

REL 2020 New Testament Syllabus

Duke: REL 2020: Biblical Literature: New Testament Syllabus

Site: [AsULearn](#)
Course: REL2020-102_NEW TESTAMENT
Book: REL 2020 New Testament Syllabus
Printed by: Rodney Duke
Date: Thursday, January 10, 2013, 09:55 AM

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Course Title

REL 2020 New Testament

Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Rodney K. Duke



[Personal Web Page](#)

Contact Info.:

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(I check email once a day -- and often not on weekends. If you need a response in less than 24 hours, call or come by.)

NO ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED BY EMAIL.

Office hours: (tentative)

MWF 10-11 am.

TR: 8-9 am, 10:45-11:45 am.

Appointments may be arranged to fit your schedule. Call me or email.

Please let me know in advance, when you are planning to come by so that I can put it on my calendar.

General Education Themes

REL 2020 participates in the General Education Curriculum. Under the Aesthetics Perspective, REL 2020 is integrated in two themes: 1) How We Tell Stories, & 2) Expressions of Belief. To accomplish these integrations, REL 2020 explicitly addresses the following, theme-specific concerns:

How We Tell Stories: Courses in this theme explicitly address the following questions as they are pertinent to the course topic and disciplinary methodologies.

1. How do various media and their particular characteristics effect perception and understanding of narratives? Examples include: oral stories, written narratives, performances, rituals, film, and symbol artifacts.
2. How does culture influence interpretation and understanding of human narratives?
3. What are the roles and uses of metaphor in the stories discussed by this course?
4. What is 'biography,' what forms can it take, how does it get written and redacted, and what are the implications and issues with creating 'accepted' biographical materials?
5. How does the interplay between fiction and non-fiction affect perception of narrative?

Expressions of Belief: Courses in this theme explicitly address the following questions as they are pertinent to the course topic and disciplinary methodologies.

1. How does the course/discipline understand and study 'belief'?
2. What are the forms of expression on which the course focuses and what are the discipline specific ways that these are best studied and analyzed?
3. How is belief expressed, in specific social contexts, using art, literature, symbolism, language, rhetoric, and/or music?
4. How can the structural components of various forms of creative expression be analyzed?
5. How do products of creative expression reflect, respond to, and shape their social, religious, political, and/or intellectual contexts?

Literary Studies Designation

Additionally, REL 2020 meets the 'Literary Studies Designation.' This course focuses primarily on the study of a body of literature within its historical, cultural, and literary contexts. The course

methodologies are designed to help students advance in interpreting and analyzing this literary expression in terms of its structure, content, rhetoric, and aesthetics as well as in terms of its cultural and ideological background and effects. The forms of literature that are studied include: gospels, epistles, poetry, hymns, apocalyptic rhetoric, and historiography.

Course Rationale and Goal

Many people hold a specialized interest in studying the New Testament (NT): the religious communities that hold it sacred, historians, sociologists, archaeologists, philosophers, and all those who appreciate literary beauty. More importantly however, most people, at least in Western world and parts of the Eastern world, should realize that they have a vested interest in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments). It has influenced their formative political documents, laws, culture, concept of "rights" and morality, etc.

Despite this vested interest in the NT, too many people allow others to tell them what this body of literature says and means. Moreover, the modern reader who does strive for independent knowledge of the NT often does not know how to read it skillfully, since the NT is composed of writings of different literary types that belonged to the ancient world. Therefore, this course seeks to help the kind of person who engages the issues of life to develop basic skills for reading the NT independently with understanding.

Expectations

Teacher: should: 1) strive to be well prepared, helpful, available, and respectful; 2) return work promptly; and, 3) be open to learning from students' insights and perspectives.

Students: should: 1) learn outside of class through the assignments and come to class prepared; and 2) strive to be fearless by asking questions, by volunteering responses, and by being willing to be "wrong" in order to push their own learning curve. "In practical terms, students should expect to spend two to three hours of studying for every hour of class time" (ASU [Statement on Student Engagement with Courses](#)).

Specific Course Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Explain what makes effective communication effective.
2. Recognize the different types of literature in the NT and demonstrate how to read them with a consciously applied reading strategy.
3. Place the NT literature in its historical and cultural context.
4. Provide an overview of the general divisions and content of the NT.
5. Improve written communication skills.

This course will serve as a means of developing skills in observation, analysis, and synthesis that should be helpful in many of your courses. Also, it is hoped that this course will provide the opportunity for you to reflect on contemporary religious, ethical, and social issues.

Instructional Methods and Procedures

Methods of Instruction

1. Exploratory (inductive) readings of select NT texts for their literary features and meaning.
2. Lectures and readings in assigned texts to gain control over the necessary background data.
3. Pairs, small group, and class-wide discussion to contribute, clarify, and evaluate observations and concepts.
4. Written assignments, quizzes, and tests to develop and assess comprehension and skill.

General Procedures

Outside class:

- Students will be asked to prepare daily assignments that focus on controlling the content of textbook material, exploring the biblical texts, and drawing conclusions concerning implications and application.
- Occasionally, there may be on-line quizzes to take before coming to class.

Inside class:

- There will be some quizzes over the assignment preparation as well as four scheduled examinations.
- Students will be called upon to share their learning and observations.
- Students will be asked to work in pairs and in groups of 4-5 to share what you have learned and to help one another develop reading methods and skills in reading the Bible for comprehension.

(Group work will be used for cooperative learning purposes, since there are some areas in which students can benefit more from working together rather than alone. It will, therefore, be necessary for students to prepare, to attend, and to participate daily in order for the course to provide maximum benefit for all. Students will be graded, however, primarily on the basis of individual work and only minimally on the basis of group work.)

I will introduce material not in the textbooks, seek to clarify material in the texts, provide guidance for the assignments and in-class exercises, and seek to model the skills the students are to acquire.

Use of "Clickers"

The iClicker will be used in this class for attendance, quizzes, and other types of feedback. It is the student's responsibility to:

- Register the iClicker promptly. ([Instructions](#))
- Bring the iClicker to each class.

- Make sure that it is working with fresh batteries. (Apparently, one issue is that students sometime replace just one of the two batteries with a fresh one and think that it is working correctly. When there is a low battery signal, TWO fresh batteries must be installed.)

Determination of Grade

1. Tests: 40% of the final grade. Four unit tests of equal value, each one cumulative. The fourth test will be the final examination. There are test preparation guides in the Course Pack for each unit test.
2. Preparation: 40% of final grade. (Avg. determined according to the number of assignments graded and quizzes given. The balance between graded assignments and quizzes will depend on the class size.)
 1. Assignments in the form of formal notes (assignments marked "N"), written, typed paragraphs (assignments marked "W"), and general preparation (assignments marked "P") will be given for most classes. "N's" and "W's" are to be prepared for grading. Depending on class size:
 1. Many assignments (sometimes uploaded) will be awarded 10 points for completeness or 0 if incomplete.
 2. Some assignments will be collected or uploaded to AsULearn and graded on the basis of completeness, thoughtfulness, and correct formal style (0-20 points). See "Guidelines for Written Assignments" (Course Pack, Append. 1, p. 1.) and see "[Assessment Rubrics for Assignments](#)."
 2. Online and in-class quizzes may also be given. (The larger the class, the more dependent I will be on these quizzes.)
3. Participation: 20% of final grade. Determined by self, peer, and instructor evaluation. (See "[Participation Self-Record Format](#)" and "[Class Participation Estimate Form](#)," Course Pack, Append. 1, p. 6.)

Note on Participation:

- Half of the participation grade will be based on peer and self evaluation of in-group participation.
- The other half will be base on class-wide participation: being prepared when called upon (students will be called upon!), raising questions, making observations, etc.
 - Students will be asked to keep track of their own class-wide participation on an index card kept in their group folder.
- Other ways to gain some "class-wide" participation credit are:
 - visit me during office hours and let me know how the course is going,
 - turn in an index card before class begins with a well-written question about that day's assignment.
- I will not simply be recording quantity, but will be looking for thoughtful quality of participation.

Assessment Rubrics for Assignments

The main goals of the assignments are to enable students:

- to gain skill of learning on their own,
- to come to class thoughtfully prepared to engage in refining what they have learned,
- to practice the skill of communicating one's thoughts clearly in formal writing, and
- to prepare for the tests.

All complete assignments will receive credit, but not all will be graded by the instructor.

Many assignments will be assessed for evidence of complete and thoughtful preparation with the expected norm of 10 points.

- 10 pts.: complete and thoughtful effort
- 0 pts.: incomplete or demonstrates little effort

Some assignments will be more thoroughly assessed on a 20-point scale:

- **Completeness and Quality of Thoughtfulness** (0-10 points)
Shows careful reading and reflection.
- **Clarity and Communication** (0-10 points)
Ease of readability with strong lead thesis statement, clear sentence structures, and good grammar.

Absences/Make-up Policy

1. No make-up tests will be given except for significant reasons (e.g., emergency or school-sponsored trip). In such cases you should contact me before the day of the test and are responsible to reschedule the test as soon as possible.
2. No credit will be given for missed assignments or quizzes, if the absence is not excused. A maximum of two class days of absences may be fully excused (absence and assignment). In such cases, it is strongly recommended that students still do the assignments and turn them in late for credit. There will be no excused absences for days before and after the breaks without supporting documents such as a doctor's note.
3. To obtain an excused* absence: provide a written note on the day you return, citing: name, course and section number, group letter, date of class missed, assignment # or quiz involved, and reason for absence. Clarify if you were unable to complete the assignment and would like it to be excused or if you will be turning it in late. (Notes from a physician usually not required, but see #2 above.)

*Note: Excuses are for the days missed and do not cover the assignment for the next class attended. Students are responsible to obtain the next assignment from a fellow student and to prepare it.

Additional Course Policies

1. Class notes: Class notes must be kept separate from assignment work in order to receive credit for the assignment.
2. Labeling work: Assignments and quizzes need to be completely labeled with full name, group letter (when assigned), date, and assignment # in order to receive credit for the work.
3. Email: Assignment work will not be accepted by email.
4. Individual work: Although group study and discussion of assignments is encouraged, an individual's written work must be self-composed to receive credit.
5. Academic Integrity: Standards and procedures of the [Academic Integrity Code](#) will be upheld.
6. Late work: Assignments will not be accepted late "because the printer ran out ink" (= "a dog ate my paper"), left it on the printer, etc.
7. Final Exam: All students are expected to take the final examination on the date posted in the school calendar and not make arrangements for leaving town earlier.
8. Electronic Devices: Devices used for entertainment are to be turned off during class meetings and put out of sight. Communications devices in the possession of students are to be turned off during class, except for: 1) laptops being used for class functions, 2) medically necessary devices, 3) approved emergency communications devices operated by authorized personnel, and, 4) cell phones registered with APPSTATE-ALERT, which must be placed in vibrate or silent mode during class period and **put out of sight**. Failure to comply may result in: a warning, dismissal from class for the day of the infraction, a reduction in the grade for the class, or further sanctions as called for in section IV of the Academic Integrity Code.

Required Texts

1. *The New International Version Bible*. (NIV) To be purchased.
Note: You may choose to use another modern translation, if that works well for you; however, the in-class version will be the NIV.
2. Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*, third edition (Abingdon, 2003). Rental book.
3. Luke T. Johnson, *The Writing of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Fortress, 1986). The chapters that the class will use (Chapters 4-6) are posted on our AsULearn site.
[Not to be purchased.]
4. REL 2020 "Course Pack" of handouts. For purchase at the Bookstore.
5. iClicker. To be checked out from the Bookstore. (Must be brought to each class for attendance to be recorded and for quizzes.)

Course Outline

CONTENT TRACK	SKILL TRACK
UNIT 1 Background to the NT	Develop "Communication Model" literary method
UNIT 2 Nature of NT Literature Background to the Gospels	How to read parables of Jesus
UNIT 3 Life of Jesus Teachings of Jesus	How to read Gospel narrative
UNIT 4 Growth of Church Life of Paul NT Instructions	How to read NT Letters

Philosophy of Education

“Now it is not difficult to see that one must not make amusement the object of the education of the young; for amusement does not go with learning--learning is a painful process.” (Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII.4:4. 1339a 26) 😊

Actually, I am here to serve you, and to help you to make the most of your educational opportunity at

ASU -- not to make learning painful. Biblical literature is a fascinating and wonderful field of study! It will be work for the both of us, but, hopefully, enjoyable and fruitful work.

I believe that the role of a teacher is to cause learning to take place. Therefore, I design assignments for which students must read, think, and then write out their thoughts and observations. This course will have such assignments for almost every class. Also, I realize that most students, soon after a course has ended, tend to forget many of the facts that they have learned. However, students will retain more in terms of theory and skills that they have practiced. Therefore, I have designed this course to be heavy on communication theory and reading/writing skills.

Please, always feel free to let me know how I can be of help.

Dr. Rodney Duke

Additional Departmental and University Policies

For departmental and/or university wide policies regarding: cell phones, disability services, religious observances, academic integrity, General Education, and student engagement with courses (course workload expectations), see [General Classroom Policies](#) and [Syllabi Policy](#).