

Introduction to the New Testament (NT500-OL; 3 credit hours)
Trinity School for Ministry, fall 2017

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to become better equipped to read the New Testament as Christian Scripture. We will focus on many themes and various historical and theological particularities along the way as we “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the New Testament, but the overarching aim is to learn to engage with these documents as a diverse-yet-unified, coherent witness to the living reality of Jesus Christ and thereby deepen our grasp of the gospel.

The general set of outcomes Trinity desires for each of our graduates includes the following:

1. The student will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work.
2. The student will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology.
3. M.Div.: The student will be able to effectively communicate the Christian message to a diversity of people in order to advance the mission of God.
M.A.R.: The student will be able to effectively teach the Christian faith.
S.T.M.: The student will demonstrate the ability to carry out research from original sources.
4. M.Div.: The student will be prepared to effectively lead in a variety of Christian communities.
M.A.R.: The student will be equipped to apply scholarship to the life of the church in his or her chosen theological discipline.
S.T.M.: The student will be equipped to successfully pursue further independent research and post-graduate study in his or her chosen theological discipline.

This course is one of the core courses in the curriculum that provide an understanding of Scripture and biblical theology, thereby grounding this curriculum as a whole (outcome 1). Such attention to biblical theology is at the heart of a classic Anglican approach to Scripture (outcome 2; see Article XX of *The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*), and an understanding of the Bible is a pre-requisite for both effectively communicating the Christian message and offering effective leadership (Outcomes 3 and 4). So this course

contributes to each of these general outcomes, doing so through the following specific objectives:

1. Increased understanding of the historical issues related to each of the documents of the New Testament, including the purposes and themes of each of the documents.
3. Increased understanding of the theological shape of the New Testament canon, as well as its location in the wider theological curriculum (i.e., alongside church history, liturgy, preaching, etc.).
4. Increased skill in interpreting individual passages in the light of the book in which they occur, the context of the author(s)' overall thought, and the canon as a whole (biblical theology).
5. Introductory knowledge of some of the major trends in modern study of the New Testament.

For discussion of how I will assess whether these outcomes have been met, see the discussion below of the course requirements.

Required Texts

1. A “standard,” “literal” Bible translation (e.g., NRSV, ESV, etc.). I recommend *The HarperCollins Study Bible*, student edition (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006) (ISBN: 978-0060786847).
2. Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). (ISBN: 978-0802837172)

General Approach

Paying detailed attention to the text of the New Testament is the bread and butter of this course, so each student is expected to have read the assignments by the due dates indicated at the start of the semester. A combination of my lectures and our “blog” discussions will take up most of each daily session. The assigned readings will provide key background information (and further bibliographies, should you wish to explore any topic in more depth), so that the lectures may focus more single-mindedly on the “big picture” of the New Testament documents’ structures, themes, and theologies. Even with this combination of your own focused study of the readings and our “comment-thread type” discussions, it will still not be possible to do more than scratch the surface of our texts. Hence, the goal of this course is not so much the transfer of *content* but the modeling and imparting of a *way of study*—so that you will “learn to fish,” per the old saying (“Give someone a fish and feed them for a day; teach someone to fish and feed them for a lifetime”).

Course Requirements

Listening to / watching lecture recordings and participating in Google Classroom discussion threads. This is the basic minimum requirement. (A word about taking an “Incomplete”:

Incompletes are given only in the most serious of cases. They are not granted as a way to extend the semester due to unfinished work. In order to request an incomplete, you must obtain the necessary form online and bring it to me so that I can list the specific assignments to be completed along with due dates. The revised due date will not extend beyond six weeks from the last day of class. The form will then be submitted to the Academic Dean for final approval and will only be granted in the most serious of cases.)

Weekly reading quizzes. Because the content of my lectures and our discussions will largely focus on the “big issues” of interpretation, much of the important background information—such as date and authorship considerations, etc.—will only be accessible to you through the assigned readings. The readings are, then, considered to be essential to this course, not simply optional extras that might help to “fill out” my lectures if the student desires to go further in depth. Therefore, most class sessions will include a “true or false” quiz on the content of the assigned readings. This is purely to ensure that the student is in fact completing the reading; questions about how to integrate the readings with class lectures will not appear on the quizzes.

Map quiz. There will be a brief map quiz consisting of two parts: (1) Palestine around the time of the NT, and (2) the larger Mediterranean world around the time of the NT.

Review/reflection paper. Toward the end of the course, students will be expected to write a 1500-word paper on a topic of your choice from a limited selection of topics I will supply. I will provide more information at the beginning of the semester on this assignment.

Final thematic paper. One 2000-word paper is due at the end of the course. You may choose to write on any one of the following questions: (1) What are the reasons interpreters cite for seeing conflict between Galatians 2 and James 2? How might that conflict be resolved? (2) What are the salient differences and convergences between the four Gospels’ crucifixion accounts? (3) What are the thematic similarities and divergences between the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles? In what ways are the texts united, and in what ways do they differ? (4) How does the New Testament portray the evolution of the relationship to Peter and Paul? Pay special attention to Acts, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians in your answer. (I will provide bibliographies in class to help with the background research for these papers.)

Course Evaluation

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows: Weekly quizzes = 25% of final grade; map quiz = 10% of final grade; review/reflection paper = 30% of final grade; and the final thematic paper = 35% of final grade.

Your written work will be evaluated according to the following criteria: clarity and charity of thought and expression, accuracy of information, and breadth and depth of discussion. I will use letter grades or their equivalent to mean the following:

B (80-89): The thought and expression are clear and the information is accurate. The discussion is broad and deep enough to indicate a solid understanding of the issue. By “broad” I mean that sufficient aspects of the

topic are covered, and by “depth” I mean that enough supporting and illustrating material is offered to flesh out the basic thought.

C (70-79): The material shows an adequate grasp of the topic, but at points the discussion is unclear, inaccurate, narrow or shallow.

D (60-69): The material shows something close to an adequate grasp of the topic but is notably defective according to one or more of the criteria.

F (below 60): The material does not indicate that the student has an adequate grasp of the topic, or it is severely defective according to the criteria.

A (90-100): The material is exceptional. Usually this means that it is not only clear and accurate but also develops the topic in breadth and depth beyond what is necessary for a good understanding of it. Such material is often, though not always, marked also by creativity, exceptional insight, and/or relatively extensive research.

The school’s grade scale is as follows: A = 100-95; A- = 94-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D = below 70; F = below 60. As per The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) requirements, several samples of student work may be randomly selected and used as a class artifact as part of an on-going assessment of courses and degree programs. Students’ names will be removed from any work used for this purpose.

Course Schedule

DATE	TEXT/TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT (all assigned readings are from the one course textbook)
TBA	What is the New Testament?	Chapter 1
TBA	The Canon of the New Testament The Places and Cultures of the New Testament Era	Chapter 2
TBA	The Gospel of Matthew The Gospel of Mark	Chapters 3-5; map quiz
TBA	The Gospel of Luke	Chapter 6
TBA	The Gospel of John	Chapters 7-8
TBA	The Acts of the Apostles The Life and Ministry of Paul	Chapters 9-11
TBA	Galatians and Romans	Chapters 12 and 14

TBA	The Corinthian Correspondence	Chapter 13
TBA	Hebrews	Review/reflection paper due
TBA	The Epistles of Peter, James, and John	Chapters 21-23
TBA	The book of Revelation	Chapter 24
TBA	The New Testament and Christian ministry today	Chapter 25
TBA		Final thematic paper due