Honors New Testament  
Dr. Frank Nichols  
SYLLABUS  
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Mission Statement of Saint Louis University

The Mission of Saint Louis University is the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity. The University seeks excellence in the fulfillment of its corporate purposes of teaching, research and community service. It is dedicated to leadership in the continuing quest for understanding of God’s creation, and for the discovery, dissemination and integration of the values, knowledge and skills required to transform society in the spirit of the Gospels. As a Catholic, Jesuit university, the pursuit is motivated by the inspiration and values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and is guided by the spiritual and intellectual ideals of the Society of Jesus.

Five Dimensions of the Saint Louis University Experience

Reflecting its mission, Saint Louis University strives to engage its students in five interrelated dimensions contributing to the development of the whole person: scholarship and knowledge, intellectual inquiry and communication, community building, leadership and service, and spirituality and values.

1. Scholarship and Knowledge

By developing a well-rounded educational foundation which incorporates learning through experience, by becoming scholars in their chosen fields, and by dedicating themselves to the advancement of knowledge, students are prepared for advanced study, for their careers, and for lifelong learning.

This study of the New Testament will enrich the student’s understanding of the roots of Christianity and of its world. Christianity and the Bible are backgrounds of much of modern society. Understanding the New Testament prepares students to understand their world and other people better.

2. Intellectual Inquiry and Communication

By developing the abilities of intellectual inquiry and communication, students are able to learn effectively, express ideas and concepts clearly, and apply their knowledge to new situations they encounter.

This critical study of the New Testament will teach students how to read ancient texts. These habits of mind will also apply to reading any text, even modern ones. Students will have to undertake a scholarly study of one specific question in New Testament and express their results in a paper researched and articulated in scholarly form. Students will also be required to explain and discuss intelligently the textbook and biblical readings with the teacher and with other students.
3. Community Building
By welcoming and working with others, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender, students build an inclusive community which leads to respect and compassion for human life and the dignity of each person.

_Students in this class will come from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds. In this class students will have to discuss these important texts and traditions with other students who might see these texts and traditions differently. Together students will form a community of diverse outlooks working in harmony and tolerance._

4. Leadership and Service
By serving others and by promoting social justice, students become men and women for others who lead by their example.

_Though this course will not require specific social justice assignments, study of the New Testament and of Christian tradition will encourage students to learn from and be inspired by biblical ideals and the spirit of early Christian communities._

5. Spirituality and Values
By developing their spirituality, values, and openness to the transcendent, students determine principles to guide their actions and their relationships with others.

_Studying the New Testament for a semester will mean not only scientific analysis, but students will be encouraged to see how the biblical traditions open up windows on transcendence and will inspire students to think about what these traditions mean to them personally._

**SLU Undergraduate Core Requirements**

This course is part of the Saint Louis University’s undergraduate core requirements. See the explanation of the core requirements in the College of Arts and Science at [http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/what_is_the_core_1.html](http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/what_is_the_core_1.html). All or part of this core is shared by the other undergraduate schools of the university. Note especially that the university curriculum aims at “the development of the whole person,” and that, among other goals, it strives to provide a “broad foundation of knowledge in the Humanities.” The Core also fosters “intellectual inquiry” generally. The theology part of the core (three courses for A&S students) includes (1) 100 level discovery (Theological Foundations), (2) insight (200 level courses like this one), and integration (300 level courses that applies “theological insight to specific social and cultural contexts.”)

This course therefore aims at a deeper insight into the Christian meaning of “church” and a more mature understanding of “church” through critical intellectual inquiry. Thus, this course should help Christians understand themselves and their own specific community better, as it at the same time also helps non-Christians understand Christians and the world we all share better.

The university core courses are not some useless extra at Saint Louis University. From the point of view of the basic goals of the university, the core courses are the most important part of the undergraduate experience. We all have jobs and tasks in life. Most majors and minors prepare students for that. But we are first of all human beings and part of the human family. We need to be prepared for playing our roles in that dimension of life as well.
Course Description

This course is a survey introduction to the whole New Testament. The basic approach to the New Testament can be described as “historical-critical.” That is, the various writings of the New Testament will be examined in the light of their literary and historical contexts. This means that New Testament writing will be compared with other similar ancient writings. The historical context and purposes of each of the books of the New Testament will be taken into account. Students will read both a middle-of-the-road but scholarly introduction to the New Testament composed for college students and embracing the historical-critical approach this course emphasizes. Students will also read carefully and analytically all the books of the New Testament. The teacher will at the same time point out the theological and religious import of the New Testament and its various parts, and will, to some extent balance the purely historical-critical interest of the textbook.

Students who are religious will have their faith refined and nuanced, but they will be also challenged to integrate modern scholarly analysis of the Bible into their own faith commitments. No student will be required to agree with the textbook or with the teacher, but all students must be able to explain the reasoning of the textbook and teacher. Students who are not religious will not be at any disadvantage. They can understand and learn from an analysis of these texts. This study will also enable them to understand what intelligent, modern, Christian faith is all about.

Textbooks


Any English version of the Bible may be used, but *The Revised Standard Version* and *The New American Version* are especially recommended.

Course Goals

1. A basic understanding of the contents of the New Testament.
3. A basic understanding of the main historical and literary techniques used by scholars to analyze the Bible.
4. A basic knowledge of the main library tools for the study of the Bible.

Course Skills

1. An ability to read biblical texts critically.
2. An ability to understand technical theological vocabulary as it relates to the study of the Bible.
3. An ability to do basic research on Biblical topics.

Daily Assignments

The reading plan for the course is detailed under Schedule below. Students must come to class having carefully read the assigned chapters in the textbook. Students are also strongly urged to carefully read the corresponding books of the NT as they come up in the textbook analysis. Ideally, first read the NT book. Then read the textbook. Then reread the NT book again. All students who hope the get an A in this course will do all this. Since some textbook chapters do not have a NT book directly connected with it, and since some NT books and the textbook analysis are quite lengthy and sometimes difficult, students should do the NT reading ahead of the actual time when the book will be discussed in class.
Since each class is primarily a discussion of the textbook and the NT—and not simply the teacher repeating what the textbook says—students must come to every class having done the corresponding readings. In addition, students must present a one-page contribution to the discussion for each class. This one-page comment can be a question or questions raised by the reading, a topic that surprised or puzzled the student, something the student thinks is just wrong or incomprehensible, or a comment simulated by the reading that the student thinks would be useful for the whole class to discuss. These one-page comment essays are graded and returned with comments.

Each class will begin with one student (assigned ahead of time) summarizing the textbook reading for the day. She or he will suggest one to three questions that the class might discuss.

**Research Paper**

All students must do an 8 to 12 page research paper for this course. It must be on a topic connected with the New Testament. Many ideas will come up as the course unfolds, but all students must have a firm idea of a topic by mid-term. Topics should be narrow and do-able in a reasonable time frame. It is essential to talk with the teacher about this so that a student does not become overwhelmed. It can be on just a certain verse of the New Testament, or on a more general topic like Women in Paul or Baptism in the New Testament or The Authorship of James. Dr. Ron Crown in the reference section of the Pius Library has a doctorate in biblical studies from Oxford as well as a library science degree. He is an invaluable resource for ideas about how to go about doing research in this area. The paper must have a thesis (not just a bag of facts about a topic) and must be in correct MLA or Chicago Manual of Style or Turabian format. More details about this assignment are specified on Backboard. Be sure to read and follow those directions carefully. This paper is due at the time of the final exam, Monday, May 11, but it would be wise to finish it much earlier. A topic must be chosen by April 14, a bibliography by April 21. Drafts of the paper can be submitted for review up till April 28.

**Tests**

There will be two tests, a mid-term and a final exam. These tests will each have two parts. The first part will be definition of terms and identification of biblical texts. The terms can be found at the end of each chapter of the textbook and are defined at the end of the textbook. Students will be expected to give a definition of each—no mere matching. Then there will be a selection of biblical texts to identify. The second part of the exam will be several essay questions based on the list of summary questions posted on Blackboard. These questions are fairly general and will summarize key topics from the course.

**Attendance and Class Participation**

Regular and on-time attendance at all classes is required. All absences must be explained in writing by way of an e-mail to <nicholfw@slu.edu>. Frequent tardiness will be regarded as absences. Attendance also means active participation in the class. Especially in an Honors course, active participation in class discussions is essential.

**University Lectures and Other Events**

All students are required to attend at least three University lectures or other University events related to theology from a series of events that will be indicated to the class in the course of the semester and posted on Blackboard. Students should do a one-page report commenting on the lecture or other event, giving some sense of what was significant or interesting. The report should show evidence of having attended and having thought about what was said or what took place. Students are encouraged to attend and report on even more than the three required.
Grades

The following are the standards for grades in the Department of Theological Studies:

*A grades* represent *superior, exceptional, outstanding* achievement, presuming a demonstration of critical, creative theological understanding.

*B grades* represent *good* command of theology, representing an above average grasp of the material and a demonstration of ability to express that understanding cogently.

*C grades* represent *acceptable* work in this course, implying a basic understanding of the main themes involved and a satisfactory fulfillment of all assignments.

*D grades* represent *below average* work in the course, failing to demonstrate a firm grasp on the material and the concepts addressed and an unsatisfactory record of work on assignments.

*F grades* represent *unsatisfactory* work in the course based on an inability to show competence in the material studies and/or a failure to attend class and submit work adequate to fulfill the requirements of the course.

In this course, there is no merely mechanical formula for determining grades. Honors students are presumed to be excellent students, and they should not be penalized with unreasonable standards just because they are taking an Honors course. However, an A grade still represents truly exceptional and outstanding work. It will not be granted easily. A- is also available in the College of Arts and Sciences, and it too represents outstanding work. B+ represents very good work in this course and the same for B. Normally Honors students would not receive a lower grade, but just average work or something less will in fact result in C, D or F grades. In general the course requirements described above should be regarded as a minimum.

The standards above are primary, but from a statistical point of view the following scale will be also be consulted:

Daily papers 100 = points (250/2.5); Mid-term = 100 points; Final = 100 points; Research Paper = 100 points; Classroom Participation 100 points.

Classroom participation will be based on attendance, submission of quality comments, active participation in classroom discussion, evidence in class of having read the textbook and the Bible. Reporting on at least three recommended university events is also included in participation.

Basically the percentage to letter grade formula is as follows:

A=100-96, A-=95-93, B+=92-90%, B=89-85%,
C+=84-82%, C=81-77%, D=76-70%, F=69-0%.

Disability Statement

Any student who feels that he or she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course as outlined in the syllabus, due to presence of a disability, should contact the office of Disabilities Services. Telephone the office at (314) 977-8885, or visit room 331 in the Busch Student Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate
them according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion by the University.

**Course Evaluation**

Students will be e-mailed a course evaluation form to fill out during the last week of the semester. It is very important that all students fill out these forms carefully. All entries are anonymous. Teachers can see who has responded but not how. After grades are turned in, teachers can see summaries of the class responses.

**Reading Schedule**

January

13  T  Introductions & Discussion of English Versions of the Bible
15  R  Chs 1 & 30 Early Christian Literature & the Text of the New Testament
20  T  Ch 2 The Early Christian World
22  R  Ch 3 The Jews of Jesus’ Day
27  T  Chs 4 & 5 The Greco-Roman World and Its Literature
29  R  Chs 6 & 7 The Gospel according to Mark & the Synoptic Problem
Also read carefully the Gospel of **Mark**

February

3   T  Ch 8 The Gospel according to Matthew
Also read carefully the Gospel of **Matthew**
5   R  Ch 9 The Gospel according to Luke
Also read carefully the Gospel of **Luke**
10  T  Ch 10 The Acts of the Apostles
Also read carefully the **Acts of the Apostles**
12  R  Ch 11 The Gospel according to John
Also read carefully the Gospel of **John**
17  T  Ch 12 The Johannine Epistles
Also read carefully the **three Epistles of John**
19  R  Ch 13 Non-Canonical Gospels
24  T  Chs 14 & 15 The Historical Jesus & Miracles
26  R  Ch 16 Jesus’ World and Oppression
3   T  Review
5   R  **Mid-Term Exam**
Spring Break

17 T  Dr. Ron Crown and New Testament Research Methods

19 R  Ch 17 Jesus, an Apocalyptic Prophet

24 T  Chs 18 & 19 Jesus to the Gospels & Paul the Apostle

26 R  Ch 20 1 Thessalonians
      Also read carefully 1 Thessalonians

31 T  Ch 21 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians & Philemon
      Also read carefully 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians & Philemon

April

2 R  Ch 22 & 23 Romans & Paul, Jesus, James, Thecla, Theudas
      Also read carefully Romans

7 T  Ch 24 The Deutero-Pauline & Pastoral Epistles
      Also read carefully Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Thessalonians

14 T  Ch 25 Paul and Women

16 R  Ch 26 Christians and Jews & Hebrews
      Also read carefully Hebrews

21 T  Ch 27 Christians and Pagans & 1 Peter
      Also read carefully 1 Peter

23 R  Ch 28 Christians and Christians & James, Jude, 2 Peter
      Also read carefully James, Jude, 2 Peter

28 T  Ch 29 Christians and the Cosmos & Revelations
      Also read carefully Revelations

30 R  Review

May

11 M  Final Exam 12:00-1:50 PM and submission of research paper
Close Reading Selections

As the reading assignments above indicate, the ideal is to read the whole New Testament during this course. Human nature being what it is and students feeling time pressures as they do, many students don’t seem to manage the whole New Testament. The following is an attempt to suggest some parts of the New Testament that students should at least read carefully. The New Testament books are arranged in the order used in the textbook.

Gospel of Mark
- The Ministry of Jesus 1-6
- The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus 14-16
- 1, 2, 3 Letters of John (read all)
- 1 Thessalonians (read all)

Gospel of Matthew
- Infancy Narrative 1-2
- Sermon on the Mount 5-7
- Thirteen Parables 13
- Apocalyptic Discourse 24
- Resurrection Narrative 28
- 1 Corinthians
  - Read at least 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16
- Galatians 1-2
- Philemon (read all)

Gospel of Luke
- Infancy Narrative 1-2
- Sermon on the Plain 6
- Several of the Parables Unique to Luke:
  - The Good Samaritan 10:30-37
  - The Rich Fool 12:16-21
  - The Lost Son 15:11-32
  - The Dishonest Steward 16:1-13
  - The Rich Man and Lazarus 16:19-31
  - The Pharisee and Tax Collector 18:9-14
- Resurrection Narrative 24
- Romans
  - Read at least 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16
- 1, 2 Timothy and Titus (read all)
- Hebrews
  - Read at least 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 13
- 1, 2 Peter (read all)
- James (read all)
- Revelation
  - Read at least 1, 4, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22

Acts of the Apostles
- Foundation of the Church
- and the Conversion of Paul 1-9

Gospel of John
- Introductory Passages 1
- Nicodemus 2
- Samaritan Woman 4
- Bread of Life 6
- Man Born Blind 9
- Lazarus 11
- Part of the Last Supper Discourses 13-15
- Resurrection Narrative 20-21