SCR 5141: New Testament Foundations

# Course Syllabus, Fall 2025

# Instructor

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# Course Description

This course is a general discussion of the New Testament from multiple perspectives—theological and historical-critical. We will begin with the political, social and religious background the New Testament, then look at the themes of each book of the New Testament, focusing on the historical context in which each book was written and functioned in early Christian communities. We will examine such historical critical issues such as the synoptic problem, the quest for the historical Jesus, the historicity of Paul’s letters, and minority voices that did not make it into the canon. Along the way, students will gain experience in exegesis of scriptural texts.

This course is taught as a flipped classroom, with classes conducted both in-person and on Zoom. This means that students do the readings and view the recorded lectures before class, and then come to class prepared to discuss the issues that they raise. Especially, students need to read the text of the Bible itself as a foundation for understanding everything in the lectures.

The recorded lectures include my own lectures, but also recorded lectures by Prof. Dale Martin of Yale University, a respected New Testament scholar, and Dr. Henry Abramson of Truro University, who provides a Jewish perspective. Their different perspectives exemplify the many ways that one can read the New Testament that are different from traditional Sunday school learning. It is my hope that even if you have grown up with the Bible in your church life, and its words are very familiar to you, you will come away from this course seeing the Bible with new eyes.

We will conclude the course by studying Rev. Moon’s comprehensive teaching about Jesus in *Wolli Wonbon.*

# Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Biblical knowledge:** Discuss the basic content and key issues of each book of the New Testament
2. **Theological reflection:** Explain the meaning(s) of the text and relate them to the student’s own theology and life of faith
3. **Exegesis:** Demonstrate a beginner’s competence in exegesis of biblical texts
4. **Historical knowledge:** Explain authorship, political, social and religious context, and salient issues for the books of the New Testament; discuss the New Testament as a source for understanding history and development of early Christianity.
5. **Hermeneutical knowledge:** Utilize historical-critical methods of biblical study, understand their benefits and limitations, and distinguish between critical and faith-based hermeneutics in biblical scholarship

# Textbooks

* Johnson, Luke Timothy, *The Writings of the New Testament: an Interpretation*, 3rd. ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0800663612 $42.89 Kindle e-book format $5.99 [LTJ]
* Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings.* 7th edition. Oxford, 2019. ISBN-13: 9780-19090-9000. Used, $40. [BE]

You can choose either Johnson or Ehrman. Johnson is more suited to practical ministry, while Ehrman goes deeper into historical issues.

* The Bible. Please use one of the following translations: NRSV, NIV, KJV, NKJV or RSV. A good study bible with ample notes and cross-references can be an invaluable investment.

# Course Requirements

This class operates as a “flipped classroom.” Students will complete the readings and view the videos prior to class, and thus be prepared to discuss the content in the weekly classroom discussions conducted on Zoom. Video links and links to supplementary readings can be accessed in Populi under the Lessons tab.

**Readings:** Students will read the material assigned in the Lessons on Populi prior to class. Lessons will be opened on Wednesday of the week prior to class, to give students plenty of time to complete the readings. Especially, complete the readings from the book(s) of the Bible assigned for the week.

**Class presentation:** One student each week will be chosen to present an exegesis of a passage of from one to several verses long, selected from the book(s) of the New Testament assigned for the week. These class presentations should include three points: (1) historical background of the passage, (2) its meaning to the author and his audience in the primitive church, and (3) its theological meaning for today’s believers. The presentations should be 10 minutes long.

**Exegesis papers:** Students will write two exegetical papers: The first on a passage selected from the Gospels is due on October 17, the second on a passage from the Epistles isdue on November 14. Each paper should be 2,500 words. *See the instructions below.*

**Term Paper:** Students will write a term paper due on December 18.

# Evaluation

Attendance and class participation: 10%

Class presentation: 10%

Small assignments: 15%

Exegesis papers: 40%

Term paper: 25%

Grades for each assignment are recorded by letter, and are understood as follows:

A Excellent

B Good

C Acceptable

D Below expectations

F Failure

Failure to submit an assignment will result in an F for that assignment.

In calculating the final grade for the course, letter grades for assignments are converted into the following numerical equivalents, and the total is then converted back to a letter grade:

A 97 A- 91.5 B+ 87 B 82 B- 77 C+ 72.5

C 67.5 C- 62.5 D+ 57.5 D 53 D- 50 F 0

This scale severely penalizes Fs. Therefore, it is better to hand in a poorly done assignment than not to hand one in at all.

There will be no Incompletes given for this course, except as authorized by the Academic Dean.

# Instructions for Exegesis Papers

* Select a passage for your exegesis. The first paper is from the Gospels; the second is from the Epistles. Limit the passage to a small size (4-10 verses), using the commentaries to determine a suitable beginning and ending point.

You will find it more rewarding to select a passage that I did not lecture about. If you choose a passage which I discussed, I will expect more from your paper than just a rehash of what I said.

I strongly recommend contacting the instructor to discuss your choice of the passage for your paper.

* The exegesis should include: (1) historical background and the origin of the passage, (2) its meaning to the author and his audience in the primitive church, and (3) its theological meaning and application in the life of today’s believers.

Exegesis is the foundation for homiletics, that is, for good preaching. Make the text speak to us, with a meaning that is relevant to our time and place. Nevertheless, the historical context can be crucial for elucidating the meaning for today, because knowledge of a text’s origin and original purpose opens doors to appreciating the text in its own light.

Try not to stray into peripheral matters that are not supported from within the passage that you have chosen.

* Consult 2 or 3 commentaries to learn more about the passage. One of your commentaries should be a **modern commentary** that can give you information about historical context. Typically, the older commentaries do not provide that information but limit themselves to a theological viewpoint.
* Study how your church and other churches interpret the passage. Also consider that other churches may find meanings that your church overlooks. Unificationists may consider Rev. Moon’s teachings, but not to the exclusion of other interpretations.
* Dig deep**—**consider the specific meanings that can be drawn from the individual verses, even individual words
* *The exegesis paper should be 6-10 pages long.*

The paper will be graded according to the following GRADING RUBRIC:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Elements** | **Novice** | **Progressing** | **Mastered** | **Exceptional** |
| **Theme**  **(5 points)** | Theme not clearly stated anywhere | Some elements are stated, but no focus and the paper wanders away from it | Theme stated at the opening with connections throughout the paper | Clear statement of the theme in opening that is focused and carried through to the end |
| **Historical context**  **(20 points)** | Absent or mistaken. | A general statement of the writer’s life and times | A specific description of the situation or persons addressed in the passage | A specific description of the situation or persons addressed in the passage, well researched. |
| **Literary context  (5 points)** | Absent | Connects the passage to the theme of the book | Specifies how the passage fits within the book’s theme and literary structure; identifies the form | Specifies how the passage fits within the book’s theme and literary structure; discusses the form |
| **Verse-by-verse exegesis**  **(30 points)** | Verses are not treated separately, or only with a sentence | Summary statements of each verse, but miss some important issues in particular verses | Identifies the meaning of each verse and discusses issues around that verse | Draws out the meanings of each verse with detail. Treats issues specific to each verse, including textual issues, connections to other parts of the Bible, etc. |
| **Application**  **(15 points)** | Little or no attention to theological application to today’s world | Theological reflection hangs in the air; does not draw upon historical or scriptural context | Theological reflection at the conclusion of the paper that flows from the exegesis of specific verses | Theological reflection at the conclusion of the paper that flows from the exegesis of specific verses and also draws upon the historical context |
| **Research**  **(15 points)** | Paper does not show that commentaries were consulted | Consulted commen­taries, but not a modern commentary. Gaps in knowledge needed for the assignment (e.g. historical context.) Incomplete citations | Consulted at least two commentaries, one modern; utilized this information well; full citations | Consulted more than two sources, utilized the information well, and cited them with correct references using Turabian style of footnoting |
| **Writing**  **(10 points)** | Weaknesses in (1) grammar, (2) vocabulary and spelling, (3) paragraphing and organization | Deficient in one of these areas | Good writing appropriate to academic work | Exceptional command of academic English |

# Term Paper

The term paper can be on a topic of the student’s choice. Students are invited to discuss their topic with the instructor by email. Topics are due before the Thanksgiving break.

The grading rubric for the term paper, while not including the elements specific to exegesis, will likewise have the following point values for Application (15 pts), Research (25 pts) and Writing (10 pts). Note the importance of doing extensive research for the term paper. It should show evidence that you have consulted multiple sources and each source is properly cited. Use the Turabian style of citation.

# Academic Integrity

Each student's work is expected to be a product of his or her own effort. Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty that occurs when a student passes off someone else's work as their own. Plagiarism in its most severe form occurs when a student purchases a paper from a third party, or submits an entire body of work written by a third party, as the student’s own. These most serious cases can be reported to the Office of the Provost for disciplinary action. Possible actions include probation, suspension, or dismissal/ separation from HJI.

Cutting and pasting material from various websites without citing the source of said material also constitutes plagiarism, as is a failure to cite sources in a paper, conveying the impression, intentionally or not, that another writer’s work is the student’s own. In these cases of plagiarism, the instructor may give the student an “F” for the offending assignment, require that the student repeat the assignment, or if the plagiarism continues, give the student an “F” for the course. A pattern of such behavior may be reported to the Office of the Provost. It can lead to serious consequences as listed above.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT in assignments is permitted only with prior permission of the instructor. If the instructor permits students to use AI for research, students should know that it may give false results and its facts need to be checked and verified. Any passages generated by AI must be given proper citation, just as for citing other authors’ works. In addition, students must append a paragraph at the end of their work explaining how and why they used ChatGPT, which includes what prompts were used and what measures were taken to verify its accuracy. Students may not use AI to produce the content for an assignment. If an AI tool is used without obtaining prior permission and/or without providing the required citation or explanation, it will be treated as plagiarism.

Faculty reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, to find instances of AI-generated writing, as well as plagiarism from other sources, in student assignments.

# Netiquette

When posting online or by email, you need to follow the same ethical standards and laws as you would in face-to-face communications. Your language should be respectful of faculty members and fellow students. Do not post private or confidential information about anyone, and do not provide personal information that could put yourself at risk. The Seminaries LMS has robust security measures to protect communication between teacher and student. Yet please be aware that anything that you post in discussions and groups in which other students participate can be retrieved by others and copied.

Do not download and share course materials without permission of the instructor, as this may violate copyright. UTS reserves the right to delete postings on UTS maintained sites that are considered insensitive, harassing or illegal. Language that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, threatening, infringing of intellectual property rights, invasive of privacy, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing abusive, hateful or embarrassing to any person or entity, or otherwise, is a violation of the Student Code.

# Course Schedule, Fall 2025

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Class Date** | **Topic** | **Readings** (to be completed before class) | **Videos on YouTube or Populi** |
| Aug 26 | Background of the New Testament:   * The Greco-Roman world * Judaism in the run-up to the New Testament * Sectarian Judaism | LTJ, 17-81  BE, 41-81 | Dale Martin, “The Greco-Roman World” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ecpn3bkVvv0>  Dale Martin, “Judaism in the First Century” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QIBB7gXHKc>  Henry Abramson, “Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mw6R5cY0vUI> |
| Sept 2 | From Oral Traditions to Scripture   * Formation of the New Testament * Historical-critical method * The Synoptic Problem | LTJ, 137-142  BE, 4-17, 82-102, 120-128 | “From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians, Part One” FRONTLINE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN8FM1NCOSk> (Begin viewing at 39 minutes in.)  Dale Martin: “From Stories to Canon” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u72myyXDA74>  Ian Mills, “Markan Priority” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FV2CrIv6xU&list=RDLV8FV2CrIv6xU&index=1> |
| Sept 9 | The Gospel of Mark   * The themes, context and purposes of Mark * The messianic secret * Apocalyptic Christianity * The Passion Narrative | **Mark**  LTJ, 143-164  BE, 103-119 | Dale Martin, The Gospel of Mark (Yale Courses) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yd5sXfFboxA>  Andrew Wilson, “Jesus’ Passion and Atoning Death” <https://vimeo.com/254715684/ae5421fd3a> |
| Sept 16 | The Gospel of Matthew I   * Themes, context and purposes of Matthew * Sermon on the Mount | **Matthew 1-7**  LTJ, 165-186  BE, 129-148 | Dale Martin, The Gospel of Matthew (Yale Courses) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezG4in_i9z4&list=RDLV71fOqLomzIk&index=7>  Andrew Wilson, “Sermon on the Mount 1” <https://vimeo.com/254520205/88c0c5cc49>  Andrew Wilson, “Sermon on the Mount 2” <https://vimeo.com/254542318/f0c240890a> |
| Sept 23 | The Gospel of Matthew II   * Jesus and Judaism * Parables of Jesus; Redaction Criticism | **Matthew 8-28** | Andrew Wilson, “Jesus and the Jews” <https://vimeo.com/254767050/a2b8c7149e>  Henry Abramson, “Jesus and the Jewish Community” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSTNXh0yo-c>  Andrew Wilson, “Parables of Jesus” <https://vimeo.com/254591618/892c0593f0> |
| Sept 30 | Luke and Acts | **Luke**  **Acts**  **Galatians 1-2**  LTJ, 187-229  BE, 149-168, 316-338 | Dale Martin, The Gospel of Luke (Yale Courses) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPhiVT53JP0>  Dale Martin, “The New Testament as History,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQaOlxhg8xg>  Dale Martin, Acts of the Apostles <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IvgCQG_BqEM> |
| Oct 7 | Gospel of John  Letters of John | **John**  **1, 2 and 3 John**  LTJ, 461-493  BE, 169-215 | Andrew Wilson, “Gospel of John” <https://vimeo.com/255177459/3521f5a0de>  Dale Martin, “Johannine Christianity” (Yale Courses) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71fOqLomzIk&list=RDLV8FV2CrIv6xU&index=3>  Dale Martin, “Johannine Christianity, the Letters” (Yale Courses). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F82JssUTYzg>  Robert M. Price, “The Marginality of the Cross,” *Journal of Unification Studies* 6 (2004-05):23-38 <https://journals.uts.edu/volume-vi-2004-2005/59-the-marginality-of-the-cross> |
| Oct 14 | Search for the Historical Jesus   * Criteria for historicity * Intractable problems * Jesus of history and the Christ of faith | LTJ, 95-133  BE, 238-304 | Andrew Wilson, “Jesus of history and Christ of faith” [https://vimeo.com/254694281/f98410e138](https://vimeo.com/254694281/f98410e138%20)  Dale Martin, The Historical Jesus (Yale Course) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_dOhg-Fpu0> |
| Oct 21 | Paul’s Life and Letters  Early Paul | LTJ, 231-260  BE, 339-371  **1 Thessalonians** | Andrew Wilson, “Paul” <https://vimeo.com/254937893/0050949559>  Dale Martin, “Paul as Missionary” (Yale Courses) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V8NeoY2qB4> |
| Oct 38 | 1 and 2 Corinthians  Galatians  Romans  Paul and the Law | **1 & 2 Corin­thians**  **Romans**  **Galatians**  LTJ, 261-323  BE, 372-418 | Dale Martin, “Paul as Pastor” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMVatCd_1xM>  Dale Martin, “Paul as Jewish Theologian” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qCUgkr2ohY> |
| Nov 4 | Colossians, Ephesians,  Pastoral Epistles | LTJ, 347-401  BE, 438-463  **Colossians**  **Ephesians**  **1 & 2 Timothy**  **Titus** | Dale Martin, “Paul’s Disciples” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaRXCg9PxxA>  Dale Martin, “The Household Paul: The Pastorals” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\_m10CyD-fs |
| Nov 11 | James, Hebrews | LTJ, 403-421,  449-459  BE, 478-488, 522-24  **James**  **Hebrews** | Dale Martin, “Arguing with Paul?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRWj6j2Dswc>  Dale Martin, “Interpreting Scripture: Hebrews” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_vA1UeSjSo> |
| Nov 18 | Book of Revelation  1 and 2 Peter  Jude | LTJ, 423-447,  507-524  BE, 537-551, 505-510  **Revelation**  **1,2 Peter**  **Jude** | Andrew Wilson, “Visions of the End Times” <https://vimeo.com/255582126/9395005ed2>  Dale Martin, “Apocalyptic and Resistance” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aBrXam36JE>  Dale Martin, “Apocalyptic and Accommodation” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJ9Gt_R5a-k> |
| Nov 25 | THANKSGIVING BREAK | | |
| Dec 2 | Other Voices | Acts of Paul and Thecla  Gospel of Thomas  Gospel of Philip, 59-64  BE, 220-26, 433-35 | Dale Martin, “The ‘Anti-household’ Paul: Thecla” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Htuls07h3CA&t=927s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Htuls07h3CA&t=927s%20)  Dale Martin, “The Gospel of Thomas” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oxi5-6LdSpE&t=9s> |
| Dec 9 | Rev. Moon’s teaching about Jesus | *Wolli Wonbon,* chapter 6 |  |

# Recommended Readings

Achtemeier, Paul J., Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson. *Introducing the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Brown, Raymond E*. An Introduction to the New Testament.*  New York: Doubleday, Anchor Bible Reference Library, 1997.

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

Craddock, Fred B. and M. Eugene Boring. *New Interpreter's Bible New Testament Survey*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

DeSilva, David A*. An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, & Ministry Formation.*  Downers Grove, Illinois, 2004. ISBN 0-8308-2746-3.

Drane, John. *Introducing the New Testament*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 1999, 2010. ISBN 0-8006-3272-9.

Holladay, Carl R. *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2005.

Koester, Helmut. *Introduction to the New Testament*, 2 vols. Philadelphia, Fortress, 1982.

Mason, Steven and Tom Robinson, eds. *Early Christian Reader*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004.

Perrin, Norman and D.C. Duling. *The New Testament: An Introduction.* Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009.

# Course Learning Outcomes Rubric

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning outcomes** | **Novice** | **Approaching** | **Proficient** | **Advanced** |
| **Biblical knowledge** Discuss the basic content and key issues of each book of the New Testament | Discuss only contents taught in church’s theology | Explain some parts of the New Testament beyond the church’s theology | Explain the wider contents of the New Testament presented in the course | Ready command of the New Testament and its contents |
| **Theological reflection** Explain meaning(s) of the text and relate them to the student’s own theology and life of faith | Dogmatic interpretation of texts | Explore new meanings of texts based on lectures in the course | Discuss new meanings of texts based on lectures in the course and apply them to their own theology | Demonstrate thorough theological reflection based on the wide scope of meanings in the New Testament |
| **Exegesis** Demonstrate a beginner’s competence in exegesis of biblical texts | Does not show understanding of what exegesis is | Exegesis lacks one of the following elements: historical context, verse-by-verse analysis, application | Exegesis includes historical context, verse-by-verse treatment, and application | Demonstrates skill at all elements of exegesis |
| **Historical knowledge** Explain authorship, political, social and religious context, and salient issues for the books of the New Testament; discuss the New Testament as a source for understanding history and development of early Christianity. | Displays ignorance of critical findings of New Testament history | Discusses general context of New Testament history but not in detail | Demonstrates knowledge of issues of authorship, political and religious context for individual books of the NT | Demonstrates knowledge of issues of authorship, political and religious context for individual books of the NT, and explains the development of early Christianity |
| **Hermeneutical knowledge** Utilize historical-critical methods of biblical study, understand their benefits and limitations, and distinguish between critical and faith-based hermeneutics in biblical scholarship | Does not grasp methods of historical-critical study | Discuss methods of historical-critical study | Discuss and utilize methods of historical-critical study; appraise the value of historical criticism against theological and other approaches | Discuss and utilize methods of historical-critical study; appraise the value of historical criticism against theological and other approaches, distinguish between these approaches in scholarship |

# Assessment Map of Assignments to Course Objectives:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Learning Outcomes** | **Class Presentations** | **Exegesis Papers** | **Final Paper** |
| Biblical knowledge | X | X | X |
| Theological reflection | X | X | X |
| Exegesis |  | X |  |
| Historical knowledge | X | X | X |
| Hermeneutical Knowledge |  | X | X |