



BIBL 5240 The New Testament Texts and Their World

Spring Semester 2021, Tuesdays, Thursdays, 9:30am–10:45am Location: TBD

Instructor: Dennis R. Edwards, Associate Professor of New Testament

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 1:00pm–4:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the interpretation, context, and content of the New Testament. Attention is given to the nature of the New Testament as Scripture and to fundamental hermeneutical issues, with a focus on historical criticism as a basis for theological interpretation. The political, social, and religious worlds of Second Temple Judaism and of Greco-Roman society are described as a framework for studying Matthew through Revelation. The content of selected books from each of the genres and historical phases of the New Testament is examined, and important theological themes running across the canon are introduced (e.g. Christology, eschatology). Particular emphasis is placed on engagement with texts in their historical contexts and the development of basic exegetical skills.

COURSE AIM

To introduce students to the study of the New Testament texts, equipping them to begin to interpret these texts in a manner informed by history, theology, and hermeneutics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the class, students will be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge of the New Testament texts in such matters as their genres, historical origins, general content and literary relationships to each other;
2. explain the significance of the world of the New Testament (historical, social, cultural, and religious contexts) for the interpretation of its texts;
3. do exegesis of selected passages from New Testament texts in an informed way in the light of critical discussion relating to them;
4. explain and illustrate the hermeneutical challenges involved in interpreting the New Testament texts for Christian discipleship and ministry today.

CONTENT

The class includes:

1. consideration of foundational hermeneutical issues connected to the interpretation of New Testament texts;
2. an introduction to the history and nature of Second Temple Judaism;

3. a survey of the Gospels, including their origins, genre, literary relationships, and four-fold witness to the life and ministry of Jesus;
4. an introduction to the nature of Graeco-Roman culture, especially its political, social, and religious structures;
5. an introduction to the history of early Christian mission, with a focus on the book of Acts and the life and ministry of Paul;
6. a survey of the Catholic Epistles and the book of Revelation, including their origins, genre, and literary relationships;
7. a study in English of selected passages from New Testament texts informed by the learning envisaged in content points 1-6.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. A modern translation of the Bible such as these: [*The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*](#) (revised edition; New York: OUP, 2010) or [*The Harper Collins Study Bible with Apocrypha*](#). These are study editions of the NRSV. Other contemporary versions are acceptable, but please do not use a paraphrased translation (e.g. New Living Bible) or an idiomatic/colloquial one (e.g. Eugene Peterson's *The Message*). As helpful as they are in the right context, a more literal translation of the Greek texts is necessary for this class (the NRSV tends to be preferred by scholars).
2. Bruce Longenecker, [*The Lost Letters of Pergamum*](#) (2nd Edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). ISBN: 978-0801097966. This is a novel written by a leading New Testament scholar. Although it is fictional, the setting of the story and the concerns of the characters accurately reflect the cultural context of early Christianity.
3. David A. deSilva. [*An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*](#). InterVarsity Press, 2018. ISBN13: 978-0830852178.
4. Gench, Frances Taylor. [*Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels*](#). Louisville: WJK, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-664-22715-9.

ASSESSMENTS

1. Read and review Bruce Longenecker's novel, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016). Your review should concentrate on what you have learned from reading the book about the cultural context of early Christianity, but you may also offer a critique of the book. This is to say, do not rehash the plot, but spend about 80% of your review on details of cultural context and about 20% on your critique of the book. The review should be 1000 words in length and is due by midnight on _____
2. There will be four content quizzes (25 points each) that cover issues covered in class as well as in required reading. These quizzes will be **open book** and taken on Canvas. N.B. Even though the quizzes are open book, you will not have an unlimited time to take them! (I will likely set the quizzes for 45 minutes on Canvas). It is to your benefit to do the reading according to the class schedule. The questions will be multiple choice, T/F, or short answer. Quizzes are due by midnight on _____
3. A paper of 1500 words evaluating the approach of Frances Gench in *Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels*. Gench claims to engage the NT with

“a feminist consciousness” (p. xii). Your evaluation of Gench should address issues such as:

- a) Social location of readers (what is it? Is it important?)
- b) Is there validity in a feminist reading of Scripture?
- c) Do you see problems or pitfalls with Gench’s approach?
- d) Focus in on one of the encounters she interprets. What stands out to you from Gench’s analysis? Did you learn anything? Did anything make you uncomfortable? How so? Did anything especially encourage you? How so?

The paper is due by midnight, _____.

4. An exegesis paper exploring one of the texts listed below. There will be three stages to this paper, which will culminate in the production of your own analysis of the text. The aim of the exercise is to increase your understanding of, and skill in, the process of interpretation. A separate handout detailing how you are to approach each stage of the task will be posted on Canvas. **Stage 1** is due midnight _____, **stage 2** is due by midnight on _____. The complete paper is due by midnight _____.

 - a) Texts to TBD

5. The grade for class participation will be based upon (i) attendance, assigned group discussion, and voluntary participation throughout the semester, and (ii) the reading contract. The reading contract is due on the last day of class. A form will be available on Canvas for you to catalogue your reading.

 - a) Most reading is from required texts or available online using the ATLA Religion Database, or found in the Reference section of the Brandel Library.
 - b) *The Dictionary of New Testament Background* and *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* are both available as e-books through the Brandel Library. On the library website see under “Research Guides” then “Seminary,” then under [“Online Resources for Biblical and Theological Studies.”](#)
 - c) All other reading is uploaded in Canvas.

GRADING

Longenecker Book Review	20%
Quizzes	20%
Gench Analysis	20%
Exegesis Paper	30%
Class Participation	10%

A	93-100	C+	77-79	D-	60-62
A-	90-92	C	73-76	F	0-59
B+	87-89	C-	70-72		
B	83-86	D+	67-69		
B-	80-82	D	63-66		

ATTENDANCE

If you experience difficulties, please speak to the instructor about it. Illness and other unforeseen circumstances beyond your control will be regarded sympathetically, but poor planning on your part is not a good excuse. Poor attendance without good reason will affect

your class participation grade. The same principles apply to requests for extensions for reports and papers. Late submission without good reason will result in grade reduction.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism - the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another's answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), pp. 25-27.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact their program's office (773-244-5619) as soon as possible to ensure accommodations are implemented in a timely manner. For further information, see [Seminary Catalog](#), p. 17 and "[Disability Resources](#)" provided through North Park's Office of Student Enrichment Services and Support.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-5565) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5599) for information about campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling services. As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty are legally obligated to share information with the University's Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. Please refer to North Park's [Safe Community site](#) for contact information and further details.

CLASS SCHEDULE

TBD

- Paper due midnight, May 8th