

NEW TESTAMENT

July 1, 2016

I. Short Description

The purpose of a New Testament core course is for students to inherit the New Testament: to know its content as well as the history, culture, and background that shaped it. After a careful survey of the setting of the New Testament, students will study the sources of the gospels and the life of Jesus Christ. This will be followed by an examination of the early church focusing on the work of Paul and the development of the Christian communities under his care. Our aim is to equip students to interpret what the New Testament meant in its own century but also be able to carry its theological meaning into our own day.

II. Thematic Core Learning Outcomes and Interpretation

A. Students will be able to....

1. learn the content of the New Testament: its central theological themes, its main historical narratives, and the names of people, events and places within that narrative
2. identify the historical setting and social environment of the New Testament writings and differentiate these from the twenty-first century contexts
3. engage various critical approaches to the New Testament and their hermeneutical methods
4. discuss biblical and theological questions with the aim of growing in their love for the triune God, the global church of Christ, their neighbor, creation, and Holy Scripture

B. Expansion and interpretation of the outcome statements

1. Learning Outcome #1: Learn the content of the New Testament: its central theological themes, its main historical narratives, and the names of people, events and places within that narrative.

In this course students will know the complete story of the New Testament, its central themes and characters. Students will have a rich exposure to each of the books of the New Testament and be able to identify the role of each book within the narrative of the whole. By *central theological themes* we refer to the major theological ideas in the teaching of Jesus and his apostles and their reading of the Old Testament that announces the advent of the messianic age. By *people, events, and places* we refer to the specifics of the New Testament narrative, its location, and its cultural context. We hope that students will not simply master the larger ideas of the New Testament but also know the particulars of its story. Students will emerge from this class confident and adept at their use of the New Testament *as a text* and competent in their knowledge of its stories and themes.

2. Learning Outcome #2: Identify the historical setting and social environment of the New Testament writings and differentiate these from the twenty-first century contexts.

In this course students will identify the main characteristics of Hellenism, including its philosophical, political, economic and cultural expressions and differentiate our modern democratic, market based, Enlightenment-infused western culture. Students will identify the key characteristics of the Roman Empire, including its emphasis on the imperial cult and its destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Students will understand Second Temple Judaism, including its translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, its nationalism as reflected in the

Hasmonean Kingdom and the First Revolt, and its apocalyptic perspective. Students will know the ancient social world as based on honor/shame and differentiate that from modern western cultures' focus on guilt.

3. Learning Outcome #3: Engage various critical approaches to the New Testament and their hermeneutical methods.

In this course students will be oriented to contemporary critical approaches to New Testament studies. Topics such as textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism, narrative criticism, and social-scientific criticism will be introduced at a level appropriate to the course. Students will engage hermeneutical perspectives and exegetical methods. Discussion of the role of authors, texts, contexts, and readers will form a framework for helping students become faithful interpreters. They will learn to read texts within their historical, canonical, and linguistic contexts and be introduced to approaches of contextualization.

4. Learning Outcome #4: Discuss biblical and theological questions with the aim of growing in their love for the triune God, the global church of Christ, their neighbor, creation, and Holy Scripture.

Through class discussion, papers, or essay exams, students will discuss profound questions that arise from the history or culture in which the biblical text was written, the words of the text, and its narrative or rhetorical structure. Theological questions could include how the text points us to think about God, his character and actions, the identity of humanity, our salvation, our relationships, and the redemption of all creation. Students will become acquainted with the complexity and trustworthiness of Scripture and desire to study it more and in so doing grow in the knowledge and love of God, the church, their neighbor, and God's creation.

III. Guidelines

A. Expanded Description

None given.

B. Connection between area outcomes (Part 2 above) and the 12 overall program goals of Christ at the Core (see pp. 8-9 of the Proposal).

1. Student learning outcomes #1 and #2 require students to learn the contents of each New Testament book and the historical and social context(s) in which they emerged. This includes not only their over-arching theological and narrative themes but also the particularities of each book, including key names, events, and places. These outcomes promote "Christ at the Core," Holistic Learning Goal #3: "understanding the contours of theological, cultural, and intellectual traditions" and "Christ at the Core," Wisdom Goal #1: "developing a substantive understanding of the Bible, theology, and the history of the church as a foundation for godly living and distinctly Christian learning."

2. Student learning outcome #2 further addresses the significance of historical and social location of the interpreter. By studying the New Testament in its ancient context, students should begin to understand the significance of differentiating their own modern context from that the ancient contexts represented in the New Testament. This outcome promotes "Christ at the Core," Holistic Learning Goal #4: "engaging constructively with racial, cultural, social, and religious diversity

with the goal of learning to treasure the breadth and scope of Christ's church and God's world" and "Christ at the Core," Wisdom Goal #3: "growing in intellectual virtue and critical self-awareness through engagement with the complex questions of history, human values, and contemporary life."

3. Student learning outcome #3 identifies critical methods and hermeneutical approaches for the study of the New Testament. Methods will be discussed and in some instances employed by students as they learn to read texts sympathetically, but critically. This outcome promotes "Christ at the Core," Holistic Learning Goal #1: "developing strong abilities to discover and evaluate information they need to draw conclusions; practicing analytical quantitative and scientific reasoning; presenting their thoughts clearly in oral and written forms; and developing skills in aesthetic engagement" and "Christ at the Core," Holistic Learning Goal #2: "pursuing varied approaches to knowledge with discernment and humility as they map both the rich connections and the conflicts among the disciplines."

4. Student learning outcome #4 emphasizes that *being* and *thinking* should result in *doing*. Through discussions, essays, papers, or exams, students will address profound questions raised by the New Testament and will reflect upon the God who reveals himself in Scripture, calls us to love Christ's church, and empowers us to love and serve the world. This outcome promotes "Christ at the Core," Wisdom Goal #2: "applying biblical principles and theological perspectives and developing the virtues required to meet the myriad challenges of their lives"; "Christ at the Core," Wisdom Goal #4: "cultivating their collaborative abilities, their capacities for independent thought and action, and their imaginative and creative faculties"; "Christ at the Core," Character Goal #2: "drawing upon their learning to serve the church and the world throughout their lives, as they respond to the call of Christ"; and "Christ at the Core," Character Goal #4: "growing in their love for others, for the created order, for Holy Scripture, for the church of Christ across the world and throughout history, and for the truth, goodness, and beauty of the Triune God."

C. Examples of Assessment

A range of rigorous assignments could provide evidence that students have successfully achieved the three Student Outcomes given in section II.A. Depending on the structure of the course, one significant assignment might be relevant for assessing more than one outcome; in other cases a series of assignments will be more appropriate. A few examples and suggested approaches are offered here as *possible inspiration* of disciplinary appropriate and rigorous options, but **use of these exact assignments is not required**. Faculty are encouraged to go beyond these or substitute other creative assignments as they develop individual courses.

1. Assessment of Outcome #1: Learn the content of the New Testament: its central theological themes, its main historical narratives, and the names of people, events and places within that narrative.

Students learn key themes, main narratives, and the names of people, events and places in short papers, in-class quizzes, daily writing assignments, objective exams, or essay questions on an exam. These instruments will demonstrate that students have learned these stated objectives for the course.

	Not acceptable	Deficient	Acceptable	Exceptional
1. Students will learn the main theological themes in the New Testament.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.
2. Students will learn the main historical narratives of the New Testament.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.
3. Students will learn the chief names, events, and places mentioned in the New Testament.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.

2. Assessment of Outcome #2: Identify the historical setting and social environment of the New Testament writings and differentiate these from the twenty-first century contexts.

Students identify key concepts, theories, and historical data in short papers or on exams or in an essay questions on an exam. These tools will demonstrate students' identification of how ancient social, political, cultural and religious context empirical analysis of social phenomena differs from other types of analysis.

	Not acceptable	Deficient	Acceptable	Exceptional
1. Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the concepts, theories, and historical data of Hellenism.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the concepts, theories, and historical data of early Roman imperial period.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the concepts, theories, and historical data of Early Judaism.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.

3. Assessment of Outcome #3: Engage various critical approaches to the New Testament and their hermeneutical methods.

Students will engage critical approaches to the study of the New Testament through quizzes and exams. Each student will undertake a single or multiple written interpretive exercises over the biblical text which demonstrates their understanding of hermeneutical principles and exegetical methodology. The interpretive exercises may also include work with critical theory.

	Not acceptable	Deficient	Acceptable	Exceptional
1. Students will be oriented to contemporary critical approaches to New Testament studies.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.
2. Students will engage hermeneutical perspectives and exegetical methods.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.
3. Students will learn to read texts within their historical, canonical, and linguistic contexts and be introduced to approaches of contextualization.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of concepts, theories, and historical data.	Attempts to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories and historical data are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of concepts, theories, and methods.

4. Assessment of Outcome #4: Discuss biblical and theological questions with the aim of growing in their love for the triune God, the global church of Christ, their neighbor, creation, and Holy Scripture.

Students will demonstrate Learning Outcome #4 as evidenced by vocal participation in class discussions or successful completion of written work in papers or essay exams. Attention to student responses will allow professors to assess if the students are equipped to understand and discuss these biblical and theological questions in the future.

	Not acceptable	Deficient	Acceptable	Exceptional
1. Students will be able to discuss Biblical questions.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of the history, culture, words, narrative, and rhetoric of the New Testament.	Student attempts to demonstrate understanding of the history, culture, words, narrative, and rhetoric of the New Testament are incomplete or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of the history, culture, words, narrative, and rhetoric of the New Testament.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of the history, culture, words, narrative, and rhetoric of the New Testament.
2. Students will be able to discuss theological questions.	Students show a complete lack of understanding of God's character and actions, the identity of humanity, our salvation, our relationships, and the redemption of all creation.	Student attempts to demonstrate understanding of God's character and actions, the identity of humanity, our salvation, our relationships, and the redemption of all creation are insufficient or incorrect.	Students are able to demonstrate understanding of concepts, theories, and God's character and actions, the identity of humanity, our salvation, our relationships, and the redemption of all creation.	Students display exceptional ability to document understanding of God's character and actions, the identity of humanity, our salvation, our relationships, and the redemption of all creation.

D. General Advice

None Given