

New Testament Survey

Course Syllabus

Welcome to the online introductory course in New Testament Survey, one of six courses we hope to provide for Navigator staff toward a deeper and broader understanding of established theological topics, and a more skillful proficiency in time-honored theological practices prevalent in the Body of Christ worldwide. It is our hope that God will use this course to stretch and strengthen you, and to equip you for a lifetime of motivated and fruitful ministry.

Course Textbooks

Required

N.T. Wright and Michael Bird, *The New Testament in its World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019)

Recommended

Ben Witherington III, *New Testament History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001)

D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009)

Michael Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and his Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003)

General Information

There are four weekly activities involved in the fulfillment of course expectations— (1) viewing the weekly instruction video (with notes), (2) reading the assigned instruction material from the textbook and related articles, (3) writing original posts to assigned questions for group forum discussion, and (4) responding to group members' posts. There is an additional final assignment of a 3–5-page (double-spaced) essay to assess what you have learned about hermeneutics by integrating course material with an interpretation of a passage and its impact on your ministry context. During the dates of the course there will also be two possible opportunities to participate in video-conferences with the instructors and group members in order to provide real-time interaction over course material. And, of course, instructors will be available to respond to your logistical and content questions on an as-needed basis.

Specifics on course activities:

The structure of weekly assignments is purposely repeated in order to make expectations clear and routine. Expectations should be predictable, taking as much mystery as is possible out of planning your time.

- (1) **Weekly Instruction Video and Notes** – Each week an instruction video will be available on the course website for viewing that coincides with notebook pages for taking notes (available

on the course website for downloading). Video instruction and reading material are designed to complement one another rather than repeat the week's instructional content.

- (2) **Weekly Assigned Reading** – Reading materials are designed to both inform and challenge your thoughts on and approaches to biblical interpretation. You may not agree with everything you read, and neither do we, but try to understand the writer's points without “knee-jerk” reactions or immediate dismissal. It may help to consider yourself in a face-to-face dialogue with the writer in which you extend appropriate interpersonal listening and probing skills. Remember, exposure to others' perspectives with critical consideration allows you to clarify your own perspectives.

You will want to have the week's writing assignments in view as you take notes from the videos and reading. This will be essential to the efficient and effective use of your time, as it will focus your notes on the issues assigned for forum discussion. Keep a log of questions that arise for you as you read.

Weekly reading assignments in the textbook will not necessarily follow the authors' sequencing of content, but will supplement the topic introduced by the week's video instruction. If references are made to sections not yet read, do not feel that you have to go back and read them in order to understand the majority of the assigned reading and respond to the forum questions. You may find the two *Pocket Dictionaries* that are recommended in the Course Description (*Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* and *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*) to be very helpful in providing brief notes on words, people, and theological concepts mentioned by the writers. The glossary in the textbook is a helpful resource, as well (pages 333–336). In some instances, a common dictionary will also be helpful, as academicians can tend to write in view of peer reviews.

In addition to the textbook, some weeks' reading will include an article from a recognized theologian in a scholarly journal. These journals can provide a wealth of insight and are where many discussions about issues in Biblical Studies take place among leading and upcoming scholars in the field. Some of these articles will be optional reading should they interest you. If you want to post a question from the optional reading in your response for the week that is acceptable.

- (3) **Weekly Group Forum Posts** – By Thursday of each week you will test your understanding and insights into the instruction material by posting an approximately 250-word response to assigned questions related to the week's content. In addition to the 250-word answer, there will be brief replies required related to the interpretation of a passage of Scripture, and your own questions raised by the instructional content.

Because completion of the course may be used by some for consideration for advanced credit by a seminary, we need standards of performance without becoming overly grade conscious. Assessment of your forum posts (and responses – #4 below) will be based on three criteria: **Completion** (of the week's assignment), **Focus and Organization of Thought** (how well the subject matter is treated – well-presented viewpoints/arguments, well-connected and well-sequenced thoughts), and **Depth** (insightful drawing on all of the week's instructional content

– reading and video). A rating of “Adequate” or “Inadequate” will be given for each post toward a cumulative final course evaluation.

- (4) **Weekly Responses to Group Forums** – By Saturday of each week you have the opportunity to read and respond to the posts of other group members in an effort to broaden understanding beyond your own insights. The goal is not to engage in online debate, but to provide affirmation (with substance!) or seek clarification for understanding the post. The expectation is for two responses of 2–4 substantive sentences each.

Example Response

Heidi, in all three of your reflections there seems to be an underlying theme of longings for and expressions of the genuine experience of the gospel in community – the warmth and fullness of communication, the genuine experience of the presence and power of the Spirit of God, and wholehearted devotion to one another. As you have said, how could this not be irresistible to a world of people who sense their own alienation, powerlessness, and aloneness? Surely the communication of the gospel is experienced in its demonstration by Christians and by the church before it can be heard, because trust, the operative word for response to the gospel, is needed for humble and vulnerable listening and receiving. The lives of the messengers and their relationships with one another are not incidental to the verbal presentation, but are, rather, essential.

Appropriate etiquette for online forums includes (1) remembering that you are interacting with a real person with real feelings, (2) respecting one another’s church traditions, beliefs, and perspectives, as well as cultural and ethnic perspectives, (3) recognizing the limitation of expression (tone of voice, body language, gestures) in online communication and choosing words carefully so as to avoid misunderstanding or being inflammatory (*Note: Most people write to be understood and need to work at writing in order to avoid being misunderstood.*), (4) posting and responding promptly out of courtesy to others’ time and effort, and (5) avoiding unhelpful informality, such as texting acronyms, excessive poor spelling and punctuation, and unfocused comments or attempted humor. Online communication is informal by its nature, but can become ineffectively so. You may need to find a friend to help by editing for you at first.

What if you fall behind? – Life and ministry responsibilities can be unpredictable and require time you had not planned. If you foresee or experience unavoidable time constraints, communicate with your instructor to work out a plan. Do not allow yourself to get more than one week behind, as you will find it increasingly difficult to maintain momentum and to catch up. Remember that other participants are counting on your timely posts, as well, for their own learning experience.

Final Integrative Essay – The integrative paper gives you an opportunity to bring together thoughts and lessons from the course material in an interpretation of a passage. The interpretation should major on the lessons covered in the course. The potential topics are listed in the weekly assignments handouts. In order to accomplish this in 4-5 double-spaced pages, the paper will need to be content-dense. Do not include anecdotes, personal stories, or long Bible quotations. Bible references are adequate, unless a particular phrase is needed to make a point. If you include a direct quotation or a “borrowed thought,” list its bibliographic reference in an endnote in Turabian format (see example below). Please give credit where credit is due. (endnotes not included in the page limit)

Example Endnote

¹ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), p. 28.

Papers should consist of three parts: (1) a clear and concise introduction paragraph indicating what your paper will accomplish, (2) the treatment of the passage (the bulk of your content), and (3) a concise conclusion that demonstrates ideas for an integration of the central teaching of the passage with your ministry context. Interpret your passage in light of what you have learned about deriving meaning.

Select one of the following options for your paper:

1. **Create an Artifact or Ministry Tool:** Create a tool that you can use in your practical ministry context. This could be an outline of a book, a character outline/study of a certain individual or individuals, a teaching tool, or something you could use to bring greater understanding of the word of God to those you minister to.
2. **Outline a Book of the New Testament:** Make an outline of any New Testament book by explaining the major divisions of the text as well as key themes. Write out some practical applications from the book as well or point out the primary application. Another option would be to do a detailed analysis of a section of a gospel such as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew or the Lukan parables.
3. **Look at how the cognates of the word “gospel” (see comprehensive list below) are used in the New Testament.** Write an essay that advances a definition that answers the question “what is the gospel?”, reflecting full range of New Testament usage. Support the different elements of your definition with *scriptural* examples and argumentation. You do not need to address each specific instance of these cognates in your essay, but *make sure that each one is adequately addressed in the definition you advance.* Conclude your essay with thoughts on how your findings should impact what we say when we spread “the gospel.”

- Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον/*euangelion*)
 - Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; 26:13;
 - Mk. 1:1,14,15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15
 - Acts 15:7; 20:24
 - Rom. 1:1,9,16; 2:16; 10:16; 11:28; 15:16,19; 16:25
 - 1 Cor. 4:15; 9:12,14,18,23; 15:1
 - 2 Cor. 2:12; 4:3,4; 8:18; 9:13; 10:14; 11:4,7
 - Gal. 1:6,7,11; 2:2,5,7,14
 - Eph. 1:13; 3:6; 6:15,19
 - Phil. 1:5,7,12,16,27; 2:22; 4:3,15
 - Col. 1:5, 23
 - 1 Thess. 1:5; 2:2,4,8,9; 3:2
 - 2 Thess. 1:8; 2:14
 - 1 Tim. 1:11
 - 2 Tim. 1:8,10; 2:8
 - Phlm. 1:13

- 1 Pet. 4:17
 - Rev. 14:6
 - Evangelize (ἐυαγγελίζω/*euangelizō*)
 - Matt. 11:5
 - Lk. 1:19; 2:10; 3:18; 4:18,43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1
 - Acts 5:42; 8:4,12,25,35,40; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32; 14:7,15,21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18
 - Rom. 1:15; 10:15; 15:20
 - 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:16,18; 15:1,2
 - 2 Cor. 10:16; 11:7
 - Gal. 1:8,9,11,16,23; 4:13
 - Eph. 2:17; 3:8
 - 1 Thess. 3:6
 - Heb. 4:2,6
 - 1 Pet. 1:12,25; 4:6
 - Rev. 10:7; 14:6
 - Evangelist (ἐυαγγελιστής/*euangelistēs*)
 - Acts 21:8
 - Eph. 4:11
 - 2Ti 4:5
4. **Compare and contrast two New Testament books that are in some tension with one another on a particular theme.** A great choice would be to compare Galatians and James on the theme of faith and works due to the historical tension there. You may choose any theme you want, but make sure to choose a theme on which there is true tension and explain that tension in your introduction. Advance a thesis for how we should understand the theme in light of the tension. Support your argument primarily with evidence from the two books. Feel free to draw in support from elsewhere in the New Testament, but if you do so, explain how it is legitimately related to the passages in question (I.e., avoid proof-texting. If you cite a passage from another book, make sure it is addressing the same theme or ideas as the passages you are comparing).
5. **Choose a New Testament book that has explicitly missional motivations.** Provide the passage(s) that demonstrate this in your introduction. Argue for how what the book advocates challenges current missional postures or understanding. In other words, don't choose an idea or approach in the book that is so uncontroversial that everyone basically agrees with it. Find something that challenges actual approaches to mission, give examples of those current approaches (keeping things anonymous when they should be), and then show *how* the book critiques the current practices. Conclude with a positive suggestion for how the book might encourage us to approach mission.

Final integrative essays are due at the assigned time listed in the weekly assignments. This will come after the completion of the course.

Each week's assignments include suggestions for incremental progress in the completion of your essay. This will enhance integration of the learning content and possibly prevent last-minute anxiety due to procrastination. Should you need more time to complete your essay just ask the instructor to reach an appropriate agreement on a due date.

New Testament Survey – Overview of Weekly Topics

- Week 1. *New Testament Backgrounds*
- Week 2. *The Gospels of Matthew and Mark*
- Week 3. *The Gospel of John*
- Week 4. *The Gospel of Luke and Acts*
- Week 5. *Acts and an Introduction to Paul*
- Week 6. *I & II Thessalonians, Galatians, and I & II Corinthians*
- Week 7. *Romans, Philippians, and Philemon*
- Week 8. *Ephesians, Colossians, I & II Timothy, and Titus*
- Week 9. *James, I & II Peter, and Hebrews*
- Week 10. *Jude, I, II, & III John, and Revelation*