

The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

THE NEW TESTAMENT REL 3330
T-R 12:30-1:45
147 West Hall

Professor L. Bennett Elder
103 Ashley Hall
Office Hrs. T-R 2-3 ;5-5:30
And by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to bring the student into the world of Jesus, the earliest Christian communities and the writings that had their origins in these communities. Our perspective is shaped by questions about the historical, cultural and social contexts in which these texts and traditions were generated. We will also seek to understand implications of theological, economic and political interests and agendas within these communities for the emerging religion that we now know as Christianity. Students will be introduced to a variety of methodological perspectives that inform Biblical Scholarship in the late 20th century and will engage in critical analysis of texts from several of these perspectives. The course is divided into three units: A Prolegomena to the Study of the New Testament; Gospel Traditions; The Emerging Church.

"General Education Outcomes."

- Religious studies, is by its very nature an inter-disciplinary and multi-cultural academic discipline. The proposed course will include social and religious customs, aesthetic expression, literature, intellectual and political history, international perspectives, and encourage the ongoing critical analysis of a student's own religious convictions and preconceptions.
- Students will use computer and information technology to access bibliographic information and resources..
- Students will be introduced to a variety of primary and secondary texts. Primary texts introduce distinctive expressions of doctrine, creed, ethics, organizational structures as well as rituals and sacred stories. Secondary sources will include poetry, novels, films, essays and commentaries that complement primary texts and incorporate an experiential dimension.
- Students will express themselves clearly, logically, and precisely in writing and in speaking, and they will demonstrate competence in reading and listening. They will display the ability to write coherently in Standard English; to speak well; to read, to understand, and to interpret the content of written materials in various disciplines; and to listen effectively and to understand different modes of communication.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultural heritages in the arts and the humanities. They will develop knowledge of sacred literature within its historical and cultural frameworks.
- Students will be required to demonstrate expertise in three areas of critical thinking. First, students will exhibit the ability to reconstruct reading assignments in written form. Second, students will appropriate the capacity to critically reflect on readings assignments. Third, students will constructively appropriate their own arguments and positions.
- Students become aware of the extent to which differing ethical codes and proscriptions reflect the cosmologies of different Christian "self-understandings."

Course Objectives

1. To cultivate students' understanding of Christianity from the modern and post modern period into the 21st century..
2. To encourage students to acknowledge the extensive diversity and pluralism intrinsic in Christian traditions.
3. To introduce students to the distinctive historical and cultural contexts that shape the direction of Christian theologies in this period.
4. To explore interpretive categories related to this topic that can include: concepts of the holy, cosmology, sacred texts, liturgical and ritual practices, doctrine, spirituality, symbol systems, hierarchical and egalitarian models of authority.
5. To challenge students to think critically and to engage of rational analysis of a variety sacred and secular data.
6. To encourage a responsible transcendence of ethnocentricity without abdicating the value of personal experience.
7. To illustrate the significance of religion as an element of cultural transformation.
8. To incorporate experimental learning opportunities in this country and abroad.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

REQUIRED TEXTS

The New Testament: A Student's Introduction, Fifth edition S.L.Harris
An Annotated Bible (The New Oxford Annotated Bible, With Apocrypha, New Revised Standard Version, preferred).

EVALUATIONS

There will be an examination following each of the three units in the course. Exam I 20 points Exam II 35 points Exam III 35 points

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

This class is designed to encourage student's discussion and participation. It is anticipated that students will come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. Your textbook provides guidelines and suggestions and exercises as excellent preparation for exams and discussions. You are permitted to take two un-excused absences throughout the term. Any additional absences will reduce your final grade by one letter grade per absence.
Attendance and Participation constitute 10 % of your grade