

HRS 122 (GE Area C4)
"INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT"
FALL 2008
DR. NYSTROM
MENDOCINO 4004

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 successfully complete this course will: understand the contributions of various ethnic and religious groups (Jews, Greeks, Romans, Stoics, Platonists, etc.) 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.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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E-mail: nystromb@csus.edu
Office Hours: MW 1:15-2:15, 8:20-8:50

TEXTS:

S.L. Harris, The New Testament: A Student's Introduction (6th edition)
The New Testament of the Jerusalem Bible

LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS:

No laptops or other electronic devices may be used in class without an authorization letter from the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities.

GRADES:

Your course grade will be based on your performance on the midterm and final exams, quizzes, and readings responses. The midterm and final exams (100 points each) are essay exams. The four quizzes (50 points each) are 25-question multiple-choice exams. The four readings response exercises (15 points each) are short-answer opportunities to demonstrate your understanding of readings in the New Testament. Only your three highest quiz and readings response scores will count in the calculation of your course grade.

Grades will be based on the percentage you earn of the 395 points possible in the course:

A	93-100%	C	73-77%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	88-89%	D+	68-69%
B	83-87%	D	63-67%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	78-79%	F	below 60%

Participation may influence your grade. Productive contributions to class discussions may raise your course grade by one grade (e.g., from B+ to A-). Allowing your cell phone to ring, talking or texting during class, or creating other disturbances may lower your course grade by one grade.

Three or more absences will reduce your course grade by one grade. I will take roll occasionally, either by reading the student roster or simply by noting that some students are absent.

Please do not tell me at any point during the semester what grade you might need, whether to get into graduate school, keep your financial aid, or avoid academic probation.

MAKE-UP POLICY:

Do not take this course if you anticipate being absent on the dates of the midterm and final exams.

Make-ups for these exams will be given only if you can supply documentation of a very good reason for missing them. There are no make-ups for quizzes and readings responses.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPICS:

- Week 1: Introduction; the Greco-Roman World; the Jewish Background to the NT
- Week 2: The Jewish Background to the NT
- Week 3: "Gospel" as a literary genre; the Synoptic Problem
- Week 4: The Gospels
- Week 5: The Gospels
- Week 6: The Gospels; The Historical Jesus
- Week 7: The Historical Jesus
- Week 8: Midterm; Acts of the Apostles
- Week 9: Acts of the Apostles
- Week 10: Paul and his Epistles
- Week 11: Paul and his Epistles
- Week 12: Paul and his Epistles
- Week 13: Later Letters in the Pauline-Tradition; Other Epistles
- Week 14: Hebrews; Revelation
- Week 15: Marcionite and Gnostic Christianity

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND EXAMS:

Reading “suggestions” are for the benefit of students who want to complete assigned readings before they are discussed in class. You are responsible for readings only on the dates of the Readings Responses and the Midterm and Final Examinations.

September 17: **QUIZ #1** (50 points) on lectures; Harris, chapters 3-5.

September 24: **READINGS RESPONSE #1** (15 points) on Matthew and Mark

October 1: **READINGS RESPONSE #2** (15 points) on Luke and John

October 22: **QUIZ #2** (50 points) on lectures since the last quiz; Harris, chapters 6-10, 12; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

MIDTERM (100 points) on all lectures; Harris, chapters 3-10, 12; Matthew, Mark, Luke, John)

November 5: **READINGS RESPONSE #3** (15 points) on Romans.

November 26: **QUIZ #3** (50 points) on lectures since midterm; Harris, chapters 13-17, 18 (sections on 2 Thessalonians and Colossians only); Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

READINGS RESPONSE #4 (15 points) on Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus.

December 17: **QUIZ #4** (50 points) on lectures since midterm; Harris, chapters 18 (except sections on 1 Thessalonians and Colossians), 19 and 20; Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, Revelation.

FINAL EXAM (100 points) on all lectures and all readings assigned for the course (but note that final exam essays will be based on the “big issues” described below).

GE WRITING REQUIREMENT:

General Education Area C4 requirements include a minimum of 1500 words of “formal writing.” It is expected that this standard will be met on the essay portions of the midterm and final examinations and on the readings responses.

THE BIG ISSUES

You will be well prepared for the midterm and final essay exams 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.

Prior to the midterm:

The teachings of Jesus as presented in the Synoptic Gospels

The teachings of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John

The “pictures” of Jesus presented in each of the gospels

The life and teachings of the “historical Jesus”

Prior to the final:

Paul’s teachings on human nature, sin, faith, salvation, Torah, and the Christ.

The four genres of NT literature: gospel, acts, epistle, and apocalypse. What are the main characteristics of each of these genres (types) of literature? For what purpose/s was each employed by the writers of the NT?

Similarities and differences between the teachings of Jesus (as represented in the Synoptic Gospels) and the teachings of Paul.

The problems faced by Paul, how he dealt with them, and how his solutions reflect his theology.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES:

HRS 122 is a lecture/discussion course with no prerequisites. It may be applied to the HRS major requirements. It is also a GE course (Category C4).

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