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.

ATTENDANCE:

Although I expect that most students will watch lectures via streaming and archived video, everyone is welcome to attend class MTW 10:30-12:50 in ARC 1010. You will be required to come to campus only for the midterm and final exams. These exams will be given in ARC 1010 at 10:30 a.m. on June 21 and July 7. You may also take the midterm on June 21 at 6:00 p.m. in Mendocino 1015 and the final on July 7 at 6:00 p.m. in Mendocino 1015.

MAKE-UP POLICY:

Do not take this course if you cannot take the midterm and final exams at the scheduled times. Make-ups for these exams will be given only if you can supply documentation of a very good reason (surgery is a very good reason, your vacation isn't) for missing them.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Office: 2024 Mendocino
E-mail: nystromb@csus.edu (please use this address and not the email function on SacCT)
Telephone: 278-5334
Office Hours: ARC 1010 before and after class and by appointment

TEXTS:

The New Testament of the Jerusalem Bible
GRADES:

Your course grade will be based on your midterm and final exam grades. Each of these exams is worth 100 points and will consist of two parts: multiple-choice (50 points; 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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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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Please do not tell me at any point during the semester what grade you might need.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND EXAMS:

June 1:   Introduction; New Testament Backgrounds (Harris, chapters 3-5)
June 2:   New Testament Backgrounds (Harris, chapters 3-5)
June 4:   The Gospel Genre and the Synoptic Problem (Harris, chapter 6)

There is no regularly scheduled class session on this day, but I will be recording this lecture and having it posted. This is necessary because we have no class on the Monday of this first week of class.

June 7:   The Gospels (Harris, chapters 7-10 for this week and all four Gospels)
June 8:   The Gospels
June 9:   The Gospels

June 14:  Gnosticism and Non-Canonical Gospels; The Historical Jesus (Harris, chapter 11)
June 15:  The Historical Jesus (Harris, chapter 12)
June 16:  Acts of the Apostles; Paul and his Letters (Harris, chapters 13-17)

Note: For the midterm, you are responsible only for lectures up to and including June 15. The June 16 lecture will be covered on the final. The midterm has been scheduled for June 21 in order to give ATCS time to post the June 15 lecture and to give you additional time for study.

June 21:  **Midterm** (100 points; 50 one-point multiple choice questions and 50-points essay section). You are responsible for all lectures through June 15; Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; and Harris, chapters 3-12.
June 22:  Paul and his Letters (Harris, chapters 14-17)
June 23:  Paul and his Letters (Harris, chapters 14-17)
June 28:  
  The Late Pauline Tradition: Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus 
  Catholic ("General") Epistles: Hebrews and James 
  (Harris, chapters 18 and 19)

June 29:  
  Catholic ("General") Epistles (1 and 2 Peter, Jude) 
  (Harris, chapter 19)

June 30:  
  Catholic ("General") Epistles (1, 2, and 3 John) 
  (Harris, chapter 19).

June 30:  
  Revelation (Harris, chapter 20)

I will record this lecture in the afternoon on this date. This is necessary 
because July 5 is a holiday and a lecture recorded on July 6 would not be 
posted early enough for you to use of it in preparing for the final exam the 
following day. I suggest that you read Revelation over the weekend.

July 5:  
  HOLIDAY

July 6:  
  No lecture. I will be available in our classroom during the 10:30-12:50 
  class period for a review session.

July 7:  
  Final Exam (100 points; 50 one-point multiple choice questions and 50- 
  point essay section). Multiple-choice questions will be based exclusively 
  on lectures given since (and including) the midterm; all New Testament 
  texts other than the Gospels; and Harris, chapters 13-20. The essay section 
  will also be based on this material. The only exception is a possible 
  question on the literary genres found in the New Testament (see “The Big 
  Issues” below). In order to answer this question, you would need to discuss 
  the “gospel” (covered prior to the midterm) as a literary genre.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE -- AND THE BIG ISSUES

Because this is a six-week course, we'll be moving very quickly through the material. It is 
extremely important to watch the lectures as soon as 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. 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 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?
3. Similarities and differences between the teachings of Jesus (as represented in the Synoptic Gospels) and the teachings of Paul.
4. The problems faced by Paul, how he dealt with them, and how his solutions reflect his theology.

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.