REL 103, Sec. B: Intro to the New Testament

Spring 2017 T/Th 6:00-7:50 PM, Rankin Hall 209

Dr. Nathan Thiel
nwthiel@carrollu.edu
Office Hours: Tues. 4:30-5:30 at the Second Cup (library coffee shop) and by appointment

Course Description

From the course catalogue: General Education P1. An introduction to the history, literature, and interpretation of the New Testament. The course includes the study of the Jewish and Greco-Roman historical backgrounds of Jesus and the earliest church and the use of historical, sociological, and literary methods to examine the New Testament writings. (FA, SP)

The New Testament is read today by millions as a foundation for their religious belief and practice, but its writings are also the products of a time and place very different from our own. This class introduces students to the New Testament within its historical and cultural context and explores its tensions: at the same time familiar and foreign, particular and universal, unified and diverse. Through the course of the semester students will read representative portions of the New Testament with an eye to the different streams of early Christian tradition that have come to make up this influential body of literature.

Course Objectives

This course aims to:

- Familiarize students with the content of the New Testament both as a product of its time and place and as a touchstone of Christian thought and spirituality to the present.
- Trace patterns of similarity and difference among the writings of the New Testament in relation to Christology, ecclesiology, and other key loci of Christian theology.
- Equip students with a socio-historical framework and analytical tools to make critical judgments about matters pertaining to the interpretation of the New Testament.
Within the Religious Studies Program and as part of the Pioneer Core, this course aims to:

- Situate the expression of religious belief found in the New Testament within broader patterns of human religiosity, while respecting the distinctive features of these early Christian writings.
- Explore the New Testament as itself embodying a multiplicity of religious and ethical perspectives within its own cultural frame of reference.
- Present the New Testament as a body of literature which may be studied from a variety of methodological perspectives, historically, sociologically, theologically, etc.

**Student Learning Outcomes for This Course**

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

- Identify the principle divisions of the New Testament canon and outline the main content of a representative selection of its writings.
- Identify and distinguish between streams of tradition within the New Testament.
- Make a reasoned argument pertaining to the interpretation of the New Testament and/or the religious self-understanding of its various authors.
- Relate the beliefs and practices of the early Christians to other manifestations of human religious experience.

**Required Texts**


This text is available for purchase at the bookstore.

Each student will also need a Bible in a modern English translation (NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV, etc.). If you are unsure whether a given translation is appropriate for this course, please consult with me. Many translations are also available online or through various Bible apps.

Any other assigned readings will be provided to you through eLearning.

**Assignments and Grading Scale**

The grade for the course will be calculated as follows:
Exam 1 — 20%
Exam 2 — 20%
Final Exam — 25%
Paper — 25%
Reading Responses — 10%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B</td>
<td>88-92.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82-87.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/C</td>
<td>77-81.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-76.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no separate grade for participation, but strong in-class work, including participation in discussions and completion of in-class exercises, can earn a student up to a 2% increase in the final grade.

Reading Responses

There will be eighteen reading responses over the course of the semester. These will consist of three to four questions about the basic content of the readings and their relation to one another. Questions should be answered in three sentences or less and will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Passing responses will demonstrate that the student has read the material and engaged its central themes or argument. All reading responses will be posted on eLearning along with the reading assigned for that class and are to be uploaded to eLearning at least one hour before class time that day. Two responses may be missed without penalty.

Exams

There will be three exams (two during the course of the semester and a final) which will consist of multiple choice, identification, and short answer questions. The final will include material from the whole course but will be weighted toward material covered since the first exam.

Papers

There will be one paper of approximately four to six pages in which students will respond to a given prompt relating to the interpretation of the New Testament, its theology, or its relation to other forms of religious expression. Both drafts of the paper may be turned in within a one week window as indicated on the course schedule below. Because this window functions in effect like a grace period, no late papers will be accepted, excepting major personal emergencies. Further details about the formatting and expectations of this paper will be given during the course of the semester.

Class Policies
Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. You may miss three classes without penalty. If you miss four classes, your grade may be lowered four points for each missed class after three. If you miss eight classes, you may receive a failing grade. No distinction is made between an “excused absence” and an “unexcused absence.” If you are not present for class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed by contacting one of your classmates or the instructor and to complete any assigned work on time.

In the event that a student misses extended time because of a personal or family emergency, illness, or similar circumstance, he or she must notify me about the absences as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements may be made.

Academic Honesty

This course will follow the official Carroll policy on academic integrity. The Carroll University Academic Integrity Policy is located in your student handbook (https://my.carrollu.edu/ICS/Departments/Student_Affairs). I encourage you to familiarize yourself with it. If a student violates this policy in any way, I reserve the right to impose a sanction of failure on the assignment/assessment or failure in the course. If you have questions about appropriate citations, please ask.

Late Work

If some emergency arises which makes compliance with the due date policies spelled out in the syllabus impossible in a given instance, the student must discuss the situation in advance with me and work out some alternative.

Otherwise, completion of all written and reading assignments is required by the class they are due. Late assignments will not be accepted, excepting major personal emergencies.

Technology

The use of smart phones, iPads, laptops, and other devices is permitted for class purposes unless I request that they be silenced/put away during specified times.

Students with Special Needs

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, or any student considering obtaining documentation should make an appointment with Ms. Martha
Bledsoe, Director of Services for Students with Disabilities, no later than the first week of class. She can be reached by calling 262-524-7335 or contacting her via email at mbledsoe@carrollu.edu.

If during the semester special needs develop for you because of illness, injury, family death or similar emergency, please notify me as soon as possible so special arrangements can be made to provide the assistance you need.

**Some Additional Resources**

Students are encouraged to make use of Carroll’s academic and personal resources.

Appointments for the Writing Center in the Learning Commons (lower level of the library) can be made online at [https://www.carrollu.edu/learningcommons/writingcenter.asp?nav=5790](https://www.carrollu.edu/learningcommons/writingcenter.asp?nav=5790).

Should the need arise, counseling services are available at the Walter Young Center located next to the Campus Center parking lot on Wright Street.

   Phone: 262-524-7335
   Email: wyc@carrollu.edu

**Course Schedule**

The course calendar and assigned readings are also provided on eLearning. All readings are to be completed before class on the day assigned.

Due dates for assignments are listed underneath the readings for that day.

**Week 1**


✓ No reading

**Unit 1: Jesus and His Message**


✓ Powell, 15-27, 41-45

**Week 2**
Tues. 1/31: What Are the Gospels? / The Gospel according to Mark Part 1
✓ Powell, 81-92, 125-133
✓ Mark 1-8
✓ Reading Response 1

Thurs. 2/2: The Gospel according to Mark Part 2
✓ Mark 9-16
✓ Reading Response 2

**Week 3**

Tues. 2/7: Matthew and Luke / The Synoptic Problem
✓ Powell, 103-113, 147-157
✓ Matthew 1-2 and 5-7
✓ Luke 1-2 and 6:12-6:49
✓ Reading Response 3

Thurs. 2/9: The Gospel according to John Part 1
✓ Powell, 169-181
✓ John 1-12
✓ Reading Response 4

**Week 4**

Tues. 2/14: The Gospel according to John Part 2
✓ John 13-21
✓ Reading Response 5

Thurs. 2/16: The Historical Jesus / Portrayals of Jesus in Art and Film 1
✓ No reading

**Week 5**

Tues. 2/21: Portrayals of Jesus in Art and Film Part 2 / Exam Review
✓ No reading

Thurs. 2/23: Exam 1

**Week 6**

**Unit 2: The Spread of Christianity**
Tues. 2/28: The Birth of the Church

- Powell, 191-200
- Acts 1-3, 9-11, 13-15
- Reading Response 6

Thurs. 3/2: The Gentile Mission: Expansion and Conflict

- Acts 16-19, 21-23, 27-28
- Reading Response 7

**Week 7**

Tues. 3/7: Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles/ New Testament Letters

- Powell, 215-222
- 1 Thessalonians
- Reading Response 8

Thurs. 3/9: Paul among the Churches: Christian Living and Controversy Part 1

- Powell, 307-311
- Galatians
- Reading Response 9

**Week 8**

Tues. 3/14: Spring Break- No Class

Thurs. 3/16: Spring Break-No Class

**Week 9**

Tues. 3/21: Paul among the Churches: Christian Living and Controversy Part 2

- Powell, 273-283
- 1 Corinthians 1-3, 5-6, 12-16
- Reading Response 10

Thurs. 3/23: The Theology of the Apostle Paul Part 1

- Powell, 255-262
- Romans 1-8
- Reading Response 11

**Week 10**

Tues. 3/28: The Theology of the Apostle Paul Part 2
✓ Romans 9-16
✓ Reading Response 12

Thurs. 3/30: Paul’s Legacy Part 1: The Deutero-Paulines
✓ Powell, 222-228, 397-409
✓ 1 Timothy
✓ Reading Response 13

Week 11

Tues. 4/4: Paul’s Legacy Part 2: James/ Exam Review
✓ Powell, 445-451
✓ James
✓ Reading Response 14

Thurs. 4/6: Exam 2

Week 12

Unit 3: Christians in a Non-Christian World

Tues. 4/11: Strangers in a Hostile World
✓ Powell, 463-469
✓ 1 Peter
✓ Reading Response 15
✓ Paper Rough Draft Due 4/11-4/18

Thurs. 4/13: Christians and Empire Part 1
✓ Powell, 519-526
✓ Revelation 1-10
✓ Reading Response 16

Week 13

Tues. 4/18: Christians and Empire Part 2
✓ Revelation 11-22
✓ Reading Response 17
✓ Paper Rough Draft Due 4/11-4/18

Thurs. 4/20: Apocalypticism in the Modern Imagination
✓ No reading
**Week 14**


✓ Powell, 415-425
✓ Philemon
✓ Reading Response 18
✓ Paper Final Draft Due 4/25-5/2

Thurs. 4/27: Christianity at the Beginning of the Second Century/ The New Testament in Retrospect 1

✓ No reading

**Week 15**

Tues. 5/2: The New Testament in Retrospect Part 2/ Exam Review

✓ No reading
✓ Paper Final Draft Due 4/25-5/2

**Final Exam: Thurs. 5/4, 6-8 PM**

N.B.: The Instructor and the University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as the curriculum and/or program requires.