

University of Arkansas - Fort Smith
5210 Grand Avenue
P. O. Box 3649
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3649
479-788-7000

General Syllabus
RELS 22803 New Testament Survey

Credit Hours: 3 Lecture Hours: 3 Laboratory or other types of hours: 0

Effective Catalog: 2019-2020

I. Course Information

A. Catalog Description

The history of Christianity from the birth of Jesus to the close of the first century. Selected passages from the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles are studied.

B. Additional Information

This course will explore the origins of Christianity and the history of the early Christian Church within the larger context of the Hellenistic Age and the Roman Empire. The primary source material will come from the writings of the New Testament. Other sources to be discussed will include the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi texts, the Pseudopigrapha, Coptic sources, Josephus, and the writings of the Early Christian Fathers. Archeological evidence will also be examined.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Subject Matter

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify the early peoples of the Ancient Near East.
2. Describe the origins of Christianity.
3. Use historical-critical methodology.
4. Discuss the cultural influences that shaped Christian theology.
5. Analyze how religious texts of contemporary society impacted the evolution of Christianity.
6. Compare Biblical records of historical events with archaeological findings.

B. University Learning Outcomes

This course enhances student abilities in the following areas:

Global and Cultural Perspectives

Students will demonstrate understanding of the interaction of the early peoples and faiths of the Near East.

Communication Skills (written and oral)

Students will write research projects to demonstrate their knowledge of the origins of Christianity and the cultural and religious influences on the development of Christian theology.

Analytical Skills

Critical Thinking Skills

Students will synthesize materials from various sources to complete examinations and written assignments. Students will be required to reach their own conclusions regarding historical evidence and to support those conclusions through well-constructed arguments.

III. Major Course Topics

- A. The Hellenistic Age, Historical Overview
- B. The Roman Empire, Historical Overview
- C. The Jewish Heritage
- D. Introduction to Historical-Critical Methodology of Biblical Study
- E. The Synoptic Tradition
- F. The Problem of the Historical Jesus
- G. The Book of Acts
- H. The Significance of Paul
- I. Jewish vs. Gentile Christianity
- J. The Beginnings of Roman Persecution and the Zealot Revolt
- K. Gnosticism, Mystery Cults, and Early Heresies
- L. Early Christian Mysticism and Johnine Literature
- M. Christianity Becomes Normative