RELIGIOUS STUDIES 305                   THE NEW TESTAMENT

Instructor: Dr. Brad Kirkegaard

Section 1, Schedule Number 22611

Monday 4:00-6:40, West Commons 201

Course Webpage: blackboard.sdsu.edu (then enter SDSU Red ID and your password select The New Testament from "My Courses")
e-mail: bkirkega@mail.sdsu.edu
Office Hours: Monday 2:30-3:30 (also by appointment)

Course Description: This course offers an introduction to the New Testament and its historical context within an academic setting. Over the course of this semester you will master major themes and essential details of the New Testament. You will also engage in close textual analyses, employing diverse perspectives to unveil the richness of these writings. Within academic study, the New Testament has been at the center of the development of many critical approaches to the analyses of texts and traditions. Study of the New Testament presents an excellent opportunity for learning and applying a range of critical approaches that are vital to many of the other academic disciplines.

The defining sacred scriptures for Christianity, these texts are important for several other major traditions. As sacred scripture, the New Testament continues to shape the lives of much of the world’s population. The New Testament is arguably the single most influential text on the development of Western culture. Until recent times, the New Testament created a common cultural language that was drawn upon in literature, art and philosophy. Close study of the New Testament provides an essential background for all liberal arts studies, opening a rich world of stories and allusions within other works. Basic knowledge of the New Testament helps to make sense of the complex world in which we live.

Learning Objectives: There are two principal learning objectives for this class. First, students will demonstrate mastery of essential content and context for the New Testament including major figures, events, and complex themes through midterm and final examinations. Second, students will engage in close textual analyses from a diversity of critical approaches through active participation in class discussions, weekly writing in their exegesis journals and midterm and final examinations.

An Important Caution: This class is NOT a religiously oriented “Bible Study.” It is, however, an academic study of sacred texts that are deeply important to many people of faith – including fellow students. Please treat the texts with respect even as you question and explore them within an academic environment. For some students this will raise a range of questions of faith. Some of these questions will be of general interest to the class, but given the diversity of perspectives many will not. Please feel free to raise questions throughout the course of the semester, but do not be surprised if I suggest that it is a topic better discussed after class or during office hours, or within your own faith setting. Also, please refrain from arguing faith-based positions. This is a place to explore and ask questions, not to proselytize your particular interpretation.

Grading:
Midterm 25%
Final 30%
Journal 30%
Participation 15%

The Midterm (25%) and Final (30%) will be comprised of objective questions and essays. These examinations will test your mastery of essential information and your ability to explore complex themes within the New Testament. They will also test your mastery of Biblical Critical skills. Additional details for the Midterm and Final will be discussed in class and study guides will be provided before the exams. The "Exegesis" Journal (30%) will chronicle your examination of the primary texts throughout the semester. With the Journal, you will engage in close textual analyses of the Biblical texts through applying specific Biblical Criticisms. Each week you will have both required and optional Biblical Criticisms to apply to the week's readings. The Journal will be exchanged twice during the semester for peer review and collected at the end of the semester to be graded. The peer reviews are required and will be a part of your final grade. For additional details on the peer review and journal grading see the description on BlackBoard. For more detail on what is expected in the Journal please see the Journal Guide on blackboard. Participation (15%) is an important component of this class. Participation will be measured on the basis of the value of the contributions you make to the class and especially to discussions. You can, of course, only contribute meaningfully to in-class discussion if you attend class regularly and prepare for class discussion. Attendance at class meetings and preparation of the reading assignments, therefore, ARE REQUIRED. Arrive to class on-time and remain the length of the class or you will not receive credit for attending that day. You will also be required to write one 750 word Class Summary as part of your Participation grade during the semester and to post the summary to blackboard (failure to write the summary will significantly affect your participation grade). Instructions for writing the summary are available on blackboard.

A number of extra credit opportunities will be available throughout the semester. Each opportunity will be worth up to $\frac{1}{2}$ of a point on your final grade with a maximum of 2 points earned in extra credit for the semester. To earn the extra credit you must attend one of the approved opportunities and write a short 250-300 word essay. A list of extra credit opportunities is posted on blackboard and I will inform you as additional opportunities arise.

In your written work and in your classroom involvement (both in person and on-line) you will be expected to adhere to "acceptable standards of conduct" as discussed on the web page for the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/). Turn OFF cell phones and pagers while in class. As a general rule, extensions on journal due dates will not be granted. PLAN AHEAD.

**Clickers:**

A classroom response system (aka clickers) will be used in our course. Clickers are small handheld devices used to foster interaction, active learning, and quick feedback for faculty and students. You are required to obtain a clicker as a learning resource (just like any required text). We will be using clickers in this class regularly. You are required to bring them to every class. Clickers will be used to periodically assess your retention of essential class content and concepts as a part of your participation grade. We will also be using clickers for the objective portions of both the midterm and final exam. You must purchase and register your clicker prior to the 3rd week of class meetings, and bring your clicker to class each day thereafter prepared to participate. For our class, you will register your clicker via Blackboard. More information on the registration process for your clicker can be found by going to http://clicker.sdsu.edu. Students may not use other students' clickers; doing so is a violation of academic integrity.
(I am hopeful that this will not apply to anyone, but just to be clear: Each clicker is connected to you individually. Using another person's clicker to falsify attendance or concept checks will result in an automatic failing grade for the semester for attendance. Misuse of clickers for exams will result in failing grades on those tests for all involved parties.)

**Required Readings:**

   - Paperback: 592 pages
   - Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA; 4 edition (October 7, 2007)
   - ISBN-10: 0195322592

2. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Completely Revised on the Basis of the Greek Text of the Nestle Aland (English-only text)* (Hardcover)
   - Hardcover: 361 pages
   - Publisher: United Bible Societies; 26 edition (June 1982)
   - ISBN-10: 0826705006

   - Paperback: 208 pages
   - Publisher: Penguin Classics; Revised edition (September 1, 1987)
   - ISBN-10: 0140444750

Additionally a fourth book is "Recommended" (but you are allowed to use alternate Bibles if you wish to):

   - Hardcover: 2432 pages
   - Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA; 3 edition (February 2, 2007)
   - ISBN-10: 0195288807

5. And finally, ER (Electronic Readings)
   ER: To cut down on your costs, a few of the required readings will be available free via internet sites (marked ER on the syllabus). These readings ARE REQUIRED and must appear in your Journals and will be tested on the Midterm and Final Exams. You can access these readings from links on Blackboard.

**Calendar of Readings and Assignments**

**Week One (August 30)**

**Introduction to the New Testament in its Jewish and Greco-Roman Contexts**

Read (after class in this case) Ehrman, chapters 1, 2, and 3 and

Read a selection of texts from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) – Gen 1-4 (Creation and "Fall"), Gen 22 (Sacrifice of Isaac and Abrahamic Covenant), Exodus 12 (Passover), Deuteronomy 5 and 6
(the Law), 2 Samuel 7 (Davidic Covenant), Isaiah 42 (Suffering Servant), Jeremiah 31:27-34 (Promise of a New Covenant), Life of Adam and Eve (ER reading – Satan and the Fall, Original Sin, non-canonical literature)

Journal: required – Historical Criticism; for you optional criticism, please consider using Literary Criticism to explore themes from the Hebrew Bible

**Week Two (Sept. 6)**

Labor Day, NO CLASS (Campus Closed)

**Week Three (Sept. 13)**

Gospels Part 1 – Genre and G. Mark

Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 4, 5 and 6; Gospel of Mark (in its entirety)

Journal: required -- Literary and/or Genre Criticisms, you might consider for your optional criticism -- form criticism or reader/response

**Week Four (Sept. 20)**


Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 7, 8, and 9; using your Synopsis of the Four Gospels read the following "pericopes" (the numbers correspond to the pericopes/numbering in your Synopsis of the Four Gospels)

Pericope readings TBA

Journal: required – Source, Redaction and/or Form Criticisms

**Week Five (Sept. 27)**

Gospels Part 3 – Gospel of John and Johannine Literature

Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 11 and 12; G. John 1-6, 8-11, 15-21; 1-3 John

Journal: required criticism -- Form or Literary Criticisms

**Week Six (Oct. 4)**

Gospels Part 4 – Non-Canonical Gospels and 1st Journal Exchange

Read for class: Ehrman, chapter 13; Gospel of Thomas; Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Protoevangelion of James; Gospel of Mary; Gospel of the Ebionites (on-line or ER)

Journal: Canon criticism; Feminist; and/or Literary

COLLECT JOURNALs in class for first evaluation -- Journal Exchange 1

**Week Seven (Oct. 11)**

Gospels Part 5 – Historical Jesus and the Gospels

Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18; pericope readings TBA

Journal: Socio-historical criticism or Form criticism
Week Eight (Oct. 18) Midterm Exam and Acts of the Apostles
Read for class: Ehrman, Chapter 10; Acts 1-8

MIDTERM EXAM in class
Journal: Socio-historical criticism and/or Literary criticism (you might want to connect especially to G. Luke)

Week Nine (Oct. 25) Paul Part 1 (Christian Communities in the Greco-Roman World)
Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 19, 20 and 21; 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon, 1 + 2 Corinthians; Acts 9-17 and 22-28
Journal: Socio-historical or Genre criticism

Week Ten (Nov. 1) Paul Part 2 (Theology)
Read for class: Ehrman, chapter 22; Galatians, Romans
Journal: Literary or Socio-historical criticism
In Class Journal Exchange 2

Week Eleven (Nov. 8) Pauline Writings and Women in Early Christianity
Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 23, 24 and 25; Colossians, Ephesians, Acts of Paul and Thecla (ER reading), 1 + 2 Timothy, Titus
Journal: Feminist or Reader/Response criticism

Week Twelve (Nov. 15) Writings Part 1 – Christians and Jews, Christians and Pagans
Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 26 and 27; Hebrews, Epistle of Barnabas (Penguin), 1 Peter, Martyrdom of Polycarp (Penguin), Pliny/Trajan Correspondence (ER), Epistle of Diognetus (Penguin)
Journal: Socio-historical or Canon criticism

Week Thirteen (Nov. 22) NO CLASS

Week Fourteen (Nov. 29) Writings Part 2 – Christians and Christians
Read for class: Ehrman, chapter 28; James, Jude, 2 Peter, Didache (Penguin), 1 Clement (Penguin), Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (Penguin), Epistles of Ignatius (Penguin), Shepherd of Hermas (ER)
Journal: Socio-historical or Canon criticism
Nov. 29th COLLECT JOURNALS in class for final evaluation

Week Fifteen (Dec. 6)  

Writings Part 3 – Apocalyptic Perspectives

Read for class: Ehrman, chapters 29 and 30; Revelation, Apocalypse of Peter (ER), 2 Esdras (Apocrypha or ER), 2-6:6, 8-9:13, 1 Enoch (ER)

Journal: Literary, Genre, or Socio-historical criticism

FINAL EXAM: Monday, Dec 13th from 4:00 to 6:00