



Understanding the New Testament

REL 112 (3 credit hours)

Instructor Information

Review "Profiles" section of Virtual Campus for Facilitator contact information.

Textbook(s)

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (2011). Colorado Springs, CO: Biblica.

Course Description

Content and interpretation of selected portions of the New Testament.

Course Objectives & Goals

1. Describe the basic content of the New Testament and its origin.
2. Explain the development of early Christianity, especially its relationship to Judaism.
3. Communicate intelligently about issues of interpretation of the Bible.
4. Identify core messages of the New Testament and their meaning for Christian Theology.

Weekly Assignments

ATTENDANCE and CLASS PARTICIPATION – 20%

FORMAL PAPER – 50%

A major paper is due the fifth week of the class. This paper can be about any topic that the facilitator chooses, or if he/ she allows, you may write on any NT book, or a biography of any person in the NT.

WRITING THE FORMAL PAPER

Must be 6-8 double spaced pages in length. • Must be typed and physically handed to the facilitator. • Must include a cover page that includes the following: Adult learner's name, Class name and number, Name of paper, Facilitator's name, Date submitted.

SHORT ANALYSIS PAPERS – 20% (thus 10% each)

Two short analytical papers are due during weeks two and four of the course.

Paper One, due in Week Two, will examine a single story in one gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John).

Paper Two, due in Week Four, will address one of the epistles read for Week 4.

Each will be written with three distinct parts, and each should be labeled with side headings. Part One should contextualize the selection within the history in which it was written and labeled "Historical Background for the Passage." Part Two should be a summary and analysis of the reading assignment and labeled "Summary and Analysis of Passage." Part Three should be an analysis of how the reading applies to the world or church today and labeled "How the Relates to Our World." You must document any words or ideas taken from any source. Historical materials will be particularly helpful in establishing the historical context, Part One, and the summary and analysis of Part Two.

WRITING THE SHORT ANALYSIS PAPER

For Paper One, you need to select a self-contained story in a gospel. Use the headings in the NIV Study Bible to determine where a story begins and ends. The following would yield fruitful topics: the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-13); the rich young man meets Jesus (Matt. 19:16-29); any of the parables, but be careful not to take them too literally—they are stories told to prove a point; they may not be recording of actual experiences; a healing story like Mark 2:1-12 or Mark 5: 1-20; feeding the 5000 (Mark 6:30-44); the possibilities are endless.

In preparing for your work on Paper One, you need to think about the following questions. You will not likely go through the paper and answer these directly, but they are important for you to get a handle on the story episode. Some of these ideas will clearly surface in your paper, however.

1. Who are the principal characters? What do we know about them?
2. Where does the story occur (in a house, outside, at the Temple, etc.)?
3. If Jesus is directly involved in the story, what does he say and do? Why are these words, gestures, or actions important?
4. Who is listening in on the story? Is the story being told for someone's benefit?
5. Locate the story in the context of the gospel itself. When does it occur during the time of Jesus' life?

In preparing for your work on Paper Two, a summary/analysis and reflection on one of the epistles from the list for Week 3, you need to think about the following. You need to read the entire epistle that you are writing about, not just the selected verses noted in the syllabus/course guide to begin. Consider these questions below:

1. Who is Paul writing to? When was the epistle written? What do we know about the church in this place or person historically? Is it mentioned in Acts?
2. What are the key themes in the epistle?
3. What is the tone of the epistle? Is Paul happy, angry, disappointed, etc.?
4. What is the immediate context for which the epistle is written? See the notes in the NIV Study Bible for help with the context.
5. Summarize the argument of the epistle. You are providing a summary, a quick kind of paraphrase of the epistle.

QUESTIONS OF THE WEEK – 10%

The learner will submit one or more questions **each week** for discussion. The questions should relate to the readings for that week, although questions that range more widely are acceptable.

WRITING THE QUESTIONS

The student will submit one or more questions a week for discussion in class. The questions will be open to any biblical concern for the learner, and must be on the topic being studied that week.

- Must pertain to an area of the Bible, but particularly to the New Testament,
- Must be typed
- Must be a valid and serious question for discussion

Week One: Introduction to the NT and the Synoptic Gospels

In Week One of the course, students will encounter background information regarding the historical period covered in the NT that is vital to understanding the entire NT. In Week One, students will be exposed to the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Through your reading of textbook materials, lecture, discussion, and group activities, student should develop a good working knowledge of the Synoptics and their proclamation of the Christ. Scholars are generally in agreement that the gospel of Mark was written first and that it dates from 65-70 AD. Matthew and Luke used the gospel of Mark along with other materials in developing their own gospels, written some time between 70 and 80 AD. No gospel is a complete "biography" of Jesus' life. Mark begins with Jesus' baptism; Matthew begins with his birth, for

example. What we actually find are documents written to recall the events of Jesus' life and ministry perhaps for believers who lived a generation after his death and resurrection. The mode of writing is more oriented toward proclamation, for the intent is not only to tell readers and hearers who Jesus was, but also to establish in them a faith in the Christ as the son of the living God and the long-promised Messiah.

Readings for Class:

The Gospel of Mark: the entire book (gospel) of Mark

The Gospel of Matthew: 1:1-2:23; 5:1-20; 28:1-20

The Gospel of Luke: 1:1-2:52; 10: 25-37; 15:1-16:31; 24:1-53

Week 2: Acts and the Challenges of Gentile Christians in the Early Church

This week we will be examining Acts, a book that chronicles part of the history of the early Church from its founding in ca. 30 A.D. through the missionary journeys/activities of the Apostle Paul, likely ending in the mid 60s A.D. A movement that begins within Judaism quickly moves out to embrace the Gentile world, and the Church must deal with one of its first challenges: Do gentiles who have become Christians have to submit to the rite of circumcision in order to be acceptable to God? Not only does Acts treat challenges that Paul faces from his Jewish community, but some of his epistles also address those in churches that he has established who continue to struggle with the same question about the needs of gentiles. We will thus also examine Galatians and Philippians. (Other epistle ascribed to Paul will be examined in Weeks 3 and 4.)

Readings for Class:

Acts: 1:1-2:47; 5:12-42; 6:8-8:1; 9:1-19; 10; 15; 16:16-40; 21-23; 28

Galatians: 1:1-24; 2:15-21; 3:1-29; 5; 6:11-16

Philippians: 1:1-2:18; 3:4-16; 4:8-9

Paper one due on week two.

Week 3: The Epistles of Paul

There is no question about it that Paul, the person whose name is tied to almost half of the books in the NT, is an important voice in the early Jesus Movement and the Church that continued to grow in the first century AD. It is impossible to imagine a Christian world without Paul; his influence has echoed large in the history of the Christian Church. He was a major source of influence on theologians as diverse as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell, Stone, and Barth. The dating of Paul's epistles is a matter of scholarly debate. How many of the epistles that Paul actually wrote is also a matter of scholarly debate, even if the person writing identifies himself as Paul. The introductions to the various epistles in the NIV Study Bible and the other materials will demonstrate this variety of opinion, based on criteria. In the end who wrote them and when they are written become less significant than the Church's recognition that these texts were scripture, the Word of God. It is important, however, to remember that these letters were written to particular persons or churches and that Paul is attempting to deal with particular matters of doctrine and practice in each case.

(The Pastorals, also credited to Paul will be considered in Week 4 on account of the significant number of writings to consider this week!)

Readings for Class:

Romans: 1:1-3:31; 4; 6; 8; 9; 11; 13.

1 Thessalonians: 1:2-10; 4; 5:1-11

2 Thessalonians: 1:5-12; 2:1-12

Week 4: The Pastoral Epistles and Non-Pauline Voices (James, Jude, the writer of Hebrews)

The reading selections this week are very diverse, both in time and in thematic concerns; yet there are some general connections. The Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), the epistles of James and Jude, and the “epistle” to the Hebrews share some common themes. The authorship and dates of the Pastoral Epistles have been a matter of scholarly debate, with suggestions ranging from the 50s to the 120s AD. Clearly, the “faith” seen in some of Paul’s other letters as an expression of belief and trust in the Pastoral Epistles becomes a body of doctrine whereby the Church can be organized and disciplined. The doctrines of the faith must also be protected from growing heresy. James, the writer of an epistle that shows a contrast to Paul’s understanding of justification by faith, is also debated with respect to time and purpose. Whether scholars see his writing as contrasting with Paul’s because he is writing to a community that has misunderstood Paul’s actual teaching on the nature of faith or whether he is simply working from a different theological lexicon, there is no debate with Paul: both understood actions as essential to faith living. Finally, the Epistle to the Hebrews, more likely understood as a treatise, provides the most systematic analysis of the person and nature of Christ in connection to Old Testament person and institutions (e.g., the priesthood) in the entire NT.

Readings for Class:

1 Timothy: 1:3-11; 2:1-7; 3:1-13; 5; 6:11-19

2 Timothy: 2:1-13; 3:1-9; 4:1-5

Titus: 1:5-9; 2

Hebrews: 1:1-3; 2:1-4; 3-4; 6; 7; 9:1-14; 11; 12:1-2

James: 1:2-7; 1:22-27; 2:14-26; 3; 5:7-11

Jude: 5-16

Paper two due on week four.

Week 5: The Voices of John and Peter: Visions from the Late First Century

The closing decade of the first century AD was a very important one for the life of the Church. Challenges in the form of persecutions were rising during the reign of the emperor Domitian (81-96 AD). Finding a way to remain faithful in the midst of persecution and also seeing that the forces of God would win out over the oppressive hand of Rome were uppermost in the minds of John and Peter, two important faith witnesses tied to Jesus. John’s name is attached to a gospel, three letters and Revelation, although there have been some challenges to his authorship of all of these texts. Significant linguistic and thematic parallels, however, connect them. Peter’s voice encourages endurance in his faith community, based on an understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection. In the second letter of Peter, the emphasis is on working against false teachers who are attempting to destroy the teachings of the faith. Enduring to the end was an important concept in these writings, and that challenge became even greater on account of forces within the Church and forces without in the form of the Roman Empire (Babylon).

Readings for Class:

The Gospel of John: 1:1-18; 2:1-12; 3:1-21; 4:1-42; 6; 11; 13:1-20; 15:1-17; 20:24-31

1 John: 1:1-10; 2:7-11; 3; 4:1-6; 5:1-11

2 John: 7-11

3 John 5-8

1 Peter 1:3-12; 2:1-5; 3:1-7; 4:1-6

2 Peter 1:3-15; 2; 3:8-13

Revelation: 1:1-3:22; 4; 17; 20-22

Final paper due on week five.

Course Policies:

1. Attendance

Attendance is required. Two absences will result in an automatic "F." A total of 6 hours absence results in an "F." Missing 1 night of class may result in reduction of final grade.

2. Late Assignments

Late submission of assignments will result in a loss of points. A 10% per day penalty is assessed on late work. Assignments submitted over four days late will not be accepted. Week 5 homework cannot be submitted late.

3. Expectations on Writing

Learners will be graded on the quality, as well as the content, of their writing. Although content is most important, grammar, spelling, and the use of APA citation and references are also important. Learners will lose points for multiple errors, typos, ineffective or confusing substandard writing, and failure to properly cite your sources.

4. Academic Integrity & Citation

All submitted assignments/postings are expected to be completed by the learner. All learners are expected to adhere to all rules associated with academic and personal integrity. **Plagiarism in any form will result in failure.**

Perhaps the most common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Let me clarify so that you do not unwittingly go astray. Plagiarism is the appropriation of the ideas, words, comments, or other intellectual property of a third party without giving credit to that party. **Plagiarism does not have to be a word-for-word "copying"** of someone else's writing or "cut and paste" of electronic material; **most cases, in fact, involve paraphrasing** a third party's idea in the writer's own words.

There are two important rules to remember in order to avoid plagiarism:

1. Only "common knowledge" statements need not be cited in your work [e.g., Washington was the first president, the Civil War ended in 1865, the FBI is in the Justice Department, etc.],
2. If in doubt as to whether to cite a source, cite it—better safe than sorry!

Always be sure to **cite** (reference) your source material, including any material you reference from your course text. Bethel University uses the APA (American Psychological Association, 6th ed.) style guide for citation.

Evaluation

• Participation (In-class)

Participation points are **not** awarded based on attendance. Discussion and active participation in classroom activities are vital for linking academic concepts to real-world application. Maximum participation points are awarded for active, critical, and meaningful participation.

• Homework (Written Essays)

Written homework assignments must comply with APA 6th edition. Students should submit assignments in the drop box section of the online classroom. Written essays are graded with an undergraduate, college level expectation. The grading rubric for written assignments is based on the following criteria: 1) Meets assignment requirements (word/page length, number of references, etc.) 2) Fully answers the assignment question(s) by integrating the appropriate and relevant subject matter terminology and using critical thinking to make application of the subject matter terminology 3) Meets APA 6th edition formatting requirements for essays and 4) Is well-written concerning spelling,

Points Required for Final Grade

A - 90-100% of points

B - 80-90% of points

C - 70-80% of points

D - 60-70% of points

F - below 60%

grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and the like. Essay Rubric is provided at the end of the syllabus.

University Policies:

1. Instructional Time

Instructional time includes 4 hours of in-class activities (interaction with facilitator, group activities, individual contributions to discussions related to course content, reflection of practical experiences, etc.) or 20 hours of in-class activities during the 5-week, 3 credit hour course. Instructional time also includes a per week average of 18.5 hours of out-of-class equivalent activities (textbook reading, library research and reading, composing written assignments, etc.), or 92.5 hours of out-of class activities during the 5-week, 3 credit hour course. Therefore, total instruction time includes a per week average of 22.5 hours (4 hours of in-class activities + 18.5 hours of out-of-class activities) for a total of 112.5 hours (20 hours of in-class activities + 92.5 hours of out-of-class equivalent activities) during the 5-week, 3 credit hour course.

2. Disability Services

Bethel University College of Professional Studies (CPS) is committed to providing equal access to its academic activities to all qualified students. While upholding this commitment, CPS will also maintain the high standards of achievement, which are essential to the integrity of the College's programs and services. In advancing these aims, CPS will ensure that its policies, practices, and procedures conform to Federal and state statutes and regulations. Please refer to catalog pages 24-25 for a thorough review of policies and procedures related to Bethel's disability services.

3. Library Services

The CPS Library Services are designed to inform, equip, and motivate students to educational success. Students may ask homework or research questions via e-mail, chat, or phone. Online reference help is available 24/7 through video tutorials and downloadable handouts on the CPS Library website (<http://bethelu.libguides.com/cps/vcamp>). Homework and research assistance is also offered through class presentations by the Distance Education Librarian.

4. Tutoring Services

SMARTHINKING is an online tutoring service that is accessible to all Bethel University College of Professional Studies students 24/7. The service provides three convenient options for students to receive support. All SMARTHINKING e-instructors are competent in their specific disciplines with the majority holding a master's degree or terminal degree. SMARTHINKING is accessible from the Virtual Campus website.

5. Mission Statement

The mission of Bethel University is to create opportunities for members of the learning community to develop to their highest potential as whole persons - intellectually, spiritually, socially, and physically - in a Christian environment through synchronous and asynchronous modes.

6. Student Conduct

The University expects its students to enjoy and nurture this academic community whose purpose is to be a Christian institution of learning. They are expected to help sustain the University's values. It is the University's goal that all members of the community adhere to a set of ethical and behavioral standards that are reflected by the rules that apply to students. Students are thus expected to be honest, respectful of others, helpful to the University's pursuit of its purpose, and law abiding.

Facilitator Commitment:

1. **Availability:** Review posted office hours in virtual campus or contact me to schedule a phone call, online chat, etc.
2. **Responsiveness:** I will respond to all emails and phone calls in a timely manner, usually within 24 hours.
3. **Engagement:** I will post weekly announcements and lead in-class activities.
4. **Grading and Feedback:** I will return your graded assignments with constructive feedback within one week.

Essay Rubric

Rubric	“A” 90-100%	“B” 80-89%	“C” 70-79%	“D” 60-69%	“F” Below 60%
Articulates Subject Matter Competency 60%	Shows serious contemplation of readings Contains original thought that demonstrates superior understanding	Indicates reading was completed Addresses some of the questions' implications	Relies solely on textbook Addresses questions without discussing implications	Suggests reading assignment was scanned, but not read carefully Superficially addresses questions	Gives little indication that the reading assignment was completed Answers vaguely relevant to questions
Source Use and APA Format 15%	Meets requirement for source count Nearly flawless APA format Source integration validates writer's points	Meets requirement for source count Minimal APA format flaws Very good integration of research sources	Meets requirement for source count Several APA format flaws Average integration of sources	Sources used, but minimum requirements not met Poor adherence to APA guidelines	Sources not used Significant APA format errors
Quality of Writing 25%	Clear, articulate, and persuasive Correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling Meets minimum word count requirements	Contains minor errors that do not diminish meaning Minor mechanical/ document errors Meets minimum word count requirements	Contains several proofing errors and organization issues Contains mechanical/ document errors Meets minimum word count requirements	Assignment is disorganized and hard to follow Multiple grammar and punctuation errors Fails to meet word count requirements	Contains numerous errors Answer very difficult to read and understand Fails to meet word count requirements
Timing 10 % per day deduction	Submitted on time	Submitted on time	Submitted on time	Submitted on time	Not submitted by the deadline.