**Dr. Adam Wells**

**Wiley 004**

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**Office hours: 10-12 M,W**

**12:45-2:45 T,Th**

**Religion 132: New Testament Survey**

This course is an introduction to the origins and earliest history of Christianity, and attends closely to the literature of the New Testament. The main objectives are to comprehend the historical circumstances and causes of the emergence of Christianity, to trace its major early developments, to describe the beliefs and practices of various early Christian groups, and to understand the most important themes in early Christian literature (mainly the literature of the New Testament). The approach is largely historical and analytic, though we will often consider contemporary theological, philosophical and ethical issues. The course will meet three times per week (M, W, F 12-12:50)

**COURSE GOALS:**

Upon successful completion of this course,

1. The student will be familiar with the historical context, literary characteristics and major themes of the New Testament.
2. The student will have an appreciation for the diversity of texts in the New Testament.
3. The student will be able to employ critical thinking skills in evaluating various approaches to biblical interpretation.
4. The student will be able to relate the texts of the New Testament to his/her own tradition (whether that tradition be religious, secular, or otherwise).

**TEXTS** (required, available at the bookstore)

1. *HarperCollins Study Bible*
2. Van Voorst, Robert E. *Reading the New Testament* Today. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005.

**SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS** \*

\*Readings listed in **bold** should be read beforethe lecture.

**INTRODUCTION**

Aug. 28: Why are we here?

Aug. 30: What is the New Testament? **Van Voorst, Ch. 1**

**I. JEWISH AND GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXTS OF THE NT.**

Sept. 2: How should we read the New Testament? **Van Voorst, Ch. 2**

Sept. 4: Judaism and the NT. **Van Voorst, Ch. 3**

Sept. 6: Greco-Roman influence on the NT. **Van Voorst, Ch. 4**

Sept. 9**:** Discussion:Can Christianity be “true” if it is derived from other religions? (Readings TBA)

Sept. 11: **Exam I**

**II. THE GOSPELS**

Sept. 13: What is a Gospel? How do the four canonical gospels relate? **Van Voorst, pp. 112 – 127 ending at “Form Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels.”**

Sept. 16: Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels. **Van Voorst, pp. 127- 147.**

Sept. 18**: The Gospel of Mark, 1:1-8:26.**  **Van Voorst, pp. 148 – 153.**

Sept. 20: **The Gospel of Mark, 8:27- end**. **Van Voorst, pp.153 – 159**.

Sept 23: Critical Readings of Mark. **Van Voorst, pp. 159 – 184.**

Sept 25: **Gospel of Matthew 1:1-13:53. Van Voorst, pp. 186 – 191 (bottom)**

Sept. 27: **Gospel of Matthew 13:54 – end. Van Voorst, pp. 191 (bottom) – 197.**

Sept. 30: Critical Readings of Matthew. **Van Voorst, pp. 198 – 216.**

Oct. 2: Discussion: Modern politics and the social requirements of the Gospels. Readings TBA.

Oct. 4: **Gospel of Luke 1:1 – 9:50. Van Voorst, pp. 217 – 223 (middle).**

Oct. 7: **Gospel of Luke 9:50 – end. Van Voorst, pp. 223 (middle) – 231.**

Oct. 9: Critical Readings of Luke. **Van Voorst, pp. 232 – 249.**

Oct. 11: **The Gospel of John, Chapters 1-12. Van Voorst, pp. 250-259 ending at “The theme of chapter 13-20.”**

Oct. 14: **Gospel of John, Chapter 13-end. Van Voorst, pp. 259-263.**

Oct. 16: Critical readings of John. **Van Voorst, pp. 263 (bottom) – 282.**

Oct. 18: Discussion: How should we make sense of the differences among the Gospels? (Readings TBA)

**III. PAUL AND THE PAULINE TRADITION**

Oct. 21: **Exam 2 (Take home exam)**

Oct. 28: Who is Paul? **Van Voorst, Ch. 11**.

Oct. 30: **I Thessalonians. Van Voorst, pp. 332- 345.**

Nov. 1: **I Corinthians. Van Voorst, pp. 346 – 358.**

Nov. 4: Discussion: Paul and women (Readings TBA)

Nov. 6: **Galatians. Van Voorst, pp. 369-379.**

Nov. 8: **Romans. Van Voorst, pp. 379-393.**

Nov. 11: Catch up day.

Nov. 13: **Philippians and Philemon. Van Voorst, Ch. 14**

Nov. 15: **Colossians. Van Voorst, pp. 424 – 433.**

Nov. 18: **Ephesians. Van Voorst, pp. 433 – 443.**

Nov. 20: Discussion: The NT and Homosexuality.

Nov. 22: **Exam III**

Nov. 25: **James. Van Voorst, pp. 479-490.**

Dec. 2: **Jude, 1 and 2 Peter. Van Voorst, pp. 490 – 508.**

Dec. 4: **Revelation, Chs. 1-16. Van Voorst, pp. 529 – 536.**

Dec. 6: **Revelation, Chs. 17- end. Van Voorst, pp. 536 – 550.**

Dec. 9: Catch up/ review day.

Dec. 11:After the NT. **Van Voorst, Ch. 20.**

**TBA: FINAL EXAM**

**Note:** University policy stipulates that final examinations are given **only** during the scheduled examination period. Please review your exam schedule before you make end-of-the-semester plans.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

1) **Regular attendance** at and informed participation in class meetings (8-8:50 MWF). Every student should try to speak-up regularly!

2) **Quizzes and Short Writing Assignments (15%)**  Throughout the semester I will give a number of quizzes and writing assignments designed to assess your comprehension of the course readings**.** Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

3) **Exams (50%)** (in class Sept. 11, take home Oct. 21, and in class Nov. 22) Each exam will cover the lectures and reading assignments that precede it. Your best exam will count for 20% of your course grade . Your other two exams will count 15% each.

4) **In class discussions (10%)** (Apr. 17)

4) **Final Exam (25%)** (exam schedule TBA). The final exam will be cumulative and comprehensive. To do well you will need to have a thorough grasp of all the material that we have covered during the semester.

**GENERAL GRADING RUBRIC:**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Lower Numerical Cutoff** | **Description** |
| A | 94 | Exceptional work that shows creativity and careful analysis of material. A-level work is sophisticated, well-written, and free from errors in grammar and spelling. |
| A- | 90 | Shows exceptional mastery of concepts, and goes well beyond requirements. |
| B+ | 87 | Work in the B-range is above average. B level work may be excellent work with several small errors or flaws. It is solid work, and shows significant command of concepts. |
| B | 84 |  |
| B- | 80 |  |
| C+ | 77 | Work in the C-range is average and satisfactory. It fulfills the criteria of the assignment, but does not display the same level of analysis, comprehension, and/or creativity as B and A-level work |
| C | 74 |  |
| C- | 70 |  |
| D | 60 | Work in the D-range is substandard. It may have major flaws, or show little mastery of major or minor concepts. |
| F | 0 | Work in the F-range shows no mastery of relevant material. F-level work fails to complete requirements or is otherwise unacceptable. |

\*\*Letter grades are equivalent to a numerical score 1 point above the lower numerical cutoff. For example, an A paper is equivalent to a numerical score of 95

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**:

During your college years, by responsible class attendance you can establish a reputation for reliability that will help your professors to write good reference letters for jobs or programs of graduate study. I value faithful attendance highly, as an indication of your commitment to the course goals.

You are allowed TWO excused absences. You may request that an absence be excused for an appropriate reason such as sickness, a medical appointment, athletic competition, dangerous driving conditions, etc. An excused absence is based on an email request from you (**not** on a note from a nurse, a list from a coach, or your telling me why you missed class). **Before or right after any** **absence, please email me, giving the date and the reason that you missed class, if you want me** **to consider excusing the absence.** **If you do not email me before or soon after your absence, I will assume that it is unexcused**. Unexcused absences will reduce your course average by 2 points for each such absence.

**Note: I do not give make-up quizzes or exams. If you miss an in-class assignment or exam, you will receive a zero.**

**PARTICIPATION POLICY:**

Informed participation is expected. You should be physically and mentally present and engaged in every class! Your learning process will be helped immensely by participating actively in the course, so don’t be afraid to ask questions, or engage your peers (and me) in discussion. Follow the Apostle Paul’s advice: Be bold!

Non-participation (e.g., sleeping, eating your lunch, staring off in the distance for extended periods of time, disruptive behavior and so forth) will negatively impact your course grade.

**COMPUTER AND CELL PHONE POLICY:**

A successful class requires the active participation of everyone involved. Cell phones are distracting and disruptive; they are detrimental to both individual learners and the class as a whole. Consequently, the use of cell phones in class is strictly forbidden. Turn them off before class begins—off, not vibrate! I will give you one warning per semester, after which I will deduct one point from your final grade for every violation of this policy. If I see your cell phone during an exam or quiz, you will automatically receive a ZERO on that exam or quiz.

The use of laptops in class is prohibited unless you receive an accommodation from the Powell Resource Center.

**How to Get the Most Out of This Course**

As with any course, what you invest will determine your return, not simply in the grade you earn but in the knowledge and perspectives you take with you. Things to do, more or less in order of importance, are:

1. **Keep up with the assignments**. There is a good deal of reading in this course, and more than in the ordinary 100-level course. Stay current with the reading assignments. If you fall behind you will have a hard time catching up.

2. **Prepare conscientiously for class discussions**. Read closely the texts assigned, ponder the questions provided, make notes, and be ready to participate in discussion in a thoughtful and well-informed manner.

3. **Take advantage of the office hours of the instructor**. My office hours are for your benefit. They provide opportunities for you not only to ask questions and obtain clarifications, but also to get to know me and to let me get to know you.

4. **Familiarize yourself with the specialized vocabulary of the academic study of religion**. There are many technical terms and fifty-cent words: learn what they mean and how to pronounce and spell them. To this end, you should freely and frequently consult the glossary provided at the back of the textbook.

5. **Make use of resources beyond those required for reading or purchase**. There are many, many commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, etc. Don’t be afraid to consult outside sources!