**RS 325 (Spring '16)**

The New Testament

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**This course will survey and assess aspects and dynamics of arguably the "most important" (i.e. influential, impactful, controversial, proliferate) book ever written. In addition, we will observe the ongoing attempt to understand this collection of sacred texts within its own cultural and literary milieu as well as ours. We will look at the historical backgrounds, seminal influences, and significant expositors and their influence upon the formulation, articulation, interpretation, evaluation, and/or cultivation of religious and historical understanding spanning at least twenty centuries. What we lack in time we will make up in ambition! We can do anything we set our minds to, or have the mental acumen to focus upon. Or, as the New Testament itself says, "All things are possible for those who believe."**

**This course will serve as an exercise in discerning discrete paradigms in motion from their origins, to their reverberating ramifications in today’s volatile and multi-cultural world.   We will avail ourselves of some of the latest techniques in Historical Jesus studies as well as endeavoring a cultural archeological expedition into the foundations and artifacts of our contemporary confluent and conflicting worldviews.**

**Student Learning Objectives:**

  Students will gain proficiency in reconstructing historical settings of primary texts based on social-scientific methodologies, historical data reconstruction, ancient Mediterranean contexts, and sensitivity to rhetorical criticism.

  Students will be able to interpret New Testament texts based on critical analysis while suspending theological and a-theological assumptions.

  Students will become acquainted with basic strategies and theoretical models employed in modern New Testament scholarship, including feminist hermeneutics.

  Students will be learn to compare and contrast early Christianity with other religions in the ancient Mediterranean world, in0cluding Second Temple Judaism, Mystery religions, and various Proto-Gnosticisms.

**Required Texts:**

       ***How to Read the Bible and Still Be a Christian***by John Dominic Crossan **ISBN-13:** 978-0062203595

***The Restored New Testament: A New Translation with Commentary***   by WillisBarnestone; W. W. Norton & Company; annotated edition (2009); ISBN-13: 978-0393064933

***The New Testament: A Very Short Introduction***by Luke Timothy Johnson;Oxford University Press, USA (February 10, 2010); ISBN-13: 978-0199735709

***Evolution of the Word: The New Testament in the Order the Books Were Written***by Marcus Borg**; HarperOne (2012); ISBN-13: 978-0062082107**

***The First Paul***by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan HarperOne; 1 edition (March 2, 2010) **ISBN-13:** 978-0061430732

**Nitty-Gritties in Navigating This Course**: Assignments will be posted on the course website. Students will be responsible for and graded by their completion of reading assignments, bulletin-board participation, video viewing, web assignments, quizzes, mid-term examinations, a research paper on a course-related topic of their choice, one final-examination, academic integrity, and, of course, good mental hygiene. Two percent (2%) of the total grade will be subtracted for un-timely participation. Given total commitment to this agenda it will be quite possible for everyone to receive high grades by virtue of a holistic group effort characterized by good mental hygiene and cooperative educational contribution. Our aim will be to facilitate understanding and excellence of thought concerning some complex but fascinating domains of ancient and contemporary spiritual/intellectual history. The grading system includes plus and minuses.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**  Reading assignments, BulletinBoard postings, and other web-based participation. This course will be writing intensive. Include quizzes, one term paper on a relevant topic of your choice, one final-examination, and, of course, good mental hygiene. All reading assignments will be posted in a timely fashion.

**THE TERM PAPER:** The major topic of your paper will pertain to the main course subject, "The New Testament." However, within that large, over-arching umbrella, the particular choice of paper topics has a wide range of flexibility in the hopes that the students will pursue subjects that command their interests and spark their imaginations. You will want to begin exploring possible topics from practically the beginning of the course and should not only feel free but consider it a necessary step in your preparation to consult the instructor concerning your topic. Various strategies for generating a viable topic will be discussed on a webpage appropriately titled “The Research Paper” on our course page. As upper division students, you are naturally expected to write a much more expansive research paper than lower division students due to your advanced sophistication and greater academic preparation.
 **Assignments and grading criteria**: Preparation and class participation are factored into the grading. Some class meetings may be scheduled online at various times to accommodate a variety of schedules. Most of the work, however can be posted at your convenience. Thoughtfulness and preparation in your interaction with the thoughts and postings of your fellow classmates will make your sojourn through "The New Testament" a much richer experience than you will have had in a traditional course. As a participant in this course, you become part of the course. This cannot be emphasized enough. The mid-term accounts for approximately 20% of your grade, the final about 20%, and the research paper 30% with 30% based on class participation (web assignments).

Preliminary Reading Schedule for RS325 “The New Testament”

Read the Crossan’s *How To Read the Bible* in its entirety by the third week.

By Week 4—*Evolution of the Word* to page 56; *Restored New Testament* 613-631; 1Tthessalonians and Galatians`

By Week 5 –*Very Short Introduction* to page 35; *Evolution* 62-149;

By Week 6 *First Paul* to page 92 *Very Short Intro* Ch 7 (pp 70-83)