*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005. (It should be very helpful. It contains many terms related to NT background, introduction and interpretation, especially in Chapter 6.)

Strobel, Lee. *A Case For Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 2000.

Recommended:

Bell, Albert A. Jr. *Exploring the New Testament World: An Illustrated Guide to the World of the Jesus and the First Christians*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.

Carson, D.A., Moo, D., and Morris, L. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Gundry, Robert. *A Survey of the New Testament*. 4th edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*. 4th rev. ed. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1970, 1990.

Hernando, James D. *Dictionary of Hermeneutics: A Concise Guide to Terms, Names, Methods and Expressions*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2005. (It should be very helpful. It contains many terms related to NT introduction and interpretation, especially in chapter 6.)

BASIC OUTLINE

I. The World of the New Testament

- A. Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World
- B. Historical Survey
- C. Social and Cultural Survey
- D. Religious Survey

II. The Methods of New Testament Interpretation

- A. The New Testament and the Historical Critical Method - Historical Sketch

- B. Introducing and Evaluating Interpretative Methods or Types of Criticisms
 - 1. Textual Criticism
 - 2. Literary-Source Criticism
 - 3. Form Criticism
 - 4. Redaction Criticism
 - 5. Types of Literary Criticism

- III. The Literature of the New Testament: Introducing the New Testament Itself and Attendent Introductory Issues
 - A. The Synoptic Gospels
 - B. Luke-Acts
 - C. John's Gospel and Epistles
 - D. The Pauline Corpus
 - E. The Epistle to the Hebrews
 - F. The General Epistles - James, 1-2 Peter, Jude
 - G. Revelation
 - H. New Testament Apocrypha and the Question of the New Testament Canon

METHODOLOGY

In this course we will seek to meet our objectives through:

1. Classroom lecture
2. Guided classroom discussion of issues related to assigned reading, lectures and class assignments.
3. Individual reading, research and writing assignments

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance** at all class sessions is expected.¹ Excessive absenteeism is defined by the AGTS catalog and may result in a grade reduction.²
2. Completion of the **assigned reading** in the course textbooks and on the Student Portal.³
3. A **critical book review** of Lee Strobel's *A Case For Jesus*, plus written responses on the selected **reflection questions**.
4. **Research Essays:** (3) 3- 6 page essays on (*See handout*)
 - a. Some problem/ question related to the cultural/historical background of the NT. (E.g., Paul and Stoicism; Was John the Baptist an Essene? Was Jesus a Zealot?)
 - b. Some problem/question related to the critical introduction to the NT (Eg., Did Paul write the Pastoral Epistles? (or some other disputed Pauline letter)

¹ Whenever possible, absences should be announced beforehand to the professor.

² Because of the compressed nature of the course, only one class absence is allowed before it adversely affects your course grade.

³ In that this is the first time a compressed format has been used for BNT 530, the Student Portal material will become an important way to supplement class lecture.

- b. Some problem/question related to the literature/books of the NT. (E.g., Did James and Paul disagree over justification by faith?)

5. Final Exam

Note: *Work turned late without the prior permission of the professor will receive a grade reduction of 1/2 letter grade for every day late.*

CHAPEL ATTENDANCE

Students are encouraged to attend chapel services whenever they are on campus and their schedules allow. This semester the community chapel service falls on one class date – **April 7 at 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.** Students should come to class at the regularly appointed class time of **7:30 a.m.** and we will dismiss class to attend chapel.

GRADING PROCEDURE

1. Grade Weights:

a. <i>Reading - Essay Project</i>	<i>points</i>	"	<i>%</i>
Critical Book Review	100	"	= 10%
Reflection Questions	100	"	= 10%
b. <i>Research Essays (3)</i>	300	"	= 30%
Project Description Paper			
<i>OR</i>			
Historical Backgrounds Project			
<i>OR</i>			
Glossary Project			
c. <i>Required Readings</i>	100	"	= 10%
d. <i>Class participation *</i>	100	"	= 10%
f. <i>Final Exam</i>	300	"	= 30%

2. The total number of possible points to be earned in the semester is 1000. Point totals at the end of the semester are tabulated and a grading curve plotted relative to the collective grade profile of the class.

* *In addition to class attendance students are expected to have read the required reading in the texts for each class session and to show evidence of class preparation by actively participating in classroom discussion and asking appropriate questions.*

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Charlesworth, James H., ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. New York: Doubleday, 1983.

Hennecke, E. *New Testament Apocrypha*. 2nd ed. Edited by W. Schneemelcher. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.

Josephus. *The Complete Works of Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987.

New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha. Edited by B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Secondary Sources:

Aune, David E. *The New Testament and Its Literary Environment*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987.

Barker, Glenn W., Lane, William L., and Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The New Testament Speaks*. NY: Harper and Row, 1969.

Barrett, C. K. *New Testament Background: Selected Documents*. NY: Harper and Row, 1956.

Black, D.A., and D.S. Dockery eds. *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991. (out of print, but worth having)

Bruce, F. F. *New Testament History*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1972.

Cadbury, H. J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. 2nd ed. London: SPCK, 1958, 1968.

Carson, D. A., and Woodbridge, John D. eds. *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon*. Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1986.

Cartlidge, David R., and Dungan, David L. *Documents for the Study of the Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.

Daube, David. *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*. London: Arno Press, 1956.

Davies, W. D. *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. Cambridge: University Press, 1963

Epp, Eldon Jay, and MacRae, George W. eds. *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989.

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Gerhardsson, Birger. *The Origins of the Gospel Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

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_____. *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*. Translated by S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970.

LaSor, W. S. *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

Lohse, Edward. *The First Christians: Their Beginnings, Writings, and Beliefs*. Translated by M. Eugene Boring. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

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Malherbe, Abraham. *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

Marshall, I. Howard ed. *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.

Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

- Metzger, Bruce M. *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth and Content*. 2nd edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983.
- Murphy, Frederick J. *The Religious World of Jesus: An Introduction to Second Temple Palestinian Judaism*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.
- Nash, Ronald. *Christianity and the Hellenistic World*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984.
- Neill, Stephen, and Wright, Tom. *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*. 2nd ed. Oxford: The University Press, 1988.
- Niswonger, Richard L. *New Testament History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.
- Nock, A. D. *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background*. NY: Harper and Row, 1964.
- Paoli, E. A. *Rome, Its People Life and Customs*. London: Longman, 1963.
- Sanders, E. P. *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Schürer, Emil. *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135)*. Vols. 1-8. Revised and edited by G. Vermes and F. Millar. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973-1987.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. Oxford: University Press, 1963.
- Soulen, Richard, N. and Kendall R. Soulen. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. Atlanta, John Knox Press, 3rd Edition, 2001.
- Stein, Robert H. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
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- Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965.
- Vermes, Geza. *Jesus The Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*. London: Collins, 1976.

SPECIFIC DATA

Prepared by James D. Hernando, Ph. D., April 1, 2009