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# NT 520 New Testament Introduction

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**NT 520**  
**NEW TESTAMENT INTRODUCTION**  
**SPRING 2005**  
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CATALOG DESCRIPTION

An introduction to (1) the literature of the New Testament in its socio-historical, literary and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the New Testament.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to help you begin to weave yourself through the maze of NT studies. During the course we will be exploring several major subject areas: 1) the history of the period in which the NT was written; 2) the social and cultural milieu in which early Christians lived; 3) the practice of the scholarly study of the NT (source, form, redaction, genre, rhetorical criticism et al.); 4) questions of introduction about the books of the NT (authorship, date, audience, structure, purpose); 5) the practice of exegesis and hermeneutics.

In terms of the cognitive content of this course there are two major components: 1) the lectures; 2) the textbooks.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In this course I intend to introduce you to the major areas of New Testament study: 1) the history, archaeology, and social milieu of the period in which the NT was written; 2) the practice of NT criticism; 3) Questions of introduction about NT documents (authorship, date, audience, structure); 4) exegesis and hermeneutics. Since most of you will be going into some form of pastoral leadership we will be examining the NT material with a view to seeing how you can best instruct your parishioners in the Word. We live in an age of Biblical illiteracy and therefore the pastor must assume pedagogical tasks in training his Sunday School leaders and other laity in the proper use of God=s Word. We will address issues of methodology as well as content in helping you gain skills in approaching the NT.

In this course I expect for you to: 1) begin to develop competence in reading the literature on the NT, and using basic commentaries and tools; 2) begin to explore the different areas and disciplines and aspects of NT studies; 3) learn how to do basic research and writing in NT studies; 4) begin to gain an understanding of the crucial nature of studying Biblical texts in their original contexts; 5) begin to understand and develop skills in basic exegesis and hermeneutics so that sermons, teaching lessons, counseling material can be prepared.

The student who successfully completes this course and masters its material will be well prepared, if they have also taken their Biblical languages, to take an exegesis course and/or a course in Biblical theology. NT 520 is foundational for the rest of the theological curriculum in that it provides the necessary historical background and foundational materials so that the theological questions can be raised in a way that takes into account that ours is a historical religion, and theological truths are rooted in historical events (e.g. the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus). In our study of the Bible as literature we will also discuss how the Bible has served as one of the cornerstones of education in the humanities throughout the ages, and how mastery of skills in reading the Bible helps in reading other classic texts that are a basis of a good education in the humanities.

In addition, the detailed study of first century culture and customs will serve as a reminder that ours is a religion that began in a culture very different from our own, and by its evangelistic nature has always intended to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries to reach people for Christ. The student who successfully crosses the cultural boundaries into the world of the NT will in principle have developed a mode of approach that should be applicable by analogy to such efforts with contemporary non-Western cultures.

Finally, since it is the Wesleyan principle that “the world is our parish” and since John Wesley also insisted that we as Christians should focus on the Word of God above all other resources we will attempt to deal with Biblical Interpretation in a way that encourages both a global missionary commitment and a continual focus on God’s Word as a part of life long learning. In part this will be accomplished by a stress on the use of different types of Bibles and translations with different audiences which allows the reaching of a wider group of people and also facilitates and encourages the ongoing study of the Word. We will review the basic Bible study tools necessary for any good teacher to convey the truths of God’s Word.

Having completed this course, students should be able:

- (1) to articulate how one’s beliefs about Scripture impinge on how one engages biblical texts in interpretation;
- (2) to identify a range of questions (e.g., historical, literary, canonical) that might be addressed to particular New Testament texts and explore those questions in the process of interpreting particular New Testament texts;
- (3) to identify significant, critical resources for New Testament study and deploy those sources critically in New Testament study;
- (4) to probe the interplay of theology and ethics in the various New Testament writers;
- (5) to demonstrate awareness of the significance of the original languages for understanding and interpreting the New Testament; and
- (6) to integrate these concerns and methodologies in a sound hermeneutical method.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be two tests, a mid-term and a final exam. These will be take home tests, but they will not be open book or open note tests. They will be open brain tests! You will however be able to use your Bibles (just don't copy all your class notes into your Bible!). You will be allowed to take whatever time you want on these tests during the week in which the test is given (i.e. you will have a one week opportunity to see the test on the web page and take it). The mid-term exam will cover the first half of the course and the final will cover the latter half. The mid-term will be given early in October.

There will be a term paper of no more than ten pages of text (plus notes and bibliography) on some subject related to the five areas covered in the course as listed above. It is due the last Thursday in October. Sample term papers are available on reserve at the library. I will expect you to follow the standard format set forth for such papers in Slade. This paper is due the last week of class. You should be prepared to use eight to ten good sources for your paper. The Bible and Webster=s dictionary do not constitute sources. Resources listed in your text books as primary and secondary sources do. I would recommend your using 2-3 good articles and 4-5 good commentaries or NT monographs. Log on to the Asbury Web page and the library line and you can survey the possibilities.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS.

- 1) B. Witherington, The New Testament Story (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).
- 2) B. Witherington, New Testament History, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001) pb.
- 3) B. Malina, The New Testament World, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster/J. Knox, 1998) pb.
- 4) J.B. Green et. al. eds The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Downers Grove: I-V Press, 1993 (hb)
- 5) G.F Hawthorne et al. eds. The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters, Downers Grove: I-V Press, 1993 (hb). These two dictionaries are excellent reference tools. If you already have these and are look for more detail try the Anchor Bible Dictionary (multiple volumes). The latter is done by authors that range from conservative to liberal, while the I-V dictionaries are done by Evangelicals.

EXTRA CREDIT H. Shanks and B. Witherington, The Brother of Jesus (San Francisco: Harper, 2003) and B. Witherington, The Gospel Code (Downers Grove: IV Press, 2004). The student must read and give a one page book review of each of these two books. If done well, this will result in an additional 2 points added to one's final average (e.g. if one finishes with a 91 average, one would then end with a 93 average).

## READING SCHEDULE

It is very important that you keep up with the reading schedule. In fact I would encourage you to start early and get ahead. The course is basically divided into five parts (see the

course description above), but we are parceling the reading out over the first three parts of the course, giving you some leeway and catch-up time at the end.

For the NT history, archaeology, social milieu portion of the course, which comes first, please read all of the two Witherington books as a general introduction and also read Malina, which is more focused on the social world issues.

For the NT criticism portion of the course you should read some of the following articles in The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: 1) form criticism; 2) Gospels (genre); 3) Gospels (historical reliability); 4) Historical Jesus, Quest; 5) Jesus in non-Christian sources; 6) L Tradition; 7) Languages of Palestine; 8) Literary criticism; 9) M tradition; 10) Myth; 11) narrative exegesis; 12) Q; 13) redaction criticism; 14) rhetorical criticism; 15) Sociological approaches to the Gospels; 16) Synoptic Problem; 17) Synoptics and John; 18) Textual criticism.

For the third portion of the course in addition to finishing the above articles you should read in The Dictionary of Paul and his Letters: 1) Apocalypticism; 2) authority; 3) Chronology of Paul; 4) Hermeneutics; 5) Letter forms; 6) Old Testament in Paul; 7) Paul and his Interpreters; 8) Paul in Acts and Letters; 9) Paul in early church tradition; 10) Rhetorical criticism; 11) Social scientific approaches to Paul; 12) Textual Criticism.

For the fourth portion of the course, all articles on individual Gospels and Letters in the two dictionaries should be read (e.g. John, Gospel of; Romans, letter to).

NOTE: I will be asking on the two exams how much of the required reading you have done. This will affect borderline grades (pushing them up or down).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-3: Will be dealing with history, archaeology, the social world

Weeks 3-8: Will be on NT criticism

Weeks 9-11: Will be on NT Introduction

Weeks 12-13: Will be on exegesis and hermeneutics

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Please read all of the documents in “Learning the Online Classroom”, which you will find in the online classroom.

The first assignment due will be the book critique or case study. It must be submitted during week four of the class (03/04/2005). Week 9 the midterm will be given (04/04/2005). The term paper will be due the last week of class (05/09/2005), and the final exam will be posted the last day of class (05/13/2005).

## COURSE MATERIAL PROTOCOLS

You may submit your papers electronically by attaching a document to an e mail message, however the format you use must be user friendly for me. This means one of the following formats needs to be used for me to download: 1) Microsoft Word; 2) Word Perfect 11. Please specify the format in the email message with the document.

### **ExL Contact Information:**

For **general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program**, contact Dale Hale:

[ExL\\_Office@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu)

Phone: (859) 858-2393

For **technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media** contact Information Commons:

[Info\\_Commons@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu)

Phone: (859) 858-2233

Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

### **Accessing Information Commons Materials:**

#### **1. General Questions:**

§ The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/hours.shtml>.

#### **2. Materials Requests:**

§ To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:

<http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml>

§ ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/reference books from Asbury Seminary's Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.

§ ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources.

Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

#### **3. Research Questions:**

§ ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help choosing a paper topic, determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

#### **4. Online Databases:**

§ To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to <http://www.asburyseminary.edu/icommons/index.shtml> and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).