

Winthrop University  
Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies

**RELG 314: NEW TESTAMENT**

Spring 2011

3 Credit Hours

Wednesday & Friday 9:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Kinard Hall 312

Dr. Peter J. Judge, Professor

Office: Kinard Hall 322

Office Phone: (803) (323)-4652

Email: [judgep@winthrop.edu](mailto:judgep@winthrop.edu)

Open office Hours: TR 2-5 p.m.; WF 11a.m. -12 noon. You are free to drop in whenever I am in my office, but you may want to make an appointment outside regular office hours. I do my best to observe those hours consistently, but occasional meetings and other duties (particularly as chair of the department) necessitate (partial) cancellation of office hours. It's best to check with a quick call to make sure I'm in.

This syllabus is subject to change and adjustment as circumstances dictate. Changes are at the discretion of the professor but will be decided upon through discussion and consensus with class members.

**Description and Objectives**

This course is designed to be a historical and literary study of the collection of early Christian writings that have been canonized as the New Testament. As an Introduction, we will study several documents of different genres in detail, but the course is not meant to study every New Testament text in its entirety or to engage in discussion of all the themes and issues in Christian theology and practice that might be suggested in the texts. The chief aim is for the student to become familiar enough with the various types of texts individually and the collection as a whole to be able to “navigate” the New Testament with understanding and go further in study if so desired.

Central to these texts are the “stories” they tell or imply. The story of Jesus of Nazareth who came to be called “the Christ” by his followers is primary, but we shall see that that story actually comes to us in the many stories of the first Christians – how they understood Jesus and how they told the story in their various ways. We will discover how “history” and “story” are intimately connected and yet to be distinguished from one another. We will also discover the great diversity of thought, outlook, and expression in these texts along with the unity that is implied in the believing community's eventual canonization of these 27 books into an authoritative collection for Christian believers. Study of the historical circumstances of the writings and the literary character and content of the books of the New Testament will be central.

Our course can be used to fulfill the Humanities & Arts and the Historical Perspectives requirements in the Touchstone Program and aims to meet the following General Education goals that are intended as crucial components of the learning experience of all Winthrop University students.

**Goal One: To communicate clearly and effectively in standard English.**

This goal will be realized by students' success at discussing the material articulately in class and by written work that will assess not only their knowledge of content but their ability to write in clear, precise, concise, grammatically correct, and well-punctuated English.

**Goal Three: To use critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a variety of research methods.**

This is met in students' inquisitive and critical discussion of the texts involved and the challenges they present and in their successful writing of essays on examinations or research essays in which they use several standard tools for biblical study and do their own critical analysis of texts or issues behind or raised by these texts.

**Goal Four: To recognize and appreciate human diversity (both past and present) as well as the diversity of ideas, institutions, philosophies, moral codes, and ethical principles.**

This goal is met when students can successfully articulate their appreciation of both the differences and the similarities between their own world and that of Early Christianity as well as the continuity and the development of the thought and commitment of both individuals and institutions. They should also be able to understand and navigate the crossroads where their own worlds and values intersect or even collide with those of fellow students.

**Goal Seven: To examine values, attitudes, beliefs, and habits which define the nature and quality of life.**

This goal will be realized as students find in the texts examined some of the fundamental questions, concerns, challenges, attitudes, successes, short-comings and beliefs that are part of the constant human search for identity and value.

To achieve these goals and assess their learning, students will take regular quizzes on their reading comprehension, take more analytical essay exams, and have the opportunity to research and write a paper that closely studies a NT passage of their choice for its historical circumstances, literary structure and images, vocabulary and style, and a sampling of interpretations. They may also choose a broader theme or topic that explores an issue that pervades a particular NT writing or cuts across several writings. The research paper is not required but may be substituted for one of the major exams.

### **Required Texts**

1. Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament. A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009.

- This well organized and well written text introduces us briefly but adequately to the political, cultural, philosophical, and religious world of the New Testament; the nature of the writings and methods for studying them; and the central character, Jesus. It then guides us in examining the New Testament texts as written documents: we study their literary character and features, their historical background, and their main theological points. The book provides many useful guides for study in a companion website at [www.IntroducingNT.com](http://www.IntroducingNT.com) and an application for a hand-held wireless device, like an iPhone. The book aims to encourage students to read the actual text of the Bible and not just read *about* it, and it provides a useful guide for being able to do just that in an informed and thoughtful way.

2. An accurate, up-to-date translation of the Bible, preferably including the Apocrypha. I highly recommend the New Revised Standard Version because it is an accurate translation from the original languages and have asked the Bookworm to stock *The New Interpreter's Study Bible* (with Apocrypha), published by Abingdon Press. This study bible has good introductions and notes for each book of the Bible done by reputable scholars from across the spectrum of biblical faiths. These provide a good complement to Powell's book. I use this text for my other course in biblical studies at Winthrop.

- Some students have their own Bible already and in many cases these are quite useful for this course. You should, however, be sure that your Bible is an accurate translation that you can read and understand. For instance, the King James Bible is widely known and used and is a classic of the English language, but many students stumble over its style and vocabulary and thus fail to grasp the full import of the text. It is also a translation based on a now inadequate manuscript tradition. For another instance, paraphrases like the Living Bible or the Good News Bible are attempts to convey the spiritual message of the Bible in a way that might be more relevant for certain modern audiences. These are fine for their purpose but they are not always true to the actual wording of the original-language texts. Our interest is in studying these texts as *texts* – what the author specifically wrote and why he wrote it that way and not another way – so since most of us cannot read the original languages we should come as close as we can with our translated text. A poor translation could affect your test results.
- It will be important for you to have the text of the Bible in front of you in class in order to fully enter into discussion and analysis.

3. Kurt Aland, ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels. English Edition*. New York: American Bible Society, (1982), newly revised printing 2010.

- This is a specialized tool for reading the four gospels side by side for comparison and contrast. There are similar such books but you need to have this one.

**Instruction** – The course is built around lecture/presentation by the professor that includes student reaction to the assigned readings and discussion of the biblical text. Student questions are welcome at any time. Students will also be expected to participate actively by sharing their own perspectives and comprehension of the material through verbal interaction with one another and the professor, as well as through written work.

### **Course Requirements**

- **Attendance** – You are allowed 6 absences without excuse. If you exceed 6 absences, you will receive an N for the course IF you withdraw before Friday, March 9; after that date you will receive an F. Excused absences require official documentation and prior approval from the professor. If you have a documented or approved excuse, you may make up a test or adjust a deadline. Otherwise, there are no make-up dates for quizzes or tests and papers will not be accepted after the due date and time.
- **Reading and Preparedness** – Following the schedule below, our course will cover 20 of the 29 chapters in Powell’s book. This means we’ll not examine all of the New Testament books but we will have a good sampling of the different kinds of literature and the most theologically central books. Students should complete the self-quiz found on the companion website ([www.IntroducingNT.com](http://www.IntroducingNT.com)) for each chapter, print, and turn in the results (be sure your name is on the paper). Of course, this means you should be prepared to discuss the material in class. Demonstrating that you have read the material and tested yourself will comprise 20% of your final grade.
- **Examinations** – These full-period exams will assess your retention of information in a few multiple choice and short-answer questions but will mainly be of a higher order in that they will call for you to demonstrate your ability to synthesize material in written essays in which you examine specific biblical passages or discuss themes or structure in the New Testament books in question. The first exam will be a take-home test, due on Friday, January 28. The others will be taken in class without notes or textbook but with use of your Bible. These will each be worth 20% of your grade.
- **Final examination** – This exam will concentrate on the material in the final section of the course (James, 1 Peter, and the Johannine Literature) but will be a cumulative exam in that you will need to draw together the information, concepts, ideas, and analysis of the semester. For example, you will need to compare and contrast the Gospel of John with the Synoptic Gospels. Again, there will be a mix of short answer questions along with essay questions. The final is worth 20% of your grade.
- The final exam will be given on the day scheduled with no exceptions unless you have a legitimate conflict with another exam, of which you and I will be notified by the registrar. In this case, please remember that it is your responsibility to resolve the conflict. Note that travel plans and work schedules do not warrant a change in schedule.
- **Research paper** – You may choose to substitute any one of the exams (including the final exam) with a research paper in which you closely study a NT passage for its historical circumstances, literary structure and images, vocabulary and style, and a sampling of interpretations. You may also choose a broader theme or topic that explores an issue that pervades a particular NT writing or cuts across several writings. You may use this option for only one exam and you must write the paper on a topic that falls within the broad subject area covered by the particular exam being substituted: Introductory issues, the Synoptics or Acts, Paul or Hebrews, Johannine writings. You should carefully plan your choice and consult with me on your topic. The paper must be submitted no later than the day of the final exam (April 28). I will read and comment on drafts that are submitted by April 15.

### **Assessment and Grading**

Self-quizzes on reading assignments = **20% of final grade (taken all together)**  
Major exams Jan. 28, Feb. 25, Mar. 30 = **60 % of final grade (20% each)**  
Final exam Thursday, April 28, 11:30 a.m. = **20% of final grade**  
Research paper substituted for 1 exam = **20 % of final grade**

A = 94-100	B+ = 87-89	C+ = 77-79	D+ = 67-69
A- = 90-93	B = 84-86	C = 74-76	D = 64-66
	B- = 80-83	C- = 70-73	D- = 60-63

Below 60 = F (failure)

There will be no extra credit work – decide now to work in a way that will achieve the grade you desire in order to maintain your GPA and scholarships, etc.

### **Academic Success Center**

Winthrop’s Academic Success Center is a free resource for all undergraduate students seeking to perform their best academically. The ASC offers a variety of personalized and structured resources that help students achieve academic excellence, such as tutoring, academic skill development (test taking strategies, time management counseling, and study techniques), group and individual study spaces, and academic coaching. The ASC is located on the first floor of Dinkins, Suite 106. Please contact the ASC at 803-323-3929 or [success@winthrop.edu](mailto:success@winthrop.edu). For more information on ASC services, please visit [www.winthrop.edu/success](http://www.winthrop.edu/success).

Note that these services are not just remedial or for students who are failing. Good students become even better by becoming more focused on what makes them successful.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 323-3290. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from Services for Students with Disabilities, please inform me as early as possible in the semester.

### **Student code of conduct**

As noted in the Student Conduct Code: “Responsibility for good conduct rests with students as adult individuals.” The policy on student academic misconduct is outlined in the “Student Conduct Code Academic Misconduct Policy” in the online *Student Handbook* which can be accessed at <http://www2.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/handbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>.

Dishonesty is a serious offense in all its forms, whether lying about reasons for an absence or missed assignment or cheating on a test or misrepresenting borrowed material as your own. It can result in a failing grade on a test, assignment, or the course, or even dismissal from the university.

### **Use of Handheld and Wireless Technology**

Be sure to turn off or mute your cell phone, pager, or other electronic devices. Use of these during class (for example, texting or checking messages or email) could be quite detrimental to your grade: 1<sup>st</sup> offense = a reminder; after that, each offense = 5 points off your final grade. If this becomes a problem, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom with an absence counted against you.

Laptops may be used for taking notes but you must disable the wireless function and close all applications not relevant to course work. The same penalties for abuse apply here as for cell phones and I may forbid you to use a laptop in class.

See the full policy on this technology in the classroom for the College of Arts & Sciences at <http://www2.winthrop.edu/artscience/AppropriateUseApprovedPolicyMar2010.pdf>

Here is a projected list of topics & reading assignments for each class meeting and other important dates. Additional readings and specific scripture passages will be assigned as necessary. This is subject to adjustment depending on pace and conditions like weather.

<b>Wk</b>	<b>#, Day, Date</b>	<b>Topic &amp; Reading Assignments (P = Powell; Syn = Aland Synopsis) Bring your Bible to class regularly</b>
<b>1</b>	1. W 1/12	Introductions, Syllabus, course components and requirements, etc.
	2. F 1/14	The New Testament World – P 1
<b>2</b>	3. W 1/19	The New Testament Writings – P 2
	4. F 1/21	Jesus – P 3
<b>3</b>	5. W 1/26	The Gospels – P 4 Bring your <b>Syn</b> for the next 4 weeks
	6. F 1/28	Gospels cont'd. <b>Exam 1 due today in class</b>
<b>4</b>	7. W 2/2	Mark – read the entire Gospel of Mark
	8. F 2/4	Mark – P 6
<b>5</b>	9. W 2/9	Matthew – selections from the gospel will be assigned
	10. F 2/11	Matthew – P 5
<b>6</b>	11. W 2/16	Luke-Acts – selections will be assigned
	12. F 2/18	Luke – P 7
<b>7</b>	13. W 2/23	Acts – P 9
	14. F 2/25	<b>Exam 2</b>
<b>8</b>	15. W 3/2	New Testament Letters & Paul – P 10 & 11
	16. F 3/4	1 Thessalonians – read the letter & P 19
<b>9</b>	17. W 3/9	Galatians - read the letter & P 15 last day to w/d or rescind s/u
	18. F 3/11	1 Corinthians – selections will be assigned – P 13
	3/16 & 18	<b>Spring Break – no classes</b>
<b>10</b>	19. W 3/23	Romans – read the letter & P 12
	20. F 3/25	Hebrews – selections will be assigned & P 23
<b>11</b>	21. W 3/30	<b>Exam 3</b>
	22. F 4/1	James & 1 Peter – read the letters and P 24 & 25
<b>12</b>	23. W 4/6	John – read the entire Gospel of John
	24. F 4/8	John cont'd. – P 8
<b>13</b>	25. W 4/13	John cont'd. – P 8
	26. F 4/15	1, 2, 3 John – read the letters & P 27 draft of research paper accepted no later than today
	27. W 4/20	Revelation or Apocalypse of John – selections will be assigned
	28. F 4/22	Revelation cont'd. – P 29
	<b>Thurs 4/28</b>	<b>Final Exam 11:30 a.m. Kinard 312 or final version of Research Paper due</b>

Legitimate student conflicts are defined as follows: more than one scheduled exam per period; more than two scheduled exams per day; and more than three scheduled exams in any four consecutive periods. Conflicts should be resolved by the student and instructor. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the resolution of any conflicts. **Personal conflicts such as travel plans and work schedules do not warrant a change in examination times.** (See <http://www.winthrop.edu/uploadedFiles/recandreg/Calendars/Exams.pdf> )