



BI520 New Testament Survey

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Michael Morrison, PhD

Course description

This course gives students an overview of the New Testament documents: the authors, dates, places, genre, structure, and themes. Attention is given to individual documents, and how the documents work together for canonical unity.

To do well in this course, we expect that you will need to spend about 11-12 hours each week, for 12 weeks.

Required textbooks

Burge, Gary M., and Gene L. Green. *The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament Within Its Cultural Contexts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. ISBN [0310531322](#). 624 pages. Approximate price for a new book: [Amazon](#), \$35.¹ Kindle is OK; first edition is OK.

DeSilva, David A. *New Testament Themes*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2001. ISBN [0827225113](#). 160 pages. Very good copies available for \$10.

Marshall, I. Howard. *A Concise New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. ISBN [0830828788](#). 304 pages. Amazon, \$26.

The New Testament. About 300 pages. Use a modern committee-made translation, such as the NRSV, NIV, ESV, or NET. Do not use a one-person translation (e.g., *The Message*, *The Passion Translation*, or other paraphrases). These are commentaries in disguise – good for many purposes, but not for academic study.

Please obtain the required textbooks before the class begins – in some nations, you

¹ To find the lowest prices, you may find it helpful to use www.bookfinder.com. ISBN numbers above are linked to bookfinder.

may need to order them before you register.

Recommended resources

We recommend a series of easy-to-read paperbacks:

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. 304 pages. Previous editions are also good.

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002. 448 pages.

Fee, Gordon D., and Mark L. Strauss. *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. 170 pages.

Student learning outcomes

This course serves to support the first GCS student learning objective: Explain the revelation of the Bible in its historical and cultural setting as it relates to God, Jesus Christ, and salvation, and its application for faithful living today.

Through this course, students will be able to...

1. describe the circumstances in which each New Testament document was written, as far as is known.
2. trace major themes through the Gospels, epistles, and other writings.
3. describe how the documents are different, yet form a coherent whole.

For more details, see Appendix C.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lessons.** Lessons will be posted each Monday (or Tuesday, when Monday is a holiday) for the first ten weeks. See the *Student Handbook* for study suggestions. You should look up any scripture references in the lessons.

2. **Participate.** In most courses, part of the learning comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. This counts for 10 percent of the final grade. When there is a forum, you should post at least one comment by the end of Thursday, and reply to at least one other student by the end of Sunday.
3. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 1000 pages, or about 100 pages each week. Most students find that it is best to read 20 or so pages each day, rather than trying to read all 100 pages in one day.
4. **Papers.** These count for 60 percent of the final grade. We estimate that you will need about 60 hours to work on these papers – an average of 5 hours per week – some weeks more, some weeks less. Much of this work can be done at the same time as you read the New Testament. For a guide to formatting your papers, see “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted at <https://learn.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=5854>. If you have Microsoft Word, please use the template posted on the course website; this document contains correct page and paragraph settings.
 - 1) For the first paper, trace a theme through the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, such as the kingdom of God, discipleship, or eating together. This paper is not a string of quotes¹ – it will require some analysis, commentary and summation from you. Pick a topic in the first week, and work on your paper each week, as you read Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts. Six pages. **Do not refer to any verses outside of these four books.** The original readers of Matthew probably didn’t have Romans, for example. We need to see what each book says on its own. Do some outside research and footnote your sources.
 - 2) The second paper involves tracing a theme through the writings of Paul, John, Hebrews and the General Epistles. This may be the same theme as you used for the first paper, or it may be another, such as the divinity of Jesus, redemption, grace, hope for the future, etc. Six

¹ Quotes should not comprise more than 20 percent of the paper. Quotes are rarely self-explanatory – they need some introduction from you to describe their purpose. All quoted material must be designated with quotation marks [“ ”] and the source must be noted. In academic writing, do not italicize the quotes.

pages. Again, let each book speak for itself, without trying to make it match another biblical book.

5. **One final exam.** This counts for 30 percent of the final grade.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

| Assignment | Hours | Percentage of grade |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Reading the syllabus and lessons. 200 pages | 20 | |
| Reading forum discussions, making responses | 5 | 10 |
| Taking the final exam | 2 | 30 |
| Reading the textbooks, 25 pages per hour | 49 | |
| Studying for the final exam | 6 | |
| Writing research papers, 5 hours per page | 60 | 60 |
| Total – about 12 hours each week | 140 | 100 |

* This is an estimate for the “average” student. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers, and vice versa. Some students will complete the course requirements in less total time, and some will take more time.

Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

| Week | Topic | Assignments to be done during the week | |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Introduction Intertestamental history and Jewish theology | Introductory forum Burge and Green (B&G), chapters 1-3 (73 pages) Also read Matthew, chapters 1-22 ¹ | |
| 2 | What is a Gospel? The Synoptic Problem Mark | Forum B&G chapters 5-6, 9 (65 pages) Read Matthew 23-28, Mark 1-12 Turn in your paper topic | |
| 3 | Matthew Interpreting parables The kingdom of God | Forum B&G chapters 7-8 (46 pages) deSilva, chapters 1-2 (62) Mark 13-16, Luke 1-11 | |
| 4 | Luke Historical accuracy of the Gospels | Forum B&G chapter 10 (19 pages) Marshall, chapter 4 (10) de Silva, chapter 3 (36) Luke 12-24, Acts 1-7 | |
| 5 | Acts The narrative genre Introduction to Paul | No forum this week. Paper 1 is due at the end of week 5. B&G chapters 4, 12, 13 (71) Marshall, chapters 5-6 (27), Acts 8-28 | |
| 6 | Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians The epistolary genre | Forum B&G chapters 16-18 (55) Marshall, chapters 9-11 (34) Romans & 1 Corinthians | |

¹ The actual number of pages you'll read in Burge and Green is less than what is stated, because many of the pages are photos. The reading plan for the Bible assigns an approximately equal number of pages for each week, so you will finish the Synoptic Gospels and Acts by the fifth week, when your paper on those books is also due.

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|----|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 7 | Galatians - Philemon Pseudepigraphy | Forum A lot of reading this week: B&G chapters 14-15, 19-21 (85) Marshall, chapters 12-21 (70) 2 Corinthians through Philemon | |
| 8 | Hebrews General Epistles | Forum B&G chapters 22-24 (51) Marshall, chapters 22-26 (41) Hebrews, James, 1& 2 Peter, Jude | |
| 9 | The Gospel of John The epistles of John | Forum B&G chapters 11 and 25 (33) Marshall, chapters 18-19 (25) de Silva, chapter 4 (30) | |
| 10 | Revelation The apocalyptic genre | Forum B&G chapter 26 (21) Marshall, chapters 20-21, 27 (40) Revelation | |
| 11 | study week | Proctored final exam must be taken this week. Send a message for an appointment, or arrange for a third-party proctor. | |
| | Paper 2 is due by the end of week 12 | | |