

SYLLABUS for BibSt-Fdn 2 (additions or changes possible and likely)
Spring Semester, MESOM, 2021
INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT
PART TWO—APOSTLES, EPISTLES, AND APOCALYPSE: The Best of the
Rest of the New Testament

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Course Description

This course will cover the remainder of the New Testament after the Gospels and Acts. St. Paul and his epistles will feature prominently, since thirteen of the writings are attributed to him (though only seven are undisputedly from his hand). The names of other apostles and Pauline associates are linked to the rest, and the canonical closer is that mysterious, maddening, terrible, and beautiful work "The Apocalypse of John," more commonly known as "The Book of Revelation." The emphasis will be primarily on what Paul's epistles and the others reveal about the evolution of the Jesus movement from the death of Jesus throughout the rest of the first century and into the second. We will look at the challenges the nascent church faced, both internal and external, the variety of early Christian practices and beliefs, and the gradual (and sometimes bitter) separation from its parent body, Second Temple Judaism.

Some of the later class sessions are not fully fleshed out, but changes or additions to the syllabus will be announced well in advance by postings on Google Classroom.

Required Books

These books will be used for both New Testament courses—Gospels and Epistles. Both are available from Amazon and/or Cokesbury. There are a limited number of copies of *The Bible Says. . .* that will be available to registered students at the author's discount price of \$10. These will be sent from the MESOM office to those requesting them, around the beginning of September.

1. A Study Bible, preferably hardcover. Currently, there are two excellent, ecumenically-oriented study Bibles. The standard one from which certain readings will be assigned is the New Oxford NRSV. All required readings will be from the New Oxford.

New Oxford Annotated Bible: NRSV with the Apocrypha. Coogan, Michael D. (ed.), Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins (assoc. eds.). 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN-10: 0195289552. ISBN-13: 978-0195289558. If you already have an earlier edition, that will do.

If finances permit, I urge you to consider owning the second, the CEB Study Bible (below) though it will not be required. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and the Common English Bible (CEB) are both the work of a broad-based ecumenical team of scholars and translators. Since the CEB is the newest ecumenical translation, it has a different generation of scholarly contributors, and these

two will serve in parish settings adequately for most preaching, teaching, and liturgical/worship preparation. The CEB Study Bible has even more extensive sidebar articles and textual apparatus than the NRSV.

(CEB) *The CEB Study Bible with Apocrypha*, ed. CEB and Joel B. Green, Nashville, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-60926-028-6

2. Powell, Mark Allan, *Introducing the New Testament*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2009, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9960-1.
3. Warren Carter & Amy-Jill Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4267-4190-6
4. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*, Harper San Francisco, 2004. ISBN 0-06-05147-4.
5. N.T. Wright: *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. ISBN-10: 0800663578" and/or "ISBN-13: 978-0800663575.
6. *Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism*, ed., Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich & Jason Maston. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-310-56623-6.

Recommended Books

Since the New Testament did not arise in a cultural and historical vacuum, it is important to understand the political, religious, cultural, and sociological background out of which these writings emerged. The three books below will offer such context. While they will not be required reading, they are recommended for acquiring a deeper understanding of the origins of both the Christian faith and the writings produced by the first-century followers of Jesus, and in particular, those written by Paul and his heirs.

1. J. Christiaan Beker, *Heirs of Paul: Paul's Legacy in the New Testament and in the Church Today*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. ISBN: 0-8006-2525-0.
2. _____, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. ISBN: 0-8006-2438-6.
3. Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, & Politics in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Viking Press. 2012. ISBN: 978-0-670-02334-9.
4. John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus*, Harper Collins, NY, 1998. ISBN: 0-06-061660-1.
5. Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-300-12581-8.

General Requirements

The course will be conducted virtually using a combination of Zoom and Google Classroom. The Zoom sessions will include lecture/presentations by the professor, class discussions, sometimes in breakout zoom rooms and sometimes in the whole group. In each class, I will introduce the material and speak to it sufficiently to impart essential information for discussion. The amount of lecture vs. open discussion will vary according to the level of prior background knowledge represented by the participants. But questions, comments, challenges, will always be welcome at any point. Each class session may include discussion of the assigned readings from the required texts. I will also send you by email prior to the first class a step-by-step method for biblical study that you may find helpful in preparing sermons or Bible studies.

Google Classroom will be used primarily for downloading assignments and uploading your written work. If you are unfamiliar with Google Classroom, begin now to acquaint yourself with it with one of the many video tutorials available on the Internet.

1. You are expected to read the assigned readings from the required books *in advance* of the class in which they will be discussed and reflect on your reactions to the readings in 2-4 pages to be submitted on Google Classroom one day before the next class.
2. You will be responsible for preparing a 2-5 pp reflection on a particular biblical text or topic, which I will assign for each session and post on Google Classroom under the “Class Work” tab. You will upload that to Google Classroom on the due date..
3. One sermon of approximately 2000-2500 words **or** a presentation, (e.g. Bible Study) on an assigned text or topic. The sermons will be written in manuscript form. (the usual double-spaced, 12-point serif font, e.g., Times Roman). If you choose the presentation (Bible Study), I’ll want to see your interpretive process with extensive notes, and your ideas for class presentation and discussion.

Before the first class

1. If you have not already done so, read the Introductory pages at the beginning of the New Testament in the NRSV New Oxford Study Bible (pp. i-x) If you do have both the NRSV and the CEB study Bibles, look at the introductory material in both, since they offer somewhat different perspectives. Also read the Introduction to the Carter-Levine book (pp.1-16).
2. Read the Wikipedia articles on the Pauline epistles at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_epistles and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorship_of_the_Pauline_epistles. These articles, more or less represent the mainstream scholarly consensus on the Pauline epistles. The chronology of the letters cited in the first article is probably held by a majority of scholars, but in recent years, that debate has reopened, with the alternative view placing 1 Thessalonians as early as 41 C.E. This is the view that the Carter/Levine book accepts.
3. Read Powell, pp. 1-93 and 205-269 (if you were not in the Gospels course or have not yet read these sections of Powell).
4. Read the Preface, Prologue, and Ch. 1-2 in Crossan’s *In Search of Paul*.

5. Read the Preface and Ch. 1 in Wright's *Paul: A Fresh Perspective*.
6. Write a 3-page (one page for each question) reflection focusing on the following three points:
 - 1) What was your personal impression of Paul and his writings *before* you began this study?
 - 2) What new insights have you already gained from the readings alone?
 - 3) What questions about Paul/his writings do you want to explore further? Don't waste time or space summarizing the readings—be succinct and concentrate on the three points of focus. Send your reflections to me at least three days prior to the first class, i.e. by February 10.

Class Schedule

Class One—February 13

Introductions

Lecture/Discussion—*The World of Paul and Earliest Christianity*

PP Presentation—*Biblical Turkey*

Break

Lecture/Discussion—*The Quest for the Real Paul*

Reading Assignment for Class Two:

1. Read *1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans* **Always read the assigned scriptures before reading Powell and Carter-Levine.** Try to read each of these epistles in one sitting in order to get a grasp of the whole, paying attention to any indications of the occasion that motivated the author to write, as well as the main flow of the argument or subject under discussion, noticing any anomalies or confusing passages or questions that arise.
2. Chapters 13-16, in Powell; chs. 6-9, 13 (1Thess. section) in Carter-Levine.
3. Chapters 3-4 in Crossan; chs. 2-4 in Wright
4. Stendahl essay: *Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West* (Classroom)

Assignment for Class 2 to be posted on Classroom

Class Two—March 13

Lecture/Discussion: *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles—Call and Mission*

Break

Lecture/Discussion: *Paul's Gospel—Apocalyptic Shape/ Coherent Center and Contingent Application*
Romans, Stendahl essay, Stowers reading

Reading Assignment for next class session:

1. Read *Philippians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. Again, read each one at one sitting if possible.
2. The chapters on each of these writings in Powell chs. 13, 17, 18, 22, 23; Carter-Levine: 6, 10, 12, 13 (2 Thess. section) 14, 15.
3. Wright Chs. 5-6
4. Crossan Chs. 5-6 in Crossan

Assignment for class 3: To be posted on Classroom

Class Three—April 10

Lecture/Discussion— *From Paul to Pauline Tradition*

Lunch break

Lecture/discussion—*Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians; 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*

Reading Assignment for Class 4:

1. Read 1 & 2 Peter, James, 1-3 John, Jude, Hebrews, Revelation
2. Read relevant chapters in Carter-Levine 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
3. Wright ch. 7-8
4. Chapters 7 and Epilogue in Crossan

Assignment for Class 4 to be posted on Classroom

Class Four—May 8

Lecture/Discussion— *“Fightings Within and Fears Without”—Catholic or General Epistles*

Reading Assignment for Class 5:

1. Read *“Revelation in Context,”*
2. Read Pagels, *“Revelations”*
3. Read the Wikipedia articles on John Nelson Darby, Dispensationalism, Rapture, Left Behind series, or similar modern trends regarding the interpretation of the Book of Revelation.

Class Five—May 22

Lecture/Discussion—*Apocalypse When? Making sense of the most intriguing, mysterious, infuriating, and provocative writing in the New Testament.*