



Course Syllabus

NTS 101 L1

New Testament Survey I

Fall 2026

Class Information

Day and Time: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:15–1:30 p.m.

Room Number: E208

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Bethany J. Grainger

Instructor Email: bgrainger@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: N/A

Instructor Office Hours: [N/A](#)

Course Description and Prerequisites

A brief survey of intertestamental history, an introduction to the canon and text of the New Testament, and an introduction to the historical background and content of the Gospels and Acts.

Course Objectives

The aims of this course are:

- Introduce intertestamental history from 586 BCE–135 CE including literature, people, events, and material culture and to explain their significance to the study of the New Testament with special emphasis on 336 BCE–135 CE (Alexander the Great through Bar Kokhba).
- Introduce students to the discipline/field of New Testament studies emphasizing
 - the historical milieu of the New Testament,
 - formation of the canon and text of the New Testament,
 - and critical issues, structure, content, themes, and theology for the Gospels and Acts.
- Engage diverse interpretations of the New Testament in light of various contemporary contexts, especially focusing on underrepresented, female, or Majority World voices.
- Determine the value of the Gospels and Acts for personal spiritual growth and church vitality with the aim of growing in love for the triune God, the global church, one's neighbor, creation, and Holy Scripture.

On completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Outline important people, social groups, and events in the Southern Levant from 586 BCE–135 CE and explain their significance to the study of the New Testament, with special focus on 336 BCE–135 CE.

- Summarize introductory issues related to the Gospels and Acts and to the New Testament text and canon.
- List and discuss the diverse views regarding the historical person of Jesus.
- Examine biblical interpretation from different social locations and their impact on one's reading of the biblical text.
- Develop constructive critical reading skills and openness to diverse interpretations of the New Testament.
- Interpret the Gospels and Acts in light of their historical and cultural milieus and apply this knowledge to recontextualizing the New Testament for the church today.
- Describe the content, literary structure, and major theological and ethical themes of the Gospels and Acts and their relevance for Christian faith and practice.

Required Textbooks

1. The New Testament (an English translation or a translation in your first language).
2. N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Zondervan Academic, 2019). ISBN 9780310499305 (eBook or hardcopy is acceptable but note that assignments include page numbers of the hardcopy).
3. Esau McCaulley et al., eds., *The New Testament in Color: A Multiethnic Bible Commentary* (IVP Academic, 2024). ISBN 9780830814091 (eBook or hardcopy is acceptable but note that assignments include page numbers of the hardcopy).
4. The professor will post other assigned readings or notes occasionally throughout the semester on Canvas that are required reading.

Course Requirements and Assignments

1. Bible Reading (10%):
Students are responsible for reading Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts over the course of the semester from a modern English translation (or translation from the student's first language). Students are allowed to listen to an audio translation of the Bible to fulfill this requirement. Students will report on the final exam the percentage they have completed.
2. Weekly Reading and Reading Responses (15%):
Students will be assigned reading for each class period and asked to participate in class discussion. On non-exam or library days, students should bring 2 questions or observations from the assigned reading to contribute to class discussion. **These questions will be used to take daily attendance.**
 - a. There will be a few classes throughout the semester that will be primarily group discussion. Students should be prepared to discuss the readings in-depth. The professor will indicate which class days these more in-depth discussion days will be for students to prepare accordingly.

3. Quizzes (30%):

Student will take 12 quizzes covering Wright/Bird's *The New Testament in Its World* reading. The lowest 2 quiz grades will be dropped. Quizzes will be administered promptly at the start of class and students will have 10 minutes to complete each one. No additional time will be given on a quiz for tardy attendance. No make-up quizzes will be allowed. If a student is absent on a quiz day, this means a zero-quiz grade and can count as one of the student's two drops.

4. Exams (30%):

The student will take two in-class exams. The first exam will cover intertestamental history, Jewish content, and Jewish literature. The second exam will cover New Testament critical issues, canon, the Gospels, and Acts.

Backgrounds Exam Sept 29

Final Exam Dec 8

5. Jesus & the Gospels Background Paper (15%):

The aim of this paper is to interpret a passage from the Gospels in light of its historical context. Students will choose one passage from the list below and research one element from the passage that could be illuminated by understanding its Jewish and/or Greco-Roman background and write a 4–6-page paper, double spaced, **due November 19**. It could be a place, practice, institution, concept, or theme. Examine your passage and pay attention to aspects of the ancient context. For example, where is your passage set? What places, historical figures, cultural practices, buildings, objects, occupations, or aspects of daily life are mentioned? Students need to pick their passage and what background element they are researching before the library day in the class schedule (Sept 10). Then, research those things using the library's resources.

For example:

- If you are studying Mark 7:1–15, you might research purity or *miqva'ot* (Jewish purification pools).
- If you are studying Luke 7:1–10, you might research Roman centurions or benefaction.
- If you are studying John 2:1–12, you might research Cana, wine in the Roman world, or Jewish weddings.

Students are required to use at least **three academic resources** for this paper (one primary source and two secondary sources). Use footnotes to cite sources following Turabian or SBL style guides. Begin with dictionaries and encyclopedias to investigate your topic; they will lead you to pertinent primary sources. Library days will be used to find sources for this paper.

Academic Resources:

- Journal Articles
- Academic Encyclopedias and Dictionaries
- Monographs
- Bible Commentaries

Do *not* use websites that you found on Google, internet-based encyclopedias like Wikipedia or history.com, or AI sources.

Once you have researched the passage's context, apply the "5 C's" (context, complements, clarifies, confirms, and challenges), and discuss how this historical background contributes to your interpretation or understanding of the passage. Finally, discuss how your understanding of the ancient context of your passage impacts or can help to contribute to the faith and practice of Christians today.

Paper Specifications

4–6-page paper

- 2–4 pages: Background Element
- 1–2 page: Exegesis (Interpretation) of Passage
- 1 page: Application of Passage
- Bibliography page (does not count towards page count)
- Citation Style: Turabian or SBL

Passage List

- The Ministry of John the Baptist (Matt 3:1–12)
- Fishers of Men (Matt 4:18–22)
- Jesus Ministers in Galilee (Matt 4:23–25)
- Healing a Man with a Withered Hand on the Sabbath (Matt 12:9–14)
- The Death of John the Baptist (Matt 14:1–12)
- The Traditions of the Elders (Matt 15:1–20)
- Paying the Temple Tax (Matt 17:24–27)
- The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1–16)
- To the Emperor what is the Emperor's and to God What Is God's (Matt 22:15–22)
- Jesus' Trial Before Pontius Pilate (Matt 27:11–26)
- Jesus Heals a Centurion's Slave (Luke 7:1–10)
- Jesus Teaches in the Synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30)
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
- Healing a Crippled Woman in a Synagogue (Luke 13:10–17)
- The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)
- Foretelling the Destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:5–6, 20–24)
- The Wedding at Cana (John 2:1–12)
- Cleansing the Temple (John 2:13–17)

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Technology Policy

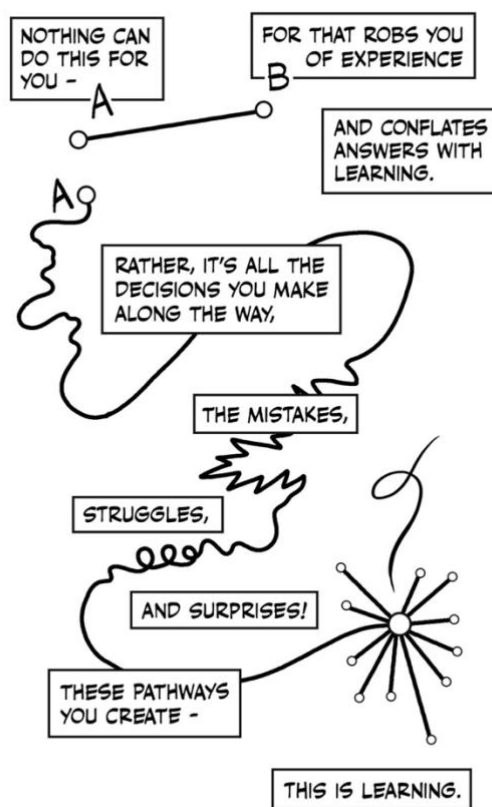
Students are not allowed to use technology (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) in my classroom. Students should silence these devices and put them away during class time. Please only respond to emergency messages or calls.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI may not be used for any stage of an assignment including research, brainstorming, outlining, editing, writing or for any other purpose. Any submitted work assessed as generated by AI violates the standard of academic integrity.

Spellcheck and grammar checks built into word-processing software like Word, pages, and Google Docs is permissible.

Remember, you are the product of your education—you are becoming a deeper thinker and a more effective communicator. In this class, your goal is to learn a particular skill or acquire important information. While you are a student, work to cultivate your skills in thinking and writing instead of using AI to replace important steps in your development.



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Video Recording

To ensure FERPA compliance when a course is live-streamed or recorded, students can opt out of video recordings by requesting seating in a designated area off camera. Students who sit outside of this area are giving implicit permission to be recorded.

Class Attendance:

Students should only enroll in courses they are able to attend regularly.

- **On-campus** students are expected to attend class **in person** according to the course syllabus.
- Students enrolled in the **online section** must pay any applicable online course fees.
- Online students are expected to attend class **synchronously** at the scheduled time via the designated video conferencing platform, Zoom, found in the left-hand global menu in Canvas.
- Online students must have their **cameras turned on with sound muted** during class, and actively participate in discussions and activities. In order to be properly identified, students must upload a picture ID to their Canvas Account Profile *prior to the first online meeting*. For instructions on how to upload a profile picture, [click here](#).

Missed Classes:

- Each instructor may decide how attendance impacts your grade and learning objectives. Details are provided within the course syllabus.
- Students are responsible for catching up on any material missed due to absence or tardiness.
 - Instructors are **not required** to allow make-up work for missed classes.

Attendance & Financial Aid:

- Students receiving **grants, loans, or scholarships** must meet participation requirements set by the college.
- It is the student's responsibility to:
 - Review relevant sections of the Academic Catalog.
 - Contact the **Financial Aid Office** for details on how attendance affects aid.
 - Understand the consequences of non-participation.

Census Period Attendance Requirement:

- Though Criswell College does not officially take attendance, it must verify that students **begin their courses** to meet federal aid regulations.
- **During the census period** (first two weeks of a 16-week semester or first week of shorter terms), students must participate in **academically related activities**, or they may be dropped from the course.

Examples of Qualifying Activities:

- Attending class in person or via live video with the instructor present
- Submitting an assignment, quiz, or exam
- Taking part in assigned tutorials, study groups, or discussion boards
- Having documented communication with the instructor about course content

Important Note:

Simply logging into Canvas or a Zoom session without participating (e.g., camera off, no interaction) **does not count** as attendance.

Canvas:

- Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based Learning Management System (LMS).
- **For online courses** at Criswell College, instructors use Canvas to:
 - Organize course content on a module basis using organizational tools within Canvas
 - Control the timing of course requirements through module control or assignment due dates to ensure that students are engaged for the full length of the semester or term
 - Accept assignments from students only inside the Canvas course (emailed assignments are not acceptable)
 - Provide written feedback on assignments only within Canvas, preferably through Speedgrader
 - Use the Announcement or e-mail feature in Canvas to communicate with the students rather than by broadcasting to a class email listserv outside of canvas
 - Use Zoom in Canvas for all "live" (synchronous) class sessions

Important Note:

Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at 844-358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as

any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,

- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Research and Writing Standards

The default writing style for written assignments in Criswell College Courses is the latest edition of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian. However, instructors are free to require alternative writing styles in their courses. These styles include but are not limited to the American Psychological

Association (APA), Chicago Manual of Style, Modern Language Association (MLA), and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) writing guides.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access a wide range of academic resources and receive research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, located on the second floor of the Education Building.

Login credentials for accessing the library's databases are emailed to students near the beginning of each semester.

For more information or assistance, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu or visit www.criswell.edu/academics/wallace-library/.

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to enhance their skills and build confidence. All tutors are recommended by faculty to ensure they are qualified to support the student body. To meet with a tutor, students can schedule an appointment through Calendly at <https://calendly.com/criswell-tutoringcenter>. The Tutoring Center is located in room E203 of the Education Building.

For questions, email tutoringcenter@criswell.edu.

Course Outline/Calendar

Calendar		Class Agenda	Reading	Assignments Due
Week 1	T, 8/18	Introduction / Syllabus	Syllabus	--
	Th, 8/20	Studying NT as History Broad Timeline	Wright/Bird, Ch 1–2 (pp. 38–59)	Reading Response
Week 2	T, 8/25	Intertestamental History: Babylonian, Persian, & Greek	Wright/Bird, Ch 5 (pp. 86–94)	Quiz 1 Reading Response
	Th, 8/27	Intertestamental History: Hasmoneans	1–2 Maccabees Reading (see Canvas for links)	Reading Response
Week 3	T, 9/1	Intertestamental History: Hasmoneans	Wright/Bird, Ch 5 (pp. 94–103)	Quiz 2 Reading Response
	Th, 9/3	Intertestamental History: Herodians	Josephus Reading (see Canvas for links)	Reading Response
Week 4	T, 9/8	Intertestamental History: Herodians	Josephus Reading (see Canvas for links)	Reading Response
	Th, 9/10	Library Day		Jesus & Gospels Background Paper: Passage and Background Element Due
Week 5	T, 9/15	Intertestamental History: Roman & Bar Kokhba	Wright/Bird, Ch 5 (pp. 103–107)	Reading Response
	Th, 9/17	Jewish Context & Literature	Wright/Bird, Ch 6 (pp. 108–141)	Quiz 3 Reading Response
Week 6	T, 9/22	Hellenism & Romanization	Wright/Bird, Ch 7 (pp. 142–171)	Quiz 4 Reading Response
	Th, 9/24	Review		
Week 7	T, 9/29	Exam 1		
	Th, 10/1	Library Day		

Week 8	T, 10/6	Studying NT as Literature NT Text Criticism	Wright/Bird, Ch 3 & Ch 35 (pp. 60–75, 850–865)	Quiz 5 Reading Response
	Th, 10/8	NO CLASS		
Week 9	T, 10/13	NT Canon	Wright/Bird, Ch 36 (pp. 866–877)	Reading Response
	Th, 10/15	Historical Jesus	Wright/Bird, Ch 8 (pp. 172– 187)	Quiz 6 Reading Response
Week 10	T, 10/20	Gospel Genre / Synoptic Problem	Wright/Bird, Ch 28 (pp. 680–701)	Quiz 7 Reading Response
	Th, 10/22	Studying NT as Theology & Socially Located Exegesis	Wright/Bird, Ch 4 (pp. 76– 85) <i>NTIC</i> Introduction (pp. xi– xiv) *Students will be assigned one of the following readings each for class discussion* <i>NTIC</i> Assorted Readings: -African American Biblical Interpretation (pp. 1–7) -Asian American Biblical Interpretation (pp. 8–16) -Hispanic Bib. Int. (pp. 17– 24) -Turtle Island Bib. Int. (pp. 25–34) -Majority-Culture / Reading while White Bib. Int. (pp. 35–42) -Gender in the NT (pp. 210–217)	Reading Response

Week 11	T, 10/27	Mark 1:1–8:26	Wright/Bird, Ch 24 (pp. 554–577) <i>NTIC Gospel of Mark</i> (pp. 95–121)	Reading Response
	Th, 10/29	Mark 8:27–16:20	Wright/Bird, Ch 10 (pp. 216–241) <i>NTIC Gospel of Mark</i> (pp. 121–129)	Quiz 8 Reading Response
Week 12	T, 11/3	Matthew 1–7	Wright/Bird, Ch 25 (pp. 578–603) <i>NTIC Gospel of Matthew</i> (pp. 43–56)	Reading Response
	Th, 11/5	Matthew 8–28	Wright/Bird, Ch 9 (pp.188–215) <i>NTIC Gospel of Matthew</i> (pp. 56–90)	Quiz 9 Reading Response
Week 13	T, 11/10	Luke 1–9:50	Wright/Bird, Ch 26 (pp. 604–628) <i>NTIC</i> (pp. 130–147)	Reading Response
	Th, 11/12	Luke 9:51–24:53	Wright/Bird, Ch 11 (pp. 242–263) <i>NTIC Gospel of Luke</i> (pp. 147–172)	Quiz 10 Reading Response
Week 14	T, 11/17	Acts 1–12	Wright/Bird, Ch 26 (pp.628–647) <i>NTIC Acts</i> (pp. 218–253)	Reading Response
	Th, 11/19	Acts 13–28	Wright/Bird, Ch 12 (pp. 264–295) <i>NTIC Acts</i> (pp. 253–278)	Quiz 11 Reading Response Jesus & Gospels Background Paper Due
Fall / Thanksgiving Break Nov 23–27—No Classes				
Week 15	T, 12/1	John 1–12	Wright/Bird, Ch 27 (pp. 648–679)	Reading Response

			<i>NTIC</i> Gospel of John (pp. 173–199)	
	Th, 12/3	John 13–21	Wright/Bird, Ch 14 (pp. 316–335) <i>NTIC</i> Gospel of John (pp. 199–209)	Quiz 12 Reading Response
Week 16: Finals Week	T, 12/8	Final Exam		
	Th, 12/10			