

BI 550

University of
Dubuque
Theological
Seminary

Spring 2023

Online
&
Residential

Mondays 9:00-10:40 AM
Smith Welcome Center
363

Introduction to The New Testament



Christ in Glory (6th cent.)

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
Van Vliet Hall 209



Virtual Office

Hours:

Tuesdays and
Thursdays
1:30-3:00 PM
(Link at top of course
Moodle page)

Grade Items

Course Community (x 13)

Lecture Pauses (x 13)

Synoptic Marking
Assignment

Book Report

Exam One

Presentation on a New
Testament Text

Exam Two

Important Dates

TBD : Synoptic Marking
Assignment Due

TBD: Book Report Due

TBD: Exam One Due

TBD: New Testament Book
Presentation Due

TBD: 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.

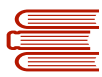
#3: Explain how the historical, theological, cultural, and religious contexts in which the New Testament texts were written are relevant to their interpretation.

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

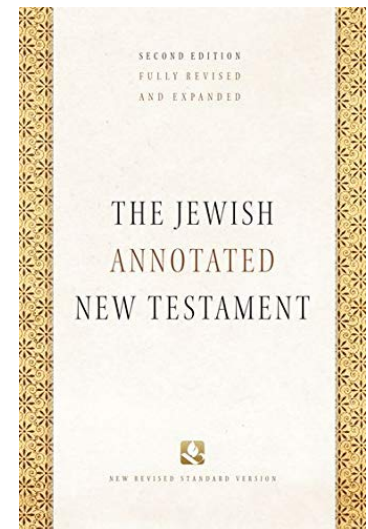
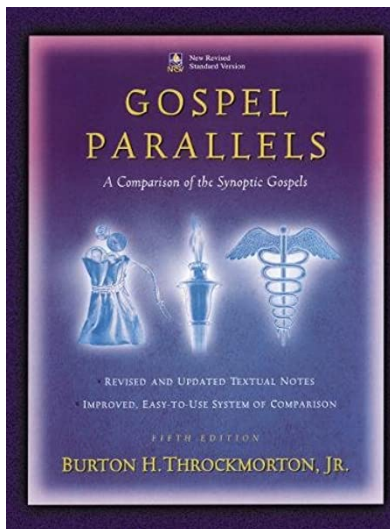
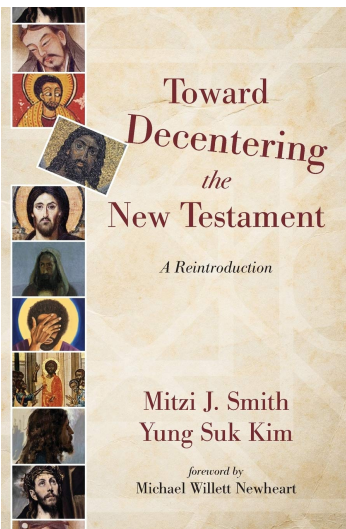
#5: Foster a deeper love and appreciation for Scripture, its interpretation, and application in ecclesial contexts.

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.

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.



Book Report Texts

Students may choose from one of the following texts (or another with the professor's permission) to complete a book report on.

Jonathan Bernier, *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition*, Grand Rapids, Baker, 2022. ISBN: 1540961808.

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

Bruce Chilton, *The Herods: Murder, Politics, and the Art of Succession*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2021. ISBN: 1506474284.

Paula Fredricksen, *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation*, New Haven: Yale University Press. ISBN: 0300248407.

Matthias Henze, *Mind the Gap: How the Jewish Writings between the Old and New Testament Help Us Understand Jesus*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017. ISBN: 1506406424

Love Lazarus Sechrest, *Race and Rhyme: Rereading the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022. ISBN: 0802867138.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, New York: Crossroad, 1983. ISBN: 0824506677.

Joseph Sievers and Amy-Jill Levine, editors. *The Pharisees*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. ISBN: 0802879292.

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:

Achtmeier, Paul J., Green, Joel B., and Thompson, Marianne Meye. ***Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology***. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

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.

Spivey, Robert A., Smith, D. Moody, Black, C. Clifton. ***Anatomy of the New Testament*** 7th edition (or a previous edition). Minneapolis: Fortress: 2013.

If there is another introductory New Testament textbook that you are interested in using, I am happy for you to do so, but would like to know what it is to ensure that it will work for the purposes of the course. Do not hesitate to send me an email to ask about another option you might be interested in!



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



Specifications Grading and Categories

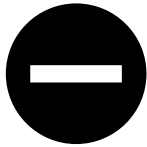
This class uses what is called specifications or "specs" grading. Final grades are **not** determined by the collective score of weighted items. Rather, they are determined by the number of grade items that you successfully complete. Each grade item is pass-fail and contains detailed specifications. 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: lecture pauses and course community engagement. Each week of the course there is the opportunity to complete at least one of each of these for a total of twenty-six minor grade items.

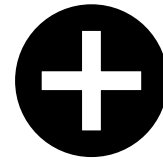
While these assignments are labeled "minor," they are not minor in importance. Learning best occurs in small increments, and these minor items are meant to facilitate this. Moreover, the course community assignments serve as the basis for establishing course community, which is also imperative for learning.



"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

Lecture Pauses: Each week a document will be made available for lecture pauses. Most course lectures will have one or more "pauses" built into them that ask you to engage the video in some way. Active participation facilitates learning better than does passive reception. That is, by doing something you are more likely to remember the content from a video than if you simply watch it. I ask that you turn in your lecture pauses for two reasons: (1) so that I have a sense as to how you are engaging the videos and (2) to keep you accountable for completing the lecture pauses.

Community Engagement: Learning happens in community. For residential students, community engagement primarily comes in the form of attending weekly classes. For distance students, community engagement primarily comes in the form of forum participation. On many occasions there will be short assignments to be completed before offering your forum post (for distance students) or coming to class (for residential students). For forum posts, I ask that initial posts be submitted 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.



Book Report: This assignment asks you to read and evaluate one book related to the New Testament. Students will identify and restate the book's central argument, its strengths and weaknesses, and how it relates to other content introduced in the course.

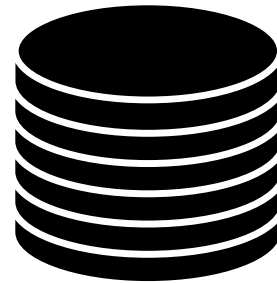
Presentation on a New Testament Book: In the second half of the semester, students will have the opportunity to teach one New Testament book to their peers. This introduction will be to one of the following books that are not explicitly addressed by the professor during the semester: 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 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 two “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