



Course Syllabus

NTS315

Topics in New Testament Studies

Fall 2026

Class Information

Day and Time: Tuesdays 4:45 PM to 7:15 PM

Room Number: E207

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Kymberli Cook

Instructor Email: kmcook@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 214.406.7743

Instructor Office Hours: [Happy to meet. Just email me and we'll set something up.](#)

Course Description and Prerequisites

A study of selected topics related to the language, history, background, hermeneutics, or theology of the New Testament. (Course may be repeated for credit when the topic differs; Prerequisites: NTS 101, NTS 201; Other prerequisites may be required.)

Course Objectives

This version of NTS315, entitled *Theology of Humanity in the New Testament*, examines theological anthropology in the witness of the New Testament. The course explores key themes, including (but not limited to) the *imago Dei*, relationships, humanity's sinful condition, and ontology as presented by the New Testament authors and genres. Moving from an examination of God's revelation concerning humanity throughout the New Testament, the course will then consider how these texts have shaped and contributed to the church's historic reflection on what it means to be human. The objectives of the course are as follows:

- 1. Biblical Exposure:** Students will gain substantive knowledge of the New Testament's witness, being exposed to each major New Testament author and genre, with particular emphasis on recognizing what that testimony reveals about the nature of humanity and the human experience.
Assessment: Observation Journal, Great Conversation Project, and Reading Report
- 2. Historical Appreciation:** The students will develop a deeper awareness of how New Testament passages and their various interpretations have contributed to historic and current theological anthropological discussions.
Assessment: Great Conversation Project; Attendance and Participation
- 3. Spiritual Formation:** Students will recognize their own human state and allow the Biblical witness about humanity to shape how they understand themselves, their communities, and society.
Assessment: How Human Am I Assessment; Observation Journal; Progressive Reflection

Required Textbooks

Crossway Bibles. *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016. ISBN varies by edition and binding.

Maston, James L., and Benjamin E. Reynolds. *Anthropology and New Testament Theology*. New York: T&T Clark, 2024. ISBN 978-0567701194.

BibleProject. *New Testament Book Overview Videos*. Portland, OR: BibleProject.
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/category/new-testament/>.

Recommended Reading

Please note that the views expressed in these works are not necessarily all representing the professor's, but they do represent general academic conversations surrounding our topics of study. Read thoughtfully.

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Cortez, Marc. *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: T&T Clark, 2010.

Eastman, Susan Grove. *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.

Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Farris, Joshua R. *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.

Hinsdale, Mary Ann and Stephen Okey, eds. *T&T Clark Handbook of Theological Anthropology*. London: T&T Clark, 2021.

Pricop, Cosmin, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, and Tobias Nicklas, eds. *Images of the Human Being: Eighth International East-West Symposium of New Testament Scholars, Caraiman Monastery, May 26 to 31, 2019*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2024.

McFarland, Ian A. and Joshua R. Farris eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2015.

The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Each assignment turned in must meet the below criteria. If it does not, it will incur significant point reduction before evaluation of its actual content:

1. It must include a bibliography unless otherwise noted.
2. It will abide by the current Turabian style guide.
3. It should engage the assigned Scripture and course readings completed to that point.
4. It will limit itself to the assigned page count.

Progressive Reflection (10%, 5% each submission)

At the beginning and end of the semester, students will complete a two-page written reflection responding to the prompt, "**As a human being, I am...**" The reflection needs to be Biblically and theologically informed and accurately represent the student's current understanding of who and what they are as a human. This is a very brief assignment, so the most successful submissions will be concise and intentional. These reflections encourage students to integrate and consolidate the New Testament's teaching on humanity with their own understanding of themselves, their relationships, and their human condition. Reflections are intended to demonstrate growth rather than mastery and should reference the assigned readings.

Grades Accrued: 2, two-page reflection submissions

How Human Am I? Assessment and Reflection (5%)

During the third week of the course, students will complete a self-assessment designed to identify the extent to which their lives reflect or neglect core elements of a biblical and theological vision of humanity. A two-page reflective essay will accompany the assessment, inviting students to evaluate their current engagement with their own humanity and identify areas for growth in light of the biblical witness. Though both will be turned in, there will be no grade given for the actual assessment but rather on the reflection portion. The assessment will be available on the Canvas course. No bibliography is necessary for this assignment.

Grades Accrued: 1, two-page reflection paper

Reading and Media Report (30%)

Description: Students are expected to complete all assigned readings and media, including the New Testament book(s), the course textbook, and the Bible Project videos by the week it is covered in class. Due to the importance of these elements for class discussion and group learning, no late reading/viewing will be accepted. The final reading report will certify honest completion of the assigned material and encourage consistent preparation throughout the semester.

Grades Accrued: 1 final grade from a report submitted via Canvas at the end of the semester

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Description: As the course involves weekly, thoughtful discussion of biblical observations and their practical life application, students are expected to attend each class, arrive prepared, and contribute meaningfully to classroom discussions and activities.

Participation includes:

- Regular attendance
- Completion of assigned readings/videos prior to class
- Completion of that week's observation journal
- Thoughtful engagement in discussion
- Respectful interaction with classmates
- Active participation in collaborative learning activities

Grades Accrued: A grade will be given each class period for each student's attendance and participation, which will be averaged together for one final grade at the end of the semester.

Percentage of Final Grade: 10%

Observation Journal (25%)

Description: As students read through the New Testament, they will maintain an observation journal that records reflection on passages significant to theological anthropology as well as identifies patterns, themes, and statements throughout the various authors that inform one's understanding of humanity. Journal entries should focus on observation, noting particularly how and where each New Testament author either continues themes observed elsewhere or offers a unique perspective. The results of each week's journal will be the fodder for class discussion. Examples of a proper journal entry will be discussed on the first day of class.

Grades Accrued: The journal will be turned in at the end of the semester for one final grade

Percentage of Final Grade: 25%

Great Conversation Project (20%)

Students will investigate how Christians throughout history have interpreted an important anthropological New Testament passage or theological theme listed below. This project is designed to help students enter the "great conversation" of the Christian tradition by engaging historical voices who have reflected on what Scripture teaches about humanity.

Students may choose **one** of the following:

Option 1: An Anthropologically Significant New Testament Passage

Students may choose one of the following passages:

- Matthew 5–7
- Romans 5:12–21, 8
- 1 Corinthians 15
- Hebrews 2
- Revelation 21–22

It will be important for attention to be given to whether what is being said in the passage relates to Christians alone or to all human beings (including unbelievers). Discussion of the implications of that observation should be a part of this project.

Option 2: An Anthropological Theme

Students may choose one of the following themes:

- the image of God
- creaturehood
- ontology and/or embodiment
- purpose and/or vocation
- gender and/or sexuality
- suffering
- the sinful state
- death
- sanctification
- glorification

Historical Voices

The eras and some voices within those eras that could be consulted are below. These are not the only options. *If you would like to engage someone not on this list, please be sure to get them approved by the professor prior to writing.*

Remember to read each voice in their own historical and theological context, as we have discussed regarding the New Testament authors as well. These earlier brothers and sisters may not be asking the same questions, but what they say could be quite relevant to our own theological reflection. Some voices will likely not come from the same branches of your own church tradition, which can be stimulating or may add additional challenges. Choose carefully.

Do not hesitate to reach out to the professor for help identifying voices relevant to your passage or theme.

Early Church: Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Augustine

Medieval Church: Bede the Venerable, John of Damascus, Anselm of Canterbury, Hildegard of Bingen, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra, Julian of Norwich

Reformation: Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, Katharina Schütz Zell, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Richard Baxter, John Owen

Modernity: Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Richard Allen, Frederick Douglas, J.B. Lightfoot, B. B. Warfield, Herman Bavinck, Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, Toyohiko Kagawa, C.S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, William Hendriksen, Leon Morris, Edith Schaeffer, Ajith Fernando, Kwame Bediako

Postmodernity/Contemporary: F. F. Bruce, Madeleine L'Engle, Gordon Fee, John Paul II, Flannery O'Connor, Elisabeth Elliot, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, John Mbiti, Stanley Grenz, Douglas Moo, Ben Witherington III, N.T. Wright, Miroslav Volf, Craig Keener, Amy Peeler, Catechism of the Catholic Church

Project Requirements

Choose **two historical voices** and write a **15-page paper** engaging their interpretations alongside your own study.

- In approximately **3 pages for each person**, summarize and fairly evaluate each individual's interpretation of your chosen passage or theme.
- In the final **9 pages**, compare and contrast their positions with one another and develop your own conclusions considering:
 - your own study,
 - classroom discussion,
 - and the contribution of your chosen voices.

The goal is not simply to identify which historical voice is “correct,” but to thoughtfully engage how Christians throughout history have interpreted Scripture, contributed to the theological anthropological conversation, and how their voices can add depth and accuracy to our own understanding.

Grades Accrued: 1 research project

Percentage of Final Grade: 20%

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Attendance: Each student will be permitted two absences (which includes an early departure or late arrival) without penalty to their final attendance grade, though they should be sure to keep up with the reading as there is no late acceptance for reading/viewing after the week it is discussed in class. After two absences, a percentage of the final attendance grade will be taken each time a student is not able to attend the entirety of the class.

Participation/Preparation: Please come prepared and be intentional about participating in class discussion. You are a unique image bearer of our creator God and have something to share with our group that no one else ever has been or ever will be able to contribute. Do not rob your fellow students of that opportunity or miss out on the contributions they can make to your life and learning.

Theological Dialogue / Classroom Community: One of the core commitments of this course is to listen to a variety of different voices and hear how and why they have come to particular interpretations of a New Testament text that believers have been reading for thousands of years. Therefore, please demonstrate a humble and respectful willingness to learn, see things from a different perspective, and listen to God speaking through his other servants. This applies to our studies as well as our classroom discussion.

Late Work: Unless there is a catastrophic life event (involving something comparable to a hospital, death, or accident), no late work will be accepted. That said, if you fear you will not be able to make the deadlines, please speak with the professor beforehand rather than after the deadline passes. I cannot help you if I do not know you need help.

Technology: Please refrain from using your phones or laptops in class for anything other than facilitating your participation and learning in the class. That can be an incredibly difficult request, but honoring it accomplishes beautiful things in your own soul and in the souls of the others in the class with you.

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.

Course Policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Technology is a beautiful thing and a gift from the Lord. As a gift, it is something to steward well. Here are a few tips for utilizing AI well in this course:

- Please treat AI at best as a first-year intern. It may offer some valuable help in ground-level work and may seem know its way around, but it can easily come to wrong conclusions.
- Leave room for the Holy Spirit to work through your own thoughts. He will meet you in those quiet moments of wrestling, researching, and composing. As you are his image bearer and hopefully one of his children, he will speak through you in a way that he does not speak through artificial intelligence. Please do not silence your own voice and his contribution through you by allowing something else to give you the words.
- Finally, the struggle to find those words, to think about how things connect, and to figure out the nature of your personal conviction is itself the formative work the professor is hoping to see in the class. If the word-finding, connections, and persuasion is given to you, you do not change in the way this course is intended to change you. You may have the words, but your soul has not been shaped.

Examples of AI-related functions you **may not use** without permission:

- Text Generation – You may not use AI to generate text for use in an assignment.
- Outline Generation – You may not use AI to generate an outline for an assignment.

AI-related tools you **may use** without permission:

- Spellcheck and grammar – built into Word, Pages, and Google Docs
- AI re-writing tools – tools that take what you’ve written and help make it clearer, such as what Grammarly offers. However, you must cite Grammarly or other sources in your assignment/paper and submit both original draft of paper and the final paper.
- AI research and summarize – tools that help you find sources to cite, such as the AI tools built into Logos Bible Software.

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

Date	Class Topic	Reading/Preparation Before Class	Assignments Due
Aug. 18	Course Introduction; Hermeneutical and Theological Method	Read syllabus	
Aug. 25	Old Testament Anthropology	Genesis 1–3, 5, and 9 Maston & Reynolds, chs. 1–2	Progressive Reflection #1 ("As a human being, I am...")
Sept. 1	New Testament Backgrounds	Maston & Reynolds, chs. 3–4	How Human Am I? Assessment & Reflection
Sept. 8	Gospels: Matthew	Matthew; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 5	Observation Journal Entry
Sept. 15	Gospels: Mark	Mark; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 6	Observation Journal Entry
Sept. 22	Gospels: Luke–Acts	Luke and Acts; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 7	Observation Journal Entry
Sept. 29	Gospels: John	John; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 8	Observation Journal Entry

Date	Class Topic	Reading/Preparation Before Class	Assignments Due
Oct. 6	John: Epistles	1–3 John; BibleProject	Observation Journal Entry
Oct. 13	John: Revelation	John; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 13	Observation Journal Entry
Oct. 20	Paul: Theological Books	Romans, Ephesians, Galatians; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 9	Observation Journal Entry
Oct. 27	Paul: Prison Epistles	Philippians, Colossians, Philemon; BibleProject	Observation Journal Entry
Nov. 3	Paul: Pastoral Epistles	1–2 Corinthians, 1–2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus; BibleProject	Observation Journal Entry
Nov. 10	Various Authors: Jewish Audiences	Hebrews and James; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 10–11	Observation Journal Entry
Nov. 17	Various Authors: General Audiences	1–2 Peter, Jude; BibleProject; Maston & Reynolds, ch. 12	Observation Journal Entry
Nov. 24	No Class – Fall Break	—	—
Dec. 1	Weaving It All Together	Maston & Reynolds, ch. 14–15	Great Conversation Project; Journal Turned In; Reading & Media Report; Progressive Reflection #2