NT 5000 | INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

4 semester hours

I. Description


II. Format

This course is designed to be taken independently by students. It draws heavily upon the New Testament, textbooks, and other materials for the content of the course. Each lesson contains questions which help you to learn the material and prepare for the exams. These questions do not necessarily need to be submitted for review since the answers should be apparent in your readings. Of course, you may ask for clarification or assistance at any time by writing to the TEDS Distance Education office. The assignments that will be submitted for grading are the exams and interactive projects. The exams cover the material of the Lessons. The discovery projects allow you to focus on specific aspects of the course in a very practical manner. Students may proceed in the course at their own pace, but must complete the course in accordance with the terms of their registration.

III. Purpose

The course has several basic purposes:

1. To enable you to learn better the content of the New Testament.
2. To help you become familiar with the context of the New Testament writings so as to be able more accurately to interpret and apply its teachings.
3. To help you begin to develop your own understanding of NT theology.

IV. Objectives

Specifically, at the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Specify where in the New Testament important events and teachings are found.
2. Identify the basic content of every New Testament book.
3. Outline the circumstances in which each New Testament book was written.
5. Interpret the New Testament against the background of the fundamental historical, social, and religious movements of the first century Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds.

V. Course Texts

All required course materials can be purchased through the TEDS bookstore (800.456.7323/ 847.317.6800).

3. A quality Bible atlas of your choice (such as Tim Dowley. *The Student Bible Atlas*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1996.)

The basic textbook for this course is the Survey by Robert Gundry. Gundry is a seasoned professor of New Testament, and his text is a standard in the field. It provides basic information about the biblical books along with a survey of their contents. Supplementing Gundry on the historical side is New Testament History by the great evangelical scholar F F Bruce. You will be reading portions of this book for most lessons. Supplementing Gundry on the Gospels is the brief description of the Life of Christ by Donald Guthrie. Some of his material may be similar to Gundry’s, but be alert for his distinct contributions. Dowley’s Bible Atlas has been assigned to give you a geographical familiarity with the ancient world. You will have a map on both your mid-term and final exams.

Ladd’s Theology is a classic evangelical theology of the New Testament. You will be reading sections in this book in order to help you begin to develop what your own understanding of the theology of the NT is. Jesus Under Fire by Wilkins and Moreland will introduce you to some of the historical questions being debated concerning the life of Jesus. This is a solid evangelical response to the work of the Jesus Seminar, which has received so much publicity of late. Blomberg’s Historical Reliability introduces some of the critical issues in the study of the Gospels and provides assurance of the historicity of the four Gospels.

A book of a completely different character has also been assigned. Paul Maier’s The Flames of Rome is a historical novel and I suspect that you will
find it very easy reading. Its value for this course is that it follows closely the actual history of the period. What better way to learn the historical background of the apostolic period? You should start reading this as soon as possible; it will help you better understand the Roman world which was the cradle of the New Testament writers.

VI. Requirements

A. Completion of Lessons

The most important component of the course is your own careful, critical reading of the New Testament. It is recommended that you first read the New Testament book for the assignment, then follow-up by reading the textbook assignments and answering the Self-Assessment questions located in the "Documents" folder of TriNet. Feel free to print them out for your use. After you have completed them, go back and read the biblical passages again, making note of things you would like to pursue further.

We have included Self-Assessment questions with each lesson to help prepare you for the mid-term and final exams. The nature of this course is one of understanding the content and specific details about the New Testament. The answers to these quizzes are found in their respective "Lessons" folders on TriNet. Do not return these Self-Assessment Quizzes to your instructor. They are simply to help you in your study efforts. This will be the case with the Self-Assessment questions that are part of each lesson, even though this instruction is not repeated with each lesson.

B. Examinations (55% of grade)

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<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>30%</td>
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The midterm comprehensively tests your knowledge of NT backgrounds and the gospels. Emphasis will be placed on the content of the NT and the materials indicated in the Self-Assessment questions.

The final exam tests primarily the material from lessons 12 through 27, though there are a few comprehensive questions from previous lessons.

C. TriNet Discussion Questions (5% of grade):

The student is required to participate in the discussion areas of TriNet. Thoughtful responses should be given. Students will be evaluated on the following minimum requirements:

1) Students must post a question of their own that has come from their interaction with the content of the course. Along with this question, they must include their own preliminary thoughts on how it might be answered.
2) Students must respond to a question from one other student. These answers should be informed a bit by secondary reading. In other words, they should not simply provide their own opinions.

- NOTICE: This is to be followed for all four discussion areas. A student should have a total of eight posts, two in each discussion area.

D. Discovery Projects (40%; 10% of grade each)

Students are given an opportunity to complete these projects (or propose alternatives to the Distance Education Office) in order to have personal interaction with the instructor and develop very practical products in the course. These projects allow you to delve into the material in a deep and personal manner.

See the assignment chart for due dates.

1. Discovery Project #1: Using Backgrounds to Shed Light on the New Testament

The first part of the course emphasizes the importance of backgrounds in interpreting the New Testament. Jesus and the New Testament writers conveyed their message in a specific time and place; and, they assume a lot about the world of their day in what they teach. But we do not live in their culture and many of the things they assume we need to learn through other resources that strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the biblical material.

The intent of this project is to gain hands-on experience in how a knowledge of backgrounds can enhance your appreciation of the New Testament. Specifically, I am asking that you choose a passage from the gospel of Mark that refers to some background material of which you are not familiar. You are then to do some research on this issue, using at least two different sources.

These sources should not be study Bibles: particularly recommended are Bible Dictionaries (such as the Anchor Bible Dictionary or The New Bible Dictionary) or Bible encyclopedias (such as The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia or the Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia.) You should summarize your findings in a three or four paragraphs (200-300 words, 1-2 double-spaced typed pages) and then show how your background study helps you to understand the passage you have chosen.

Note: There are other supplemental, electronic, or Internet resources in conducting this project. There are many excellent Bibles and Christian reference materials on disk or CD. Several
organizations, such as Parson’s Technologies, and NavPress publish electronic Bibles.

Other resources are available on the Internet. One particularly good resource is ICLnet, which is found at http://www.iclnet.org. Yahoo also provides a good starting point for research. Yahoo is found at: http://www.yahoo.com. The challenge in conducting research on the Internet is in finding too many resources. You need to narrow your search in order to save your time. Search engines like Yahoo use Boolean logic for searches. Thus, if you are searching for information about “Python” (as in snake) don’t merely type in “Python”. You will bring up references including “Monty Python” and “Python” (the computer language.) A more focused search would be phrased: “Python AND Reptiles”.

As noted above, you may choose any passage and background issue that you want. Here, however, are two examples of how to approach the project:

a. The "tradition of the elders” in Mark 7:3. What was this "tradition”? And why did Jesus have such a problem with it?

b. In Mark 8:34 Jesus says, “Take up your cross and follow me.” What did the “cross” and crucifixion mean in the ancient world? What is Jesus really telling us to do in this command?


God reveals himself to us in words. These words are therefore, in a very real sense, God’s words. Yet they are also human words; words written by certain individuals in a specific time and place. The meanings of most words in the New Testament are pretty clear. But the meaning of some words, particularly some theological words, are not always obvious. It is in these cases that a word study can be very helpful.

A word study is just what its name suggests: the study of how a particular word is used. In this project, you will study a word. To begin, you should choose a word (one word) that is used at least twenty times in the epistles of Paul and has a significant theological meaning. You should then use a concordance to find every place where it is used in Paul. There are many good concordances. Some of you may have software or electronic Bible Study tools that contain a concordance. Some of the best concordances in a book form are those edited by Strong or Young. For the NIV, there is the NIV Complete Concordance. Once you have located every Pauline occurrence of the word, you should analyze the occurrences. Try putting them into categories based on the contexts in which they occur. Then show how your study of the word helps you better understand
one particular text in which the word is used. You should summarize the occurrences in 300-400 words (1-2 double-spaced typed pages); and then show the significance of your study for a particular passage in 200-300 words (1 page double-spaced).

3. Discovery Project #3: Confronting the Jesus Seminar

If you keep track of what is happening in the news you are probably aware of the “Jesus Seminar.” It is a group of liberal scholars who are applying radical historical skepticism to the Gospels. Many non-Christians have been influenced by their work. So it would be good for us to be able to respond to the questions that our co-workers and non-Christian friends might have about their work. In light of this we are reminded of Peter’s words that we, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

One of the textbooks that you are asked to read is Jesus Under Fire by Wilkins and Moreland. This book is a step-by-step evangelical response to the Jesus Seminar. After reading this book thoroughly you will be asked to work on this project which you can hopefully use right away in your conversations with non-Christians.

At its heart, this project is meant to be used as an evangelism tool. Start by finding newspaper articles, magazine articles, information on the internet, etc. regarding the Jesus Seminar so that you can see how widespread its influence has been, as well as learn more about the seminar itself. In 1-2 pages (typed, double-spaced), write out the major beliefs of the Jesus Seminar in consultation with the Wilkins/Moreland book. In 2-3 pages, derive 5-6 arguments from an evangelical perspective which show the weaknesses of the Jesus Seminar. Put all of this together and you have an evangelistic resource on hand when someone raises these questions.

4. Discovery Project #4: Putting it All Together

We pray that this course may have greatly enhanced your own appreciation for the message of the “good news” that we find in the New Testament. But we realize that many of you are studying not just for personal enrichment, but also for increased ministry effectiveness. This last project is designed to give you a chance to apply the tools and knowledge you have gained in this class to ministry preparation.

Specifically, you should prepare a teaching outline on any New Testament passage. The passage can range from 8-25 verses in length. You should study the text and use at least two commentaries to enhance your own study. If a background issue is important, use the methodology you learned in
Discovery Project 1. If a particular word seems to be unclear and very important, use, similarly, the tools you learned in Discovery Project #2.

You should develop your thoughts in 500-600 words (about 3 pages double-spaced typed) in length. After you have done this, use what you have learned to construct a teaching outline. If you are engaged right now in a specific ministry (e.g., campus Bible study, youth group devotions, etc.) target your outline to that ministry. Your outline should be no more than a page in length and should not just be a summary of the passage. Rather, it should show how you would go about teaching that passage and reflect what you have learned in your own study.

All assignments should be submitted directly to your Course Tutor using the Submit Work icon within your TriNet course. Exams should be mailed by your proctor to the address below. Course work may be submitted by mail if necessary.

Distance Education
Trinity International University
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Deerfield, IL 60015

If you have questions related to your assignments, please contact your Course Tutor in TriNet. All other questions should be directed to the Distance Education office (email or 847-317-6554).

Course Development Team:
This course was developed by Douglas Moo, Scott Schidemantle, Bucky Hunsicker, Glen Hoyle, and Stephen Kemp. Also, Sam Yeiter is the greatest.