

CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

FALL 2008

NT501 CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

T/Th 8:00-9:20 AM
CST 252

Professor Luke Timothy Johnson
Office Hours vary, and are posted at my office door weekly
Phone

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The writings of the New Testament are the canonical texts of the Christian tradition. With the writings of the Old Testament, they form the Christian Scripture. This course introduces students to the process of the composition of these writings, the factors involved in their formation, and the challenge they continue to pose to every subsequent version of Christianity.

NT 501 has three specific goals for students: a) to understand the generative matrix both for the New Testament and every serious interpretation of it, namely, the interaction of God's work in the world and human symbols; b) to learn the substance and style of the respective writings as the basis for all Christian identity and a resource for every Christian ministry; c) to grasp something of the perennial critical questions concerning these texts that have stimulated centuries of scholarship within which any responsible contemporary discussion must locate itself.

NT 501 is the first part of a two-course sequence. In the Spring, NT 502 directly addresses issues of interpretation and initiates students into the practice of interpretation through frequent writing and collaborative learning. The present class, in turn, assumes that students have completed the sequence OT 501-502 or its equivalent.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. This is a classic lecture-based course, in which a large amount of material and a broad conceptual framework are provided in order to prepare students for a more intensive personal engagement in the next semester.
 - a. Attendance at lectures is expected. Although the lecturer is also the author of the textbook used in the course, it would be a tactical error to suppose that the contents of lectures and book are identical. Distinct lines of presentation often occur. The contents of lectures are subject to examination.

- b. Recordings of every session are available on internet through the Emory iTunes program. Attached to this syllabus are two sheets of instruction. Students are also free to tape lectures themselves or to have others tape for them.
- 2. Each book required for purchase is used in a slightly different way. Note that a substantial annotated bibliography is provided for each chapter of Writings for students who wish to pursue further research or examine alternative views.
 - a. The basic text is the New Testament itself. Students are to read through the entire NT a first time by 9/25, and to read the respective compositions *again* before they are discussed in lecture. In order to have a shared point of reference, all students are expected to purchase *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (1993) --- or another study Bible, such as the Oxford --- that uses the New Revised Standard Version.
 - b. The lectures are keyed to the reading of L.T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999). The substance and argument of this book are subject to examination. Because the lectures are severely limited in number, they do not by any means adequately cover even the essentials of the respective NT compositions. Some grasp of the social setting, literary form, thematic interests and religious concerns of each writings is provided by—and assumed to have been learned—from *Writings*.
 - c. A basic tool for work in the Synoptic Gospels is B. Throckmorton, ed., *Gospel Parallels* 5th edition (Nashville: Nelson, 1992). It will be used for the classes on the Synoptic Gospels, and next semester as well.
- 3. Knowledge is tested through examination. Two short (40 minute), in-class, multiple-choice exams will be administered on 10/7 and 11/4. Each exam covers only the material studied in that period of time. There will be a special review session held the evening before these exams. The final, three-hour, examination is administered during exam week (12/12-17), and consists in both multiple-choice and essay questions. The essays topics are announced well in advance. All examinations are “Open-Bible,” including whatever notes students write in their Bibles by way of study and preparation.

COURSE EVALUATION

Evaluation of students takes place by means of grading. Each examination is assigned a number grade. The first two exams together count for a third of the course grade, and the final exam counts for two thirds. Some consideration is given to improvement. The final number grade is translated into a letter grade. For the meaning of these, consult the catalogue. Please note, however, that in this class, B really does signify good work, and A is given only for work that is exceptional.

Evaluation of the Professor and Teaching Assistant is carried out by evaluation forms filled out by students at the end of the semester. These instruments are important for the improvement of the teachers' performance and therefore for the education of future students. Please take them seriously.

COURSE STANDARDS

1. Both teachers and students in this class seek excellence, but understand that prior to excellence are certain basic standards. Lectures begin and end on time. If students are unavoidably late, they nevertheless attend. While great good humor is encouraged and enjoyed throughout the class, there is an underlying seriousness of purpose that we share.
2. Cheating of any sort will result in expulsion and failure. The appearance of cheating (in examinations) will be regarded as cheating.
3. Inclusivity in language and in attitude concerning other persons is expected.
4. Questions during lectures are positively encouraged, especially questions that rise above individual concerns.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READING

T 9/2 Introduction to the course: The Search for a Model (Writings 1-19)

The Birth of the New Testament

Th 9/4 What started the Christian Religion? (Writings 93-105)

T 9/9 The Resurrection Experience (Writings 107-122)

Th 9/11 Symbolic World of the New Testament (Writings 21-41)

T 9/16 Symbolic World of the New Testament (Writings 43-91)

Th 9/18 Jesus in the Memory of the Church (Writings 125-153)

The Synoptic Tradition

T 9/23 The Composition of the Gospels (Writings 155-158; Bring Throckmorton)

Th 9/25 The Gospel of Mark (Writings 159-184; 627-632)

T 9/30 The Gospel of Matthew (Writings 187-211);

Th 10/2 Luke-Acts (Writings 213-257)

Pauline Traditions

T 10/7 [**In Class Exam**] Paul's Place in Early Christianity (Writings 259-260)

Th 10/9 Paul the Correspondent (Writings 261-278)

T 10/14 Paul and the Problems of Early Christianity

Th 10/16 The Thessalonian Letters (Writings 281-293)

T 10/21 The Corinthian Letters (Writings 295-324)

Th 10/23 Galatians and Romans (Writings 327-365)

T 10/28 The Captivity Letters (Writings 369-421)

Th 10/30 The Letters to Delegates (Writings 423-452)

Other Canonical Witnesses

T 11/4 [**In Class Exam**] The Problem of Early Christian Literature and History (Writings 453-456)

Th 11/6 A Theological Masterwork: Hebrews (Writings 457-476)

T 11/11 A Moral Exhortation: James (Writings 507-523)

Th 11/13 Petrine Witnesses: 1 and 2 Peter (Writings 479-505)

Johannine Traditions

T 11/18 Johannine Churches and Letters (Writings 521-523, 559-571)

Th 11/20 The Gospel of John (Writings 525-557)

T 11/25 The Book of Revelation (Writings 573-592)

Thanksgiving Break 11/27-30

The New Testament as the Church's Book

T 12/2 Canonization and Christian Self-Definition (Writings 595-619)

Th 12/4 Unity and Diversity, in Text and Interpretation

Final Examination Week 12/12-17