

## **New Testament History and Religion BIB 102**

Point Loma Nazarene University  
Fall 2015  
Tues & Thurs 9:30-10:45am

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Office Hours: See schedule on door

### **Course Description and Purpose**

This course is designed to open a conversation (that will hopefully last a lifetime) about the New Testament. The class provides an introduction to (1) the literature/content of the New Testament in its social, historical, literary, and theological contexts; and (2) the critical study of the New Testament. Along these lines, this course is designed as a *journey*, which serves to introduce the student to the basic content of the divine-human drama that unfolds within the pages of the Bible and to equip the student with the foundational tools and skills to continue the dialogue with that drama throughout his or her life.

Cognitive development will be encouraged through textbook readings, classroom discussions/lectures, and periodic examinations. Social development will be encouraged through small group discussions and exercises as well as through the relating of biblical concepts to contemporary social issues. Spiritual development will be encouraged through a dialogue with the dynamic faith of the Christian Scripture, a faith that grew out of the community of believers and continues to challenge and shape that community in contemporary settings.

### **Course Learning Outcomes (School of Theology and Christian Ministry)**

*The student who successfully completes this course will be able to:*

- 1) Identify the historical contexts of the New Testament.
- 2) Articulate the unity of the New Testament in its canonical context within the diverse literature of the Christian canon.
- 3) Articulate and appreciate the ways in which the Bible, understood as given by divine inspiration, functions as the church's central norm for Christian discipleship, faith and practice; and,
- 4) Articulate the basic content of the books of the New Testament and the methods appropriate to the interpretation of those books.

Note: This course is one of the components of the General Education Program at Point Loma Nazarene University, under the category of "Responding to the Sacred." By including this course in a common educational experience for undergraduates, the faculty supports the study of Scripture and Christian heritage as foundational in the pursuit of knowledge and the development of personal values.

## Course Texts

1. *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*(NRSV). Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.
2. Samuel M. Powell, *A Teacher's Guide to Understanding the Scriptures*. Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill, 2012.

## Course Requirements

1. Class Participation and Attendance: In this abbreviated journey through the story of the NT, class attendance is a necessity and frequent absences will have a direct effect on the student's grade. *SIX (6) absences will result in de-enrollment from the class.* In addition, each student is expected to participate actively in class by contributing to the discussions on the basis of his or her reading of the assigned material.

*\*NOTE: Giving false information on the daily roll sheet (i.e. signing someone else in or having someone else sign you in) is an act of cheating that is equal to cheating on an exam. It will subject you to the academic dishonesty penalties of the university, including failure of this course and possible expulsion from the university.*

2. Readings: The NT is the primary text for this course. All readings are required. *Please bring your Bible to class.* It is important to keep up with the readings on a session by session basis or the information will quickly become overwhelming. *A significant part of the student's grade comes from quizzes over the assigned reading material (see below).*

3. Celebrations of Learning (a.k.a. Reading Quizzes): There will be *eight* such celebrations (often called, erroneously, "quizzes") that cover various reading assignments and associated class lectures. The dates of the quizzes are listed on the course schedule and study guides will be provided.

4. Final Celebration of Learning: There will be a final celebration of learning (a.k.a. final exam) at the end of the course. Details and a study guide will be provided in class. The final celebration will take place on the day and time given on the university's final exam schedule.

5. Group Presentation on a NT Book: In addition to more traditional methods of presentation by the professor, our course will have a significant element of small group work and discussion during various class sessions. Rather than a course in which the professor simply imparts a massive amount of information for students to regurgitate, students will work together to read closely, think collaboratively, and formulate thoughtful responses to texts and issues (an additional, hoped-for benefit of such assignments is to invite the students into the practices of true liberal arts education, namely, academic reading, thinking, collaborating, and writing, rather than outcome-based standardized test taking). The major instance of such work will be that each student will participate in an assigned small group and make a class presentation on an assigned

book from the NT (groups and books will be assigned in class). The presentation should be **15 minutes in length** and **follow the instruction sheet attached to this syllabus**. Each group member will receive the same grade for the presentation. Due dates are listed on the course schedule.

**\*OPTIONAL EXTRA-CREDIT PAPER:** *Report on a Non-Canonical Early Christian Document*: The student should select one of the non-canonical writings from early Christianity given at the on-line locations below, read it carefully, and write a paper that analyzes it in dialogue with the canonical writings. These documents are available on-line and provide an interesting resource for understanding the variety of non-canonical early Christian writings. The student should be sure to write on a primary document and not a secondary article talking about some document. The paper should be **3-4 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins** on all sides. *The student may receive up to 40 points extra-credit to be added to the semester total points. The paper is due at the start of class on Tuesday November 17, 2015.*

**\*INSTRUCTIONS:** In the paper, the student should undertake three tasks: 1) using the introduction to the document (if one is provided), summarize the context (if known) from which the document comes; 2) summarize the content of the document; and 3) briefly compare it with a similar writing that was included in the NT (for example, if you read a non-canonical gospel, compare it with one of the four gospels in the NT).

**To select your document:** 1) go to <http://wesley.nnu.edu> THEN...

2) click "Noncanonical Literature"

3) select from the listings under heading "New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha"

4) Choose *one* of the following genre categories THEN *choose one of the documents listed below* (your choice must be from these options):

"Apocryphal NT Acts":

"The Acts of John"

"The Acts of Paul"

"The Acts of Philip"

"Apocryphal NT Gospels":

"The Infancy Gospel of Thomas"

[Greek Text A]

"The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary"

"The Gospel of Thomas"

"Apocryphal NT Apocalypse":

"The Apocalypse of Adam"

"The Revelation of Moses"

"The Apocalypse of Paul"

"Pseudonymous Writings":

"The Epistle of the Apostles"

"The Epistle to the Laodiceans"

## Course Policies

1. **Grading:** The student's grade will be based on a combination of class participation, reading, assignments, and exams as follows:

<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
307	Celebrations of Learning (8 Reading Quizzes)
100	Final Celebration of Learning
100	Group Presentation on a NT Book

**\*Total: 507 (possible points)**

<u>*Grading Scale:</u>	94-100 A	84-86 B	74-76 C	64-66 D
	90-93 A-	80-83 B-	70-73 C-	60-63 D-
	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	50s F

2. Attendance: Attendance is a necessity. Excessive absences will have a direct effect on the final grade. Late work will only be accepted under the terms of the Late Work Policy (see below). All attendance policies of the institution apply. *SIX (6) unexcused absences will result in de-enrollment from the class.* Please note that it is the student's responsibility to obtain notes, etc. from other students for any missed classes.

*\*NOTE: Giving false information on the daily roll sheet (i.e. signing someone else in or having someone else sign you in) is an act of cheating that is equal to cheating on an exam. It will subject you to the academic dishonesty penalties of the university, including failure of this course and possible expulsion from the university.*

3. Late Work Policy: In order not to be considered "late," all assignments must be submitted **in person, in hard copy, in class** on the day listed as the due date. *NO assignment may be submitted electronically (by email, etc.) for full credit.* If the student "forgets" an assignment, he or she may submit it after class (either electronically or in hard copy) for no more than half credit. *Any assignment submitted electronically (whether late or on-time) will receive no more than half credit.* No assignment will be accepted for credit of any kind more than one week after the original due date. (NOTE: Any *extra-credit* assignments must be submitted on or before the due date and will not be accepted late for credit of any kind)

4. Inclusivity: The School of Theology and Christian Ministry is committed to the equality of women and men. Recognizing that people have often used the English language in ways that imply the exclusion or inferiority of women, the school urges students, faculty, and staff to avoid sexist language in public discourse, in classroom discussion, and in their writings. This course will strive to practice sensitivity toward and foster respect for issues of inclusivity in matters of language and conduct. Each student should seek to enrich this inclusive atmosphere in both their class contributions and personal interactions.

5. Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. Such acts include plagiarism, copying of class assignments, and copying or other fraudulent behavior on examinations. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course.

6. Academic Accommodations: While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may

require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student. This policy assists the university in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

## **Tentative Course Schedule**

### **1. Thursday Sept. 3**

A. Starting Points: Introduction to the Course

B. Why Study the NT?

Readings: None

### **2. Tuesday Sept. 8**

What Is the NT and Why Was It Written?

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. xv-xvi ("Introduction") and pp. xvii-xx ("To the Reader")

### **3. Thursday Sept. 10**

The NT as Part of Christian Scripture (Pt. 1): Inspiration and Function

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. 2255-2260 ("Inspiration of Scripture")  
2. Powell, *A Teacher's Guide*, pp. 5-10 (intro & ch. 1)

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #1: The books of the NT (be able to write in order of Protestant canon)**

### **4. Tuesday Sept. 15**

The NT as Part of Christian Scripture (Pt. 2): Authority & Revelation

Readings: 1. Powell, *A Teacher's Guide*, pp. 11-48 (chs. 2 & 3)

### **5. Thursday Sept. 17**

The NT as Part of Christian Scripture (Pt. 3): Inspiration

Readings: 1. Powell, *A Teacher's Guide*, pp. 49-70 (ch. 4 & conclusion)

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #2 over Powell, *A Teacher's Guide* (whole book)**

### **6. Tuesday Sept. 22**

What Is the NT and From Where Did It Come (Pt. 1)? Anthology, Origin, Composition

Readings: none

### **7. Thursday Sept. 24**

What Is the NT and From Where Did It Come (Pt. 2)? Canon and Historical Context:

Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Apocalyptic Backgrounds

Readings: none

### 8. Tuesday Sept. 29

What Is the NT and From Where Did It Come (Pt. 3)? Jewish & Apocalyptic Backgrounds

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. 2274-2279 ("Culture and Religion among the Ancient Israelites")

### 9. Thursday Oct. 1

How Then Should We Read the NT? Critical Methods for NT Study

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* pp. 2261-2267 ("Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation") & pp. 2268-2273 ("Varieties of Readings...")

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #3 over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* articles, "Inspiration," "Culture and Religion," "Guidelines for Reading," and "Varieties of Readings"**

### 10. Tuesday Oct. 6

Introducing the Gospels (Pt. 1): a. What Is a Gospel? b. The "Synoptic Problem"

Readings: 1. Dennis Bratcher, "The Gospels and the Synoptic Problem" (provided in class hardcopy or electronically by pdf)

**\*Organize groups for small group presentations**

### 11. Thursday Oct. 8

Introducing the Gospels (Pt. 2): a. What Is a Gospel? b. The "Synoptic Problem"

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Matthew  
2. Be sure you have completed reading (from last class): Dennis Bratcher, "The Gospels and the Synoptic Problem" (provided in class hardcopy or electronically by pdf)

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #4 over Bratcher, "The Gospels and the Synoptic Problem" and the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Matthew**

### **\*TUESDAY OCT. 13: Special Wiley Lecture Class Session**

*We will attend the Wiley Lecture presentation together as a class during our regular class time. Meet in Crill Performance Hall at 9:30am* (look for attendance sign-in sheet on the table in the Crill foyer).

### 12. Thursday Oct. 15

Matthew: Jesus, the Jewish Messiah

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Matthew (from last class)  
2. Matthew 1—11; 13—14; 21—28

### 13. Tuesday Oct. 20

Mark: Jesus, the Suffering Servant

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Mark  
2. The Gospel of Mark (all)

**14. Thursday Oct. 22**

Luke: Jesus, the Universal Savior of the Lowly

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Luke  
2. Luke 1—6; 9—15; 22—24

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #5 over the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Mark and Luke AND main characters/events in Mark and Luke**

**15. Tuesday Oct. 27**

John: Jesus, the Pre-existent Word

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to John  
2. The Gospel of John (all)

**16. Thursday Oct. 29**

Acts: The Story of Early Christianity

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Acts  
2. Acts 1—4; 6—7; 8—10; 13—16; 21—25; 28

**17. Tuesday Nov. 3**

A. "To the Gentiles": The Life and Ministry of Paul

B. What Is a NT "Letter"?

Readings: none

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #6 over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to John and Acts AND main characters/events in John and Acts**

**18. Thursday Nov. 5**

Romans

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Romans  
2. Romans 1—12

**19. Tuesday Nov. 10**

1 & 2 Corinthians ("The Corinthian Correspondence")

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to 1 and 2 Corinthians  
2. 1 Corinthians 1—2; 5—7; 12—14; and 2 Corinthians 1 & 10—12

**20. Thursday Nov. 12**

Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians (Group Presentations)

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #7 over *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians**

**\*Group Presentations on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians**

**21. Tuesday Nov. 17**

Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians (Group Presentations)

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Colossians,  
1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians

**\*Group Presentations on Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians**

**\*DUE: Optional Extra-Credit Report on Non-Canonical Early Christian Document**

**22. Thursday Nov. 19**

Hebrews, James, 1 Peter (Group Presentations)

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to Hebrews, James, 1 Peter

**\*CELEBRATION (Quiz) #8 over New Interpreter's Study Bible introductions to Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians**

**\*Group Presentations on Hebrews, James, 1 Peter**

**23. Tuesday Nov. 24 (Guest Presenter)**

1 & 2 Timothy and Titus ("The Pastoral Epistles")

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introductions to 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus  
2. 1 Timothy (whole)

**\*THURS. NOV. 26: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)**

**24. Tuesday Dec. 1**

A. 1 John (Group Presentation)

B. "Futurama": Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Revelation (Pt. 1)

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to 1 John

**\*Group Presentation on 1 John**

**25. Thursday Dec. 3**

"Futurama": Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Revelation (Pt. 2)

Readings: 1. *New Interpreter's Study Bible* introduction to Revelation

2. Revelation 1—11

**26. Tuesday Dec. 8**

"Futurama": Apocalyptic Literature and the Book of Revelation (Pt. 3)

Readings: 1. Revelation 12—22

**27. Thursday Dec. 10**

Making Sense of the Whole: The NT as the Church's Book

Readings: none

**\*\*FINAL CELEBRATION OF LEARNING (final exam) takes place on the scheduled day according to the university's final exam schedule**

*\*Final Celebration covers New Interpreter's Study Bible introductions to 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, and Revelation*



## GROUP PRESENTATION ON A NT BOOK

### *Instruction Sheet*

**GOAL:** The goal of this presentation is to give a substantial but overall introduction to your assigned biblical book, *informed by modern biblical scholarship's work on the book*. Think of your group as answering the questions, "What is the book of x, what is modern biblical scholarship saying about it, and how does it fit into the overall 'anthology' of the NT?" You have only **15 minutes**, so you will want to plan your presentation carefully in advance, yet you should still give a thorough presentation and have creative elements (like powerpoint, illustrations, music or video clip, etc.).

**PREPARATION:** To research the material for your presentation, you should draw from two sources:

- a) Read the introduction for your book in the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* (you should also consult the study notes in the Bible for some of the significant passages in the book)
- b) Find the commentary on your book in the multi-volume commentary series entitled *The New Interpreter's Bible* (these volumes are located in the reference room of the library). Read carefully (and use!) the Introduction to your book given in the commentary.
 

\*\*optional additional resource as needed: Look up the article that covers your book in the multi-volume reference work entitled, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (these volumes are held in the reference room of the library)

**PRESENTATION:** For your 15-minute presentation, you should include at least the following elements:

- a. An introduction/survey of the major content, themes, structure, and distinctive elements of your book (*i.e., what is this book and what is in it?*)
- b. A survey of the major critical interpretive issues that have been and are discussed in modern biblical scholarship (these might include the date, setting, genre, etc.). Give the class a rundown on the various views on the major issues and provide what you take to be the best options on these issues (*i.e., where did this book come from, how did we get it, what issues do scholars discuss about it?*). **\*\*Be certain to locate this writing on the historical "grid" of the NT anthology of writings (what era is this writing from and what difference does that make?)**
- c. Walk the class through one (maybe two, but watch your time!) passage(s) from your book that, in your mind, illustrates the main content, themes, and interpretive issues for the book
- d. How does your book fit into the overall "anthology" of the NT: *How does it help answer the questions, "Who is Christ?," "Who are we as the people of God?," and "How then should we live in the world?"*

**\*\*NOTE:** *don't forget to try to be creative (even fun!) in your presentation—use powerpoint, music or video clips, illustrations, whatever! But watch your 15-min. time limit*