I. COURSE DESCRIPTION.

A study of the political, social, religious, and economic world of the New Testament is made, including Judaism and its sects; the life of Christ; first century New Testament churches; New Testament cannon; the Gospels and Acts.¹

II. COURSE OVERVIEW.

This course examines background material to the New Testament and is an introduction to and a survey of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and the Book of Acts. Attention will be given to the themes, outlines, theologies, introductory issues, and problems associated with these books.

III. COURSE INSTRUCTION.

This course will include three hours of classroom lecture and discussion each week plus reading and writing assignments.

IV. COURSE TEXTBOOK. The required text is:


V. COURSE OBJECTIVES.

A. To develop a deeper appreciation and better understanding of the New Testament.

B. To study and survey the four Gospels and the Book of Acts.

C. To grasp the geography of the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

D. To apply the teachings of the Gospels and the Book of Acts to the student’s life.

E. To understand God as the Author of the New Testament.

F. To perceive the various divisions of the New Testament.

G. To appreciate the unity of the New Testament especially as it relates to the presentation of the message and ministry of Jesus Christ and in the establishment and progress of the early New Testament Church.

H. To wrestle with some of the issues or problems often associated with the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

VI. COURSE REQUIREMENTS.

A. Reading Assignments.

1. The Biblical Text. Students will be expected to read all of the four Gospels and the Book of Acts during this course.

2. The Textbook. Students will be expected to read selected portions from the textbook.

B. Testing Assignments. No tests or exams will be given in this course.

C. Writing Assignments. Each student will write four (4) papers for this course. Additional papers may be written for extra credit. Each paper should be completed according to Turabian style. For precise guidelines see Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, sixth edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1996. Each paper should be from seven (7) to twenty-five (25) pages long. The subjects selected will probably determine the length of the papers. Select topics from the list provided. Or, you may discuss a topic of your interest with the instructor for approval. Each paper should state the topic and any problems or issues associated with the topic. Major views about the topic should be addressed including the pros and cons. The student’s conclusion should be a part of the paper and why the student selected the particular conclusion. The papers will be due September 18, October 16, November 13, and December 4. Early submissions will be accepted and rewarded.
VII. COURSE GRADING.

A. General Grading Information. Grading for this class will follow this grading scale:

- A  91-100
- B  81-90
- C  71-80
- D  61-70
- F  00-60

B. Specific Grading Information.

1. Reading Assignments. Reading will be reported on a reading report form which will be distributed to students. Students will be given credit for their reading.

2. Writing Assignments. The writing assignments will be graded for style, grammar, use of sources, organization, and for how the topic is addressed.

VIII. COURSE POLICIES.

A. Participation. Attendance and participation are a requirement. Participate in class discussions and be faithful in your class attendance. Obviously, a student’s grade could be adversely affected by excessive absences. Remember: This class meets only one time each week. With one absence a student misses a whole week of class. If a student misses three or four class sessions, he/she could be assigned a failing grade for the class. However, if you are faithful in attendance, you will be rewarded.

B. Schedule. This class is scheduled to meet on Tuesdays from 2:00 P.M. until 5:00 P.M. in KB106.

C. Information. Here is my personal contact information:

Office: LC 105
Office telephone: 501-329-6872 extension 174
Cell telephone: 214-908-8767
Email address: vporter@cbc.edu

IX. COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY.


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\(^2\) BMA Seminary 2006-08 Catalog, 46-47. See the general absence policy.


X. **COURSE SCHEDULE.** The class schedule will follow the school calendar. Exceptions will be announced.

1. Aug 28  Introduction to course, professor, syllabus, text, etc.
2. Sept 4
3. Sept 11
4. Sept 18  First Paper
5. Sept 25
6. Oct 2
7. Oct 9
8. Oct 16  Second Paper
9. Oct 23
10. Oct 30
11. Nov 6
12. Nov 13  Third Paper
13. Nov 20
14. Nov 27
   Dec 4  Fourth Paper
   Dec 3-7  Final’s Week

XI. **COURSE PAPERS.** Here is a suggested list of topics a student may use in writing papers for this course.

Acts 2:38
Angels in the Gospels and/or Acts
Argument of Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, or Acts
Arrest and Trials of Jesus
Ascension of Jesus
Baptism in the Gospels
Baptism in Acts
Baptism of Jesus
Baptism of John the Baptist
Baptism of the Holy Spirit
Beatitudes
Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
Brothers (and Sisters) of Jesus
Burial of Jesus
Children in the Gospels and/or Acts

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14 class sessions, three hours each.
Blomberg, Craig L. “Form Criticism.” In *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 243-50. Form Criticism: “This method of analysis focuses on the individual, self-contained units of material into which the Gospels may be subdivided. It identifies the different ‘forms’ or subgenres of literature which appear, and it attempts to describe the ways in which these forms developed during the period of time in which they were passed along by word of mouth prior to the writing of the Gospels themselves” (p. 243). See also Osborne, Grant R. “Redaction Criticism.” In *Dictionary of Jesus*, 662. Form criticism “seeks the original or authentic tradition behind the final form found in the Gospels.”
Osborne, “Redaction Criticism,” 662. Literary criticism “bypasses the historical dimension and studies only the final form of the text, assuming that the value of the Gospels is to be found apart from considerations of originating event or author.”

Bartchy, S. Scott. “Narrative Criticism.” In Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments, Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 787-92. “Narrative critics analyze the complex ways in which stories are told in biblical books written in narrative form. Their hybrid method concentrates on the plot, points of view, character development, dialogue, settings, repetitions, gaps in the story line, uses of irony and the effects on readers of these and other literary features that distinguish a particular biblical text from a letter,* [sic] treatise, speech or collection of unrelated stories” (p. 787).
Osborne, “Redaction Criticism,” 662-69. “Redaction criticism is a historical and literary discipline which studies both the ways the redactors/editors/authors changed their sources and the seams or transitions they utilized to link those traditions into a unified whole. The purpose of this approach is to recover the author’s theology and setting” (p. 662).

Watson, Duane F. “Rhetorical Criticism.” In Dictionary of Jesus, 698-701. “Rhetorical criticism is the analysis of portions of the Gospels or an entire Gospel according to Greco-Roman and modern rhetorical and literary conventions and theories. It is the effort to understand the Gospel writer’s message, its structure and persuasive techniques, how individual passages as well as the Gospel as a whole were intended to influence an audience, and how various audiences actually would respond” (p. 698).

Source Criticism is the analysis and study of the sources reportedly used by biblical authors.
Ten Commandments in the Gospels and Acts
Textual Criticism
Theology of Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John, or Acts
The Twelve
Titles for Jesus in the Gospels and/or Acts
Tradition Criticism
Unpardonable Sin
Virgin Birth
Wine
Women in the Gospels and/or Acts
Worship in the Gospels and/or Acts
Zealots

10Fee, Gordon D. “Textual Criticism.” In Dictionary of Jesus, 827-31. “Textual criticism is the science that compares all known copies (manuscripts . . .) of a given document in an effort to trace the history of variations in the copying process so as to discover the original form of the text” (p. 827).

11Davids, Peter H. “Tradition Criticism.” In Dictionary of Jesus, 831-34. “Tradition criticism or tradition history (both translations of the German technical term Traditions-geschichte) refer to the study of the development of traditions, especially those about Jesus, until they were fixed in their final written form. Because of this interest in historical development, a secondary concern of this discipline has been that of determining the authenticity of a given saying or narrative, the criteria for determining such authenticity and the stages of historical development through which the tradition passed” (p. 831). Osborne, “Redaction Criticism,” 662. Tradition criticism “tries to reconstruct the history or development of the Gospel traditions from the earliest to the final form in the Gospels.”