

SPRING TERM 2008
COURSE SYLLABUS

Department: Biblical Studies
Course Title: Foundations of the New Testament
Course Number: NT 500
Meeting Time: Tuesday, 9:20am-12noon
Credit Hours: 3

The Rev. Rich Herbster
Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church
846 State Route 18
Aliquippa, PA 15001
724-495-6362
E-mail:rich_herbster@hotmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of the story God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and formation of a new covenant people in the church as this is found in the books of the New Testament. The course will emphasize biblical content, knowledge of the historical backgrounds to the New Testament events and documents, and acquaintance with basic concepts of New Testament theology.

TEXT BOOKS

- The New Testament – any translation (not a paraphrase)
- David A. deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004. ISBN: 0-8308-2746-3

COURSE OUTLINE

A. Objectives:

To begin to read, learn, and inwardly digest the New Testament scriptures within the appropriate historical and theological backgrounds necessary for healthy interpretation.

B. General Approach:

The majority of in-class hours will be spent in lectures and class discussion. Evaluation will be on the basis of attendance, a series of 1 page essays (which will evaluate your care in reading and understanding the NT), and a short paper (which will evaluate your ability to do NT research).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

1. Attendance and participation. (10%)

Students are expected to attend each class and be prepared to discuss the assigned work for the day.

2. 1 page essays (60%)

There will be a series of 1 page (12 pt type, single spaced - leave a bit of a margin) essays each of which will be an answer to a question. **Students must answer 8 of the 11 assigned questions during the course of the semester.** The student's answer will be based on the reading of the primary material (i.e. the New Testament) with help from the secondary material (deSilva). Papers must be handed in on the date they are due. Late papers will not be accepted since the topic will by then have been discussed in class. These papers are designed to ensure the student grapples with the primary material of the New Testament before class begins.

Essay topics:

Feb 5 (Mark)	According to Mark's gospel, who is Jesus?
Feb 12 (Matthew)	According to Matthew's gospel, what is the kingdom of God / heaven?
Feb 19 (Luke)	According to Luke's gospel, who are the true people of God?
Feb 26 (John)	According to John's gospel, what is the mission of the Father, the Son, the Spirit and the church?
March 4 (Acts)	According to Acts, how does one become a Christian?
March 11 (Paul #1)	According to Paul, who is God?
March 18 (Paul #2)	According to Paul, what is faith?
April 1 (Hebrews)	According to Hebrews, what is the value of ritual sacrifice?
April 15 (James/1-3 John)	According to James/John, how does faith in God relate to love for one's neighbor?
April 22 (1-2 Peter/Jude)	According to Peter/Jude, how should Christians live in view of the Day of the Lord?
April 29 (Revelation)	According to the Revelation, does God love the world?

3. Final Paper. (30%)

Please write a short research paper (5-8 pages of text, plus bibliography) on one of the following themes or questions. Be sure to include discussion of relevant OT, Jewish and/or Greco-Roman background material as well as specific discussion of how at least one NT author understands the issue. An adequate amount (10-12 items in the bibliography would not be too little) of secondary literature (such as books, commentaries, journal articles) should be utilized. The topic and bibliography are due on Feb 26 and the final paper on April 22. It may seem strange to you to hear me say this – but please use the bibliographical material that you have listed and that I may suggest in writing your paper! Using the online or printed version of *New Testament Abstracts* in the library will help you to locate many pieces of secondary literature which will help you in exploring your topic:

- Why did Paul think it was so important to collect money for the poor in Jerusalem?
- What does Jesus mean when he tells people “to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s”?
- What is the meaning of ‘groaning’ in Romans 8?
- How does Paul use the motif of the Exodus to explain what God has done in Christ?
- What do we know about the people listed in Romans 16?
- According to Paul, who are the true children of Abraham?
- Discuss the significance of the ‘I am’ sayings in John’s gospel.
- Why did Jesus do miracles?
- Why did Jesus speak in parables?

COURSE POLICIES

Extensions. I expect that assignments will be submitted on the dates specified in the syllabus, and my general policy is *not to accept any late papers*. This means that assignments not turned in by the due date may be given a zero or at the very least marked down. **Exceptions.** Reasonable extensions may be granted in the case of serious illness or some other family or personal emergency. Email me and we’ll talk. *A doctor’s note may be required.* **The following do not constitute valid grounds for extensions:** “I have two other exams due on that day.” “My computer crashed.” “I didn’t have time...”

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense which can lead to failure of a course or to dismissal from the school. I urge all students to familiarize themselves with the school policy found in the Academic Bulletin, which includes in part the following definition: “*Using materials that are written or spoken by others and copying or transcribing them as one’s own without proper punctuation (quotation marks) or credit (footnotes) is plagiarism. This is true whether one is copying from a book, a speech, a conversation, a lecture, an article on the Internet or any other source where the ideas and expression are not one’s own.*” The MLA or SBL system of notation should be learned and used; careful use should cut down on any worries about falling into plagiarism. Concern about plagiarism applies to *ideas* as well as *words*.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week of	Topic	Assignment
January 29	Biblical Theology, The Jewish and Hellenistic contexts of the NT	Read: deSilva, 37-110
February 5	Mark, The Synoptic Problem	Hand in: Mark Paper Read: deSilva, 145-233
February 12	Matthew, Form Criticism	Hand in: Matthew Paper Read: deSilva, 234-297
February 19	Luke, Redaction Criticism	Hand in: Luke Paper Read: deSilva 298-347
February 26	John, Textual Criticism	Hand in: John Paper. Also - Final paper topic and bibliography. Read: deSilva, 392-448
March 4	Acts	Hand in: Acts Paper Read: deSilva, 357-390
March 11	Paul	Hand in: Paul Paper #1 Read: deSilva, 475-775
March 18	Paul	Hand in: Paul Paper #2
March 25	Paul	
April 1	Hebrews	Hand in: Hebrews Paper Read: deSilva, 776-813
April 8	Reading Week – No Classes	
April 15	James, 1-3 John	Hand in: James/1-3 John Paper Read: deSilva, 449-472, 814-840
April 22	1-2 Peter, Jude	Hand in: Final Paper, 1-2 Peter/Jude Paper Read: deSilva, 841-884
April 29	Revelation	Hand in: Revelation Paper Read: deSilva, 885-932
May 6	Revelation	