American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

Social, Behavioral and Cultural Studies
REL 212
Introduction to the New Testament
3 Credit Hours
8 Week Course
Prerequisite(s): None

** IMPORTANT – Print out this Syllabus and read the entire document prior to submitting any of the assignments **

Instructor Information

Instructor:  Mark D. Wessner, PhD

Course Description

The New Testament consists of numerous types of literature, and reflects a variety of viewpoints of Jesus and his followers. As a detailed exploration of the historical context, literary styles and theological themes of each of the books of the New Testament, this course serves as an overview of current New Testament studies and also as a launching pad for further study of both Jesus and the first Christians

Course Scope

An eight week study of the historical context, development, literary styles and theological themes of each of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. We will explore the text from both historical-critical and literary perspectives, observing the strengths and weakness of each approach.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the cultural, political and religious background of each New Testament book,
2. Describe the historical development and intended purpose of each book,
3. Identify and assess the various critical approaches to studying the New Testament,
4. Identify and explain the central themes of each book as well as the themes running through the New Testament as a whole, and
5. Discuss the influence of the New Testament in both the early and modern Church.

Course Delivery Method

This B.A. in Religious Studies course delivered via distance learning will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be made available to each student. **Online assignments are due by the date listed in the Educator classroom** and are described in the Evaluation Procedures section below.

While Distance Learning provides some flexibility in when you choose to conduct your studies, you are expected to follow the syllabus and turn in your assignments on time and on schedule. As a general rule we should interact weekly, primarily using email or other on-line means. If necessary, you may arrange to call me to talk one-on-one. Of course, you are always welcome to email me at any time throughout the course with any questions, problems or comments you may have.

Real learning takes place as you carefully process the information through higher order thinking skills such as comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (it is not simply taking in information from outside sources - a book, teacher, web site, field experience, etc). Your performance in this class will be based on your demonstration of your learning, not by simply repeating back basic facts (your knowledge of the facts will become clear as you demonstrate higher order thinking skills). In all you that do in this class, you should always remember to use higher order thinking skills, as described below:

1) Comprehension: demonstrates the ability to grasp meaning, explain, and restate ideas,
2) Application: demonstrates the ability to use learned material in new situations,
3) Analysis: demonstrates the ability to separate material into component parts and show relationships between parts,
4) Synthesis: demonstrates the ability to put together the separate ideas to form a new whole, to establish new relationships, and
5) Evaluation: demonstrates the ability to judge the worth of material against stated criteria.

**Note** – during the first week of the class, please complete the One Minute Skills Survey in the classroom. This anonymous survey will help me get a good sense of where we all are, in terms of online learning skills.
Course Materials

**Required Texts**


An English translation of the New Testaments that you readily understand.

**Recommended Texts**


**Software Requirements**

Microsoft Office (MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint)

Adobe Acrobat Reader (Click here for free download)

**Evaluation Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Reflection Papers</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review of one of the four Gospels</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Reading</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The learning goals and benefits of each of the assignments overlap, but as a way of highlighting the types of skills that each assignment stresses, please review this summary:

- Reflection Papers - Personal interaction with the subject matter
- Book Review - Critical thinking about the subject matter
- Research Paper - Synthesis and engagement with the subject matter
- Required Reading - Knowledge of the subject matter
- Final Exam - Retention of the subject matter

1. There will be ongoing interactive Discussion Board activity, in a question and
answer, etc format that is open to all class members.
   a. Please post any questions or comments you may have related to the topics we
      are studying each week. Be sure you have completed all of the assigned
      reading prior to posting your question(s).
   b. Current news articles can also be posted - if you find an interesting and
      relevant article about the study of religion that you want to post, please do so.

2. The weekly readings, while not part of your final grade, are intended to improve your
   understanding of and familiarity with the course material. The benefits are twofold:
   a. You will learn the material faster, and
   b. You will be ready for the final exam (no end-of-semester cramming!).

3. Please complete your homework in MS-Word format and label each file with your
   name and the assignment title. For example, if I was a student, I would label the
   first reflection paper as “MarkWessner-ReflectionPaper1.doc”. Please follow this
   labeling format during the course, and upload your homework files to the appropriate
   Assignment section of the classroom.

4. The University offers tools in the Online Library (a great resource!) to help you
   analyze your papers for possible plagiarism violations.
   a. You are required to upload the Turnitin.com Originality Report into the
      APUS classroom assignment area, at the same time that you upload your
      paper for grading.
   b. In instances of plagiarism, there will be no opportunity to resubmit the
      assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
<th>Grading Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>93-90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>89-97</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>86-84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>83-80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>Average/Minimum Performance Level Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>76-73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>72-70</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>69-67</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>66-64</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>63-60</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>59-00</td>
<td>Failing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>Incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>Dropped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>Withdrawn Passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>Withdrawn Failing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>Audit grade: No Academic Credit awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Course Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Reading(s)</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Historical Background Approaching the Gospels | Wenham, pp. ix-80  
Gundry, pp. xvii - 89  
Matthew 1-28 | Reflection Paper #1 |
| 2    | Understanding the Gospels Today The Historical Jesus | Wenham, pp. 81-187  
Gundry, pp. 90-122  
Mark 1-16 | |
| 3    | Mark, Matthew, Luke and John | Wenham, pp. 191-264  
Gundry, pp. 124-297  
Luke 1-24 | Reflection Paper #2 |
| 4    | Acts The World of the First Century Life of Paul | Wenham, pp. 267-300  
Gundry, pp. 298-344  
Marshall, pp. xi-45  
Acts 1-28 | |
| 5    | Galatians, Thessalonians and Corinthians | Gundry, pp. 346-391  
Marshall, pp. 47-104  
Romans – Galatians | Reflection Paper #3 |
| 6    | Romans, Phillipians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Timothy and Titus | Gundry, pp. 392-454  
Marshall, pp. 105-191  
Ephesians – Hebrews | Book Review |
| 7    | Theology of Paul New Testament Letters | Gundry, pp. 456-492  
Marshall, pp. 193-287 | Research Paper |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrews, James, Peter and Jude</th>
<th>James – Revelation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **8** John and the Revelation Conclusion | Gundry, pp. 492-528  
Marshall, pp. 289-328 | Reading Report  
Final Exam |