COURSE TITLE: “Introduction to the New Testament”

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Study of the New Testament literature in its historical and cultural setting. Topics covered include the literary relationships of the four Gospels, the historical Jesus, the evolution of early Christianity, and the diverse theologies represented in the letters of Paul and other canonical and non-canonical writings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Students who complete this course will: understand the contributions of various ethnic and religious groups to the formation of early Christianity; be able to explain what contemporary scholarship says about the date, authorship, purpose, and literary features of each of the New Testament texts; be able to weigh the merits of contemporary arguments concerning issues such as the historical Jesus, the theology of Paul, and early Christian beliefs and practices; and identify the principal beliefs, values, and institutions that constituted the Christian tradition in its earliest stage.

TEXTS:

The New Testament of the Jerusalem Bible

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Office: 2024 Mendocino
E-mail: nystromb@csus.edu (I do not use the SacCT email function)
Telephone: 278-5334
Office Hours: LIBRARY 53 before and after class and by appointment

GRADES:

Course grades will be based on midterm and final exam grades. Each is worth 100 points and will consist of two parts: multiple-choice (50 one-point questions) and essay (50 points).

Grades will be based on the percentage you earn of the 200 points possible in the course:

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Please do not tell me at any point during the semester what grade you might need.
ATTENDANCE:

Students in both sections are welcome to either attend class or watch the video recordings of lectures. You must come to campus only for the midterm and final exams. These exams will be given in LIBRARY 53 at 10:30 a.m. on June 23 and July 19. You may also take the midterm on June 23 at 6:00 p.m. and the final on July 9 at 6:00 p.m. I will announce the rooms later.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS, AND EXAMS:

June 2: Introduction; New Testament Backgrounds
June 3: New Testament Backgrounds
June 4: The Gospel Genre and the Synoptic Problem

For this week, read Harris, chapters 3, 5, and 6.

June 9: The Gospels
June 10: The Gospels
June 11: The Gospels

For this week, read the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and Harris, chapters 7-10

June 16: The Gospels; the Historical Jesus
June 17: The Historical Jesus
June 18: Acts of the Apostles

The June 18 lecture will be covered on the final, not on the midterm. I need this date to get started on the second half of the course.

Review session in the evening. Room to be announced.

Finish reading the four Gospels this week. Also, read Harris, chapter 11. For the June 18 lecture on Acts read both Acts itself and Harris, chapter 12 (to be covered on the final).

June 23: Midterm (100 points; 50 one-point multiple-choice questions and one 50-point essay; 1 hr. and 45 min) on all lectures through June 18; the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; and Harris, chapters 3, 5-11.

June 24: Paul and his Letters
June 25: Paul and his Letters

For this week, be sure to read Harris, chapter 12 on the Acts of the Apostle. I will have already lectured on Acts prior to the Midterm. In addition, read these letters attributed to Paul: 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philippians, and Philemon. Also read Harris, chapters 13-16.
June 30: The Late Pauline Tradition; Hebrews; The Catholic (“General”) Epistles
July 1: The Catholic Epistles
July 2: The Catholic Epistles
July 2: Revelation

I am recording a second lecture because a lecture recorded at our next class meeting would not be posted until July 9, the day before the final. This would give you too little time to absorb the material.

For this week, read Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. Also read Harris, chapters 17-19.

July 7: Two review sessions, one at 10:30 in LIBRARY 53 and another at 6:00 p.m. in a room to be announced.

July 8: No class on this date.

July 9: **Final Exam** (100 points; 50 one-point multiple choice questions and one 50-point essay; 2 hours). Multiple-choice questions will be based exclusively on lectures beginning with the June 18 lecture; all New Testament texts other than the Gospels; and Harris, chapters 12-19. The essay section will also be based on this material.

**HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE:**

Because this is a six-week course, we'll be moving very quickly through the material. It is extremely important to watch the lectures soon after they are posted and to keep up with the readings (see lecture schedule).

Keep in mind that it would be unreasonable for me to expect you to memorize every single fact presented in lectures and readings. Instead, the point is to use your best judgment in discerning what is really important and what isn't. How can you tell? When reading the New Testament texts, watch for major themes and ideas. Ask yourself what the author's purpose is in writing a particular text. The Harris text will give you all kinds of clues as to what is most important. Ask yourself: What are the most important ideas in each of the sections in each chapter? Also, I suggest making a list of all the terms in bold type and making sure you understand them (they are all included in the glossary). As for lectures, you'll notice that I take the time to write down a lot of terms. It would be a good idea to add these to the list of Harris' bold type terms and make sure you understand these as well. Also, pay attention to what I emphasize in lectures. I've got a lot to talk about and not much time, so you can bet that when I pay a lot of attention to some topic it's because I think it's important.
If you pay attention, take good notes on readings and lectures, and review your notes several times before each exam, you should do well on the multiple-choice portions of the midterm and final exams.

What about the essay portions of the exams? You will be well prepared if you can demonstrate a thorough knowledge of what the New Testament texts, lectures, and the Harris book have to say about the following "Big Issues." The essays will be based on this material. In order to demonstrate a "thorough knowledge" of the "Big Issues," you will need to make use of the material in the New Testament texts and Harris in such a way that the reader (that's me) is convinced you are familiar with it.

**THE BIG ISSUES:**

**Midterm:**

1. The teachings of Jesus as presented in the Synoptic Gospels (taken collectively)
2. The teachings of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John
3. The portrayals of Jesus in the gospels. In what ways are they similar? How do they differ?
4. What do scholars mean by “the historical Jesus”? What does contemporary scholarship say about the life and teachings of the historical Jesus?

**Final:**

1. Paul’s teachings on human nature, sin, faith, salvation, Torah, and the Christ.
2. The problems/issues faced by Paul, how he dealt with them, and his solutions reflect his theology. Consider the problems addressed in all thirteen of the letters attributed to Paul.
3. The problems/issues addressed by the authors of the non-Pauline letters (that is, the “Catholic” or “General” Epistles) and how they dealt with them.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES:**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the campus policy on academic dishonesty at www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMA00150.htm.

Students who leave the room during exams will not be allowed to return. If this policy creates a difficulty for you, please make necessary arrangements with the Testing Center.

Students with disabilities who require special arrangements for examinations should contact me during the first week of the semester.