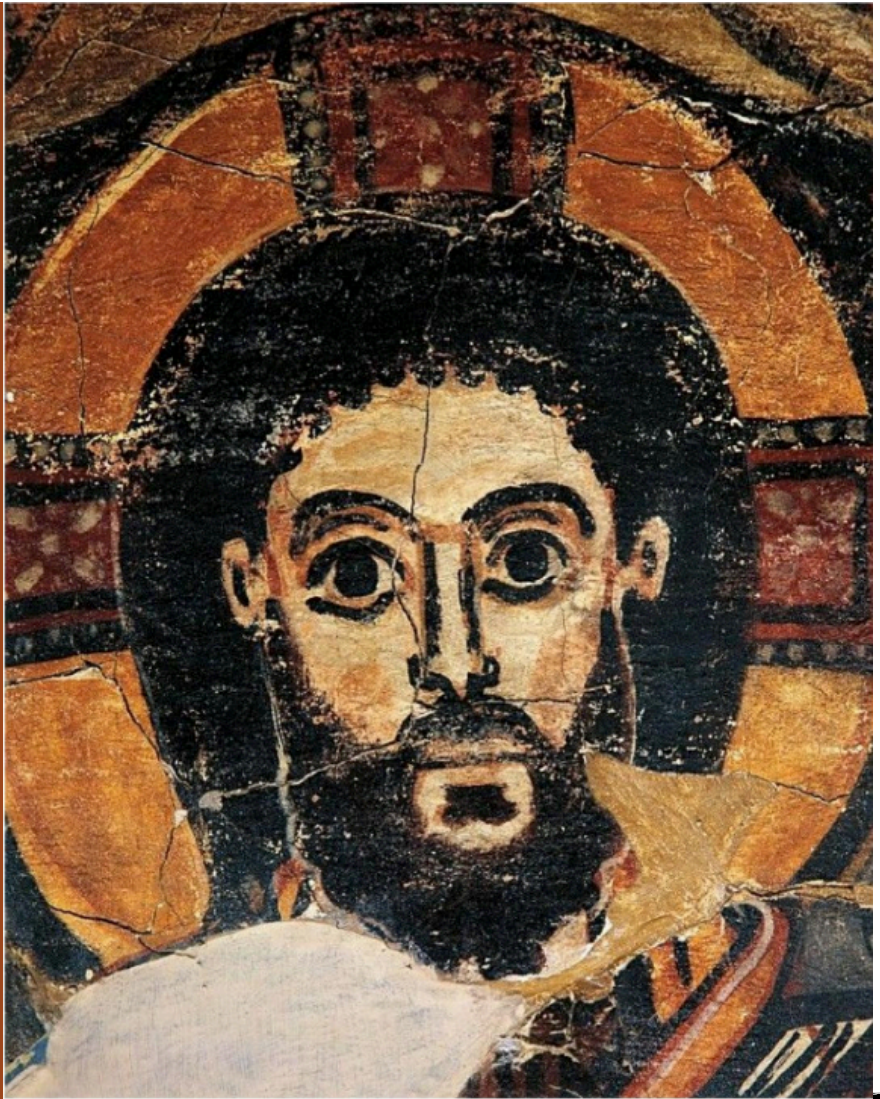


University of
Dubuque
Theological
Seminary

Spring 2022

Online
&
Residential

Introduction to The New Testament



Course Thesis

The New Testament is a collection of texts of varying genres that exhibit the manifold ways that the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of a Galilean Jew named Jesus were theologically significant for the authors and audiences of these writings. Knowledge about the historical, cultural, and religious contexts in which New Testament texts were written is essential for understanding them.

Instructor Information

Instructor:

Dr. Nicholas A. Elder
nelder@dbq.edu

Virtual Office

Hours:
TBD

Severance Hall 224

Phone: 913-221-1901



Grade Items

Forums (x 13)

Course Notes (x 13)

Synoptic Marking
Assignment

Narrative Gospels
Assignment

Exam One

Presentation on a New
Testament Text

Exam Two

Important Dates

DATE : Synoptic Marking
Assignment Due

DATE: Narrative Gospels
Assignment Due

DATE: Exam One Due

DATE: New Testament Book
Presentation Due

DATE: Exam Two Due

✓ **Course Outcomes and Curricular Objectives**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

#1: Explain what the New Testament is.

#2: Articulate the various genres that New Testament texts represent and the constituent literary features of these genres.

#3: Explain how the historical, theological, cultural, and religious contexts in which the New Testament texts were written are relevant to their interpretation.

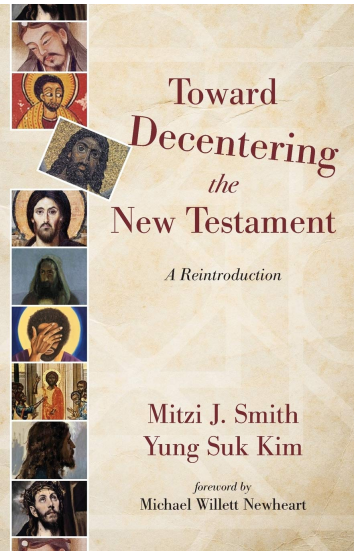
#4: Evaluate interpretive debates about specific New Testament texts.

#5: Foster a deeper love and appreciation for Scripture, its interpretation, and application in ecclesial contexts.

This course supports the following curricular objectives:

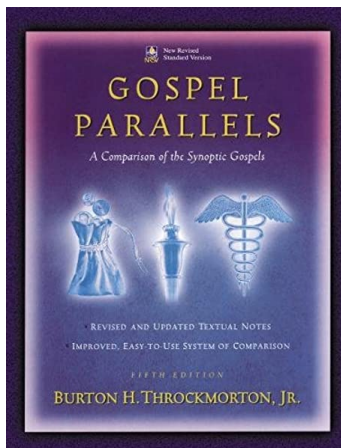
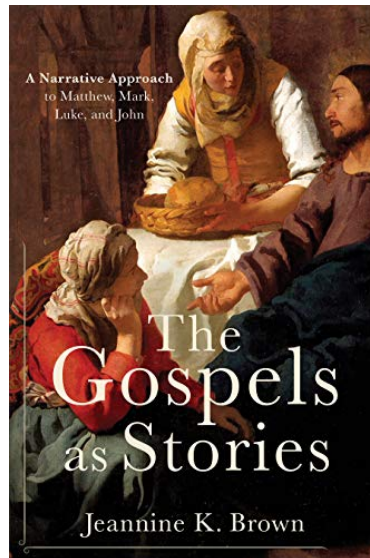
- Be formed by, live in, and minister out of scripture and the historical and theological tradition of the church (MDiv)
- Interpret the Christian Scriptures through faithful exegesis and in light of the Christian tradition (MDiv)
- Preach the Word of God with faithfulness and clarity (MDiv)
- Articulate and reflect critically and constructively on the biblical and theological foundations of God's mission to the world (MAMD)
- Be able to identify and interpret key themes from the Christian scriptures (MACL)

Required Texts

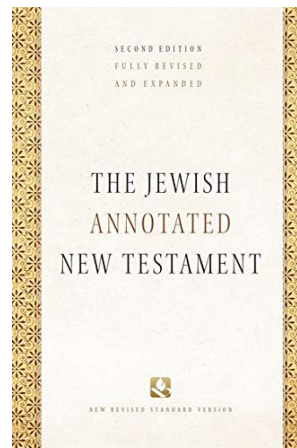


Mitzi J. Smith and
Yung Suk Kim,
***Toward Decentering
the New Testament:
A Reintroduction***,
Eugene, OR: Cascade,
2018. ISBN:
1532604653.

Jeannine K. Brown, ***The
Gospels as Stories***, Grand
Rapids: Baker, 2020. ISBN:
0801049849.



Burton H.
Throckmorton Jr.,
ed., ***Gospel Parallels,
Fifth Edition***,
Nashville: Thomas
Nelson, 1992. ISBN:
0840774842.



Amy-Jill Levine and
Marc Zvi Brettler,
eds., ***The Jewish
Annotated New
Testament (NRSV)***,
2nd Edition, Oxford:
Oxford University
Press: 2017. ISBN:
0190461853.

Choose An Additional New Testament Introduction

The required introductory textbook for this class, *Toward Decentering the New Testament*, is “overtly interested in contemporary and justice issues.” In this way, it is not strictly a “traditional” New Testament textbook. I ask that, in addition to Smith and Kim’s book, you acquire your choice of one (or more) of the “traditional” New Testament introductory textbooks from this list. [In this video](#), I provide a brief overview of each one.

There are two reasons why I ask you to acquire an additional textbook. First, it allows you to compare and contrast approaches to the New Testament generally and to the respective books in it. Second, it helps to bring in a variety of viewpoints to course discussions and forums.

Additional Textbooks:

Bird, Michael F. and Wright, N.T. *The New Testament in its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019.

DeSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods, and Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018.

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 7th edition (or a previous edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Martin, Dale B. *New Testament History and Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament: An Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 2012.

Powell, Mark Allan. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018.



Additional required course readings will be provided through the course page on Moodle.



Specifications Grading and Categories

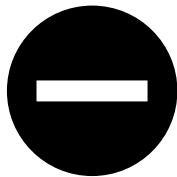
This class uses what is called specifications or "specs" grading. Final grades are **not** determined by the collective score of weighted items. Rather, they are determined by the number of grade items that you successfully complete. Each grade item is pass-fail and contains detailed specifications. If these specifications are met, then the item is passed. The rationale for using this grading system is that it removes much of the subjectivity of grading, restores rigor to academic work, and it is learning-outcome oriented.

There are several different kinds of grade items that are included under two categories for the purpose of the grading system used in the class.

"Minor" Items

There are two different kind of minor grade items for this class: weekly course notes and forum engagement. Each week of the course there is the opportunity to complete one of each of these for a total of twenty-six minor grade items.

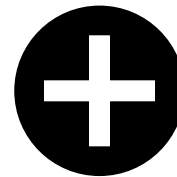
While these assignments are labeled "minor," they are not minor in importance. Learning best occurs in small increments, and these minor items are meant to facilitate this. Moreover, the forums serve as the basis for course community, which is also imperative for learning.



"Major" Items

There is the opportunity to complete five different major grade items throughout the course of the semester: two exams, the Synoptic Marking Assignment, the Narrative Gospels assignment, and a presentation on a New Testament book.

These major items are intentionally of various types and are meant to engage different learning styles at different points in the semester.



Minor Items

Weekly Course Notes: Each week a document will be made available for weekly course notes. These notes will consist of two things: lecture pauses and reading notes/reflections. Most course lecture will have one or more "pauses" built into them that ask you to engage the video in some way. Lecture pause prompts will be included in the course notes document for the week. There is not a standardized format for reading notes/reflections. If you have a preferred way for taking reading notes, you can simply include your notes in the course notes document. Alternatively, you can answer the following prompt that will be included in the weekly course notes document: "What is one thing that surprised from this week's readings? What is one thing that confused you? And what is one thing that inspired you?"

Discussion Forums: Discussion forums are the primary spaces that we engage course material together. Each week there will be a forum prompt. On some occasions there will be short assignments associated with your initial post. I encourage you to vary the way that you post in forums, sometimes by writing and sometimes by video posts. Initial posts are due by Thursday at 11:59 PM. In order to receive credit for the weekly discussion forum, I ask that you substantively engage your peers' posts by the end of the weekend. I do not require a certain number of responses for credit, but rather ask you to judge whether or not your engagement is substantive.

Major Items

Exams (x2): There are two possible exams for this class. The first covers materials from the beginning of the course through Acts. The second covers material from Paul to the end of the semester. To pass either, a student must receive an 80% on it. Both exams consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay sections.

Synoptic Marking Assignment: This assignment involves analyzing a passage from the Synoptic Gospels and producing a color-coded synopsis of it. Students will analyze the relationship between the texts, articulate how various answers to the Synoptic problem explain the relationship, and address how the differences between the texts reflect the concerns of each evangelist.



Narrative Gospels Assignment: This assignment engages Jeannine K. Brown's *The Gospels as Stories*. It is an essay guided by prompts that asks students to engage both Brown's book and apply aspects of her narrative method to one or more of the gospels.

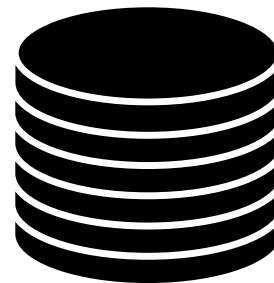
Presentation on a New Testament Book: In the second half of the semester, students will have the opportunity to teach one New Testament book to their peers. This introduction will be to one of the following books that are not explicitly addressed by the professor during the semester: 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Hebrews, Jude, 1–3 John.



Final Grade Specifications Requirements

To earn a specific letter grade, you must complete the minimum number of items in each of the categories. The minimum number you complete in any category will ultimately determine your final grade. For example, if you complete the 24 minor items required for an "A" but only complete 4 major items, which is the requirement for an "B+", then your final grade would be an "B+" not an "A."

Letter Grade	Minor Items (26 Total) 	Major Items (5 Total) 
A	25	5
A-	23	5
B+	22	4
B	21	4
B-	20	4
C+	19	3
C	18	3
C-	17	3
D+	16	2
D	15	2
D-	14	1
F	0–13	0



Grace Tokens: Every student receives three "grace tokens" that can be used at any time during the course. These "grace tokens" can be redeemed for any of the following with no explanation needed:

- Credit for a minor item that was not completed
- A 48-hour extension on a major grade item
- The opportunity to resubmit a major grade item that did not pass specifications



Course Policies, Fine Print, Etc.

Teaching Philosophy

As a student, it can be helpful for your learning to know why your professors teach the way that they do. For this reason I am providing you with my teaching philosophy. If you ever have questions about why content is being taught in a certain way, I encourage you to ask me.

As a theological educator, I aim to foster active learning environments that support and motivate students in their engagement with biblical, historical, and theological content.

This vision depends on three principles that guide my teaching:

- (1) Learning is fundamentally a communal enterprise.
- (2) Learning is an active endeavor.
- (3) Learning requires consistent motivation, assessment, and feedback.



Late Work

Late work is accepted with the use of a grace token (as detailed above). Assignments and exams are set to close at the date and time indicated on the schedule and Moodle. If you have utilized all of your grace tokens and wish to turn in late work, reach out to me and we can discuss that possibility.



Discussion Forums

Discussion forums are the basis for our course community. As indicated above, I don't require that you respond to a certain number of posts to get credit for a week's discussion forum. This is because, in my experience, when responding to another student's thoughts is simply an item to check off of a list, the substance of the response is not as rich. Instead, I ask that you thoughtfully engage your peers' posts in a manner that is substantive. This might entail a thorough back-and-forth with one discussion forum post or it might mean engaging several different posts in a more-abbreviated manner. At the end of the day, I ask you to judge for yourself whether or not your engagement is substantive, recognizing that the forums are the primary spaces where course community is formed.



Digital Office Hours

I hold digital office hours on Mondays and Thursdays from 9 AM–11 AM. These are hours that I specifically dedicate to engaging students through various media: discussion forums, e-mail, phone calls, and Zoom. These time frames are the most ideal for us to communicate synchronously. If you would like to communicate synchronously (by phone or Zoom) but these times don't work for your schedule, send me an e-mail and we can set up a different day and/or time to do so.



Course Notes

Course notes are designed as a space where students engage content individually (in contrast to forums, which are spaces for communal engagement).

I ask that you take **lecture/video notes** in this class in a certain way: by engaging “lecture pauses.” These are places in the lecture where I ask you to pause the video and complete some task. Of course, you can also take notes on videos as you see fit and as works for you and your learning style. However, I encourage you not to worry about getting all of the content presented in the lectures written down in your notes. The videos for this course are primarily meant to guide and stimulate your thinking and not necessarily to present you with “raw data.” Readings serve the latter purpose (i.e. presenting data) better than videos do. As such, the lecture pauses are intended to concentrate your mental effort on what I consider to be the most important aspect of a particular lecture/video.

I also ask that you turn in reading notes each week. The purpose of this is twofold. First, it encourages you to do the readings for the week, as you will get credit for them. Second, it allows me, as the professor, to track how students are engaging with the material. If you have a method for taking reading notes that you regularly utilize and prefer, you can copy-paste your notes or take a picture of them and include them in the “course notes” document each week. Alternatively, you can answer the stock prompt included in the course notes for each week’s readings: “What is one thing that surprised you from this week’s readings? What is one thing that confused you? And what is one thing that inspired you?”



Please Don't Cheat

The exams for this class are closed-book and closed-note. Every other assignment is open-book and open-note. For this class I have attempted to strike a balance between learning some information via memorization and engaging other information critically with a variety of sources at your disposal.

The purpose of closed-note and closed-book exams is to encourage you deeply to learn important concepts and facts. These functions as the building blocks for critically engaging other material.

When critically engaging materials in an open-book, open-note format, it is important that you cite instances when thoughts and a particular way of expressing an idea are not your own. Responsible intellectual engagement involves giving due respect to the thoughts and writings on which we are dependent. Doing otherwise is plagiarism—a serious breach of intellectual trust.

All of this is to state: please do not cheat by referencing materials in an improper way, either by using them on grade items I have asked you not to or by presenting someone else’s thoughts and words as your own.

These policies are not meant to police you. Rather, they are meant to encourage deeper learning and to foster responsible intellectual engagement.

I do not anticipate that we will have any issues of plagiarism or cheating. But should such serious issues arise, they will be handled in accordance with the seminary’s policy on plagiarism, which can be found in the UDTs handbook.





FAQ

Who are you?

I'm glad you asked. I am Dr. Elder. I am originally from Kansas City, but also consider Denver, Milwaukee, and Dubuque home. I am the Assistant Professor of New Testament here at UDTs. I did my PhD at Marquette University (Catholic, Jesuit), my MA at the Iliff School of Theology (United Methodist), and my BA at Colorado Christian University (evangelical). I'm married to my better half, Beth, and we have four children: Brooks (age 9), Kit James (age 6), and Lucy and Nettie (identical twins, age 3).

How much time do you expect me to spend on this class?

Per the Department of Education's guidelines for credit hours, you should spend approximately 152 hours total on a three-credit UDTs course. This works out to just over 10 hours per week (including our "reading weeks" and finals week.) I have attempted to set the schedule in such a way that you will usually be doing about 7-10 hours of work per week on the class. Of course, some weeks will be heavier and some will be lighter. But about 10 hours a week on average is a good rule of thumb.

How should I contact you if I have a question about class?

The first thing that you should do is consider the type of question that you have. If it is about course content then you should post it in the "Questions and Curiosities" forum for the week. That way, if another student has the same question, they will also acquire the answer to it. Also, if another student has an answer to the question, they can offer it. This provides further opportunity to build community within the class. Even if another student answers the question (rightly or wrongly) I will answer your question in that public forum so that others can see the information.

If the question is of a more private or personal nature, you are free to e-mail me at nelder@dbq.edu, or we can talk digitally in another format.

What should I call you?

I prefer to be called Doctor Elder or Professor Elder.

Are the exams difficult?

Not if you have completed all of the readings and watched all of the lectures. You should find no surprises on the exams, especially if you regularly engage the "Study Questions and Content" document provided for each week.
