

# The Chinese University of Hong Kong

## THEO5910

### The New Testament in Contexts

Time: Tuesday 7:00pm – 9:30pm

Venue: SB UG06

Instructor: David Ganlin XIE

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#### 1. Course Description:

This course invites students to enter the New Testament (NT) studies. It not only introduces NT as a collection of books but also emphasizes various contexts that shape the composition of the books and our reading of them. The course will touch on the topics such as historical background and setting, the historical Jesus, the texts, the emergence of early Christianity, and reading strategies.

#### 2. Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Gain a basic understanding of the diverse historical-cultural, literary, and theological characteristics of NT writings.
- 2) Learn to appreciate the NT writings as ancient artifacts and texts that closely interact with modern contexts.
- 3) Develop different strategies for reading NT writings according to their diverse genres and students' specific concerns.

#### 3. Learning Activities:

There are various forms of learning activities in this course.

- 1) Lectures: While it is the most common way of learning, students are also expected to **engage in the classes actively**. Active learning includes pre-class preparation (reading the required reading or biblical texts) and in-class participation (hearing others' voices, asking questions, sharing your ideas, etc.).
- 2) Discussions: There will be sessions at the end of classes to discuss related topics. Students are encouraged to raise questions or share their opinions.
- 3) Individual learning: As the course consists of paper works, it requires students to be immersed in the readings and writings. Despite this, please do not forget to reach out to others (families, friends, classmates, or even me). Keeping balance in life is always beneficial to your learning.

#### 4. Course Syllabus:

Topics	Contents
1. Historical background and setting	Jewish and Roman history Greco-Roman religions and philosophies Beliefs and Practices in Second Temple Judaism
2. Historical Jesus	Sources about Jesus Which Jesus? The origin of Jesus
3. The Texts	The origins and transmission of the texts The Gospels and the Acts The Pauline Letters Catholic Letters, the Letter to Hebrews, and Revelation
4. The Emergence of Early Christianity	The emergence of Christianity Paul and his assemblies Johannine communities Gnosticism
5. Reading Strategies	Biblical Criticisms Reading Perspectives Case studies for different Strategies

#### 6. Assessment:

1) Active Participation: 10%

2) Two Reflection Papers: 40% (20% x 2)

Students are required to submit two reflection papers. Each paper is based on the reading materials concerning two specific topics given below.

Words limit: **1500 (±200)** for English, **2000 (±300)** for Chinese.

Deadline: **31 Oct 2022**

a. Topic 1: How do you think of the historical Jesus?

Readings: Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, pp.75–93; Dale C. Allison, “How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria of Authenticity;” Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, pp.43–78.

b. Topic 2: Is there any difference in your understanding of the New Testament texts when learning their origin and the shaping process?

Readings: David DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Chp 1&2; Michael J. Kruger, "introduction" in *The Question of Canon*.

### 3) **Paper Outline: 15%**

Students must submit an outline of their research papers, including background (problem), research question, table of content with introductory lines, hypothesis, and bibliography. The topic chosen should be related to one of the five topics listed above in the COURSE SYLLABUS.

**Deadline: 22 Nov 2022**

### 4) **Research Paper: 35%**

Based on the paper outline, a full research paper should be submitted.

Words limit: **No more than 5000 in English and 6000 in Chinese.**

**Deadline: 23 Dec 2022**

**\*Note:** Please plan the writing as early as possible. Late submission **will be dealt with deduction** except that medical documents are provided.

## 7. **Required Readings:**

- 1) DeSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Context, Methods and Ministry Formation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2018. [德席爾瓦：《21 世紀新約導論》]
- 2) Those marked with [\*] in the course schedule must be read.

## 8. **Recommended Readings:**

In the course schedule below, those without [\*] are recommended readings (still updating). On the other hand, the list below only includes books that are, I think, helpful for beginners to get familiar with each topic. If students need to further those topics with more readings, they could consult the detailed reading list at the end of every chapter of deSilva's *Introduction* or a comprehensive NT bibliography provided by Denver Seminary.

<https://denverseminary.edu/the-denver-journal-article/new-testament-exegesis-bibliography-2020/>

### 1) For beginners

- i. Brown, Raymond E., and Marion L. Soards. *An Introduction to the New Testament: The Abridged Edition*, 2016.
- ii. Gupta, Nijay K. *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.
- iii. Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The New Testament: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- iv. Theissen, Gerd. *The New Testament: History, Literature, Religion*. London: T&T Clark, 2003. [戴歌德。《新約導論》。香港：道聲，2012。]
- v. 周天和。《新約研究指南》，第三版。香港：崇基學院神學組，1998。

- 2) Historical background and setting
  - i. Evans, Craig A. *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.
  - ii. Jeffers, James S. *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- 3) Historical Jesus
  - i. Darrell L. Bock. *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
  - ii. Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. 1st ed. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1991.
- 4) The Texts
  - i. Patzia, Arthur G. *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text & Canon*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995.
  - ii. Schnelle, Udo. *The History and Theology of the New Testament Writings*. London: SCM, 1998.
  - iii. 孫寶玲。《新約聖經研究導論》。新北：校園，2018。
- 5) The Emergence of Early Christianity
  - i. Hurtado, Larry W. *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2003.
- 6) Reading Strategies
  - i. Powell, Mark Allan. *Methods for Matthew*. MBI. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

## 9. Course Schedule:

Date	Content	Pre-class Reading
1. 6/9	Introduction	Course outline
2. 13/9	The significance of the New Testament contexts Jewish and Roman history	*David DeSilva, <i>An Introduction to the New Testament</i> , chp 1&2; James S. Jeffers, <i>The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era</i> , chp 1&2.
3. 20/9	Greco-Roman religions and philosophies Beliefs and Practices in Second Temple Judaism	
4. 27/9	Historical Jesus	*Mark Allan Powell, <i>Introducing the New Testament</i> , pp.75–93; Dale C. Allison, “How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria of

		Authenticity;” Darrell L. Bock, <i>Studying the Historical Jesus</i> , pp.43–78.
5. 4/10	Public Holiday	
6. 11/10	The origins and transmission of the texts The Gospels and the Acts (1)	* David deSilva, chp 4. * Raymond Brown, <i>Introduction</i> (full version), pp. 3-19
7. 18/10	The Gospels and the Acts (2)	Gerd Theissen, chp 3, 6.
8. 25/10	The Pauline Letters (1)	*David DeSilva, chp 11.
9. 1/11	The Pauline Letters (2)	* Theissen, chp 5.
10. 8/11	Catholic Letters, the Letter to Hebrews, and Revelation	*Theissen, chp 7. *Johnson, <i>A very Short Introduction</i> , pp. 84-113. David DeSilva, chp 19-24.
11. 15/11	The emergence of Christianity	*Larry Hurtado, <i>Lord Jesus Christ</i> , pp. 1-26.
12. 22/11	Paul and his assemblies Johannine communities Gnosticism	*Larry Hurtado, pp.79-153 Larry Hurtado, pp.349-426 Culpepper, R. Alan. <i>The Gospel and Letters of John</i> . Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998, pp. 43-63.
13. 29/11	Biblical Criticisms Reading Perspectives	* Mark Allan Powell, <i>Introduction</i> , pp. 57-74 * Raymond Brown, <i>Introduction</i> (full version), pp. 20-47
14. 6/12	Canonization and conclusion	Michael J. Kruger, “introduction” in <i>The Question of Canon</i>

#### **10. Academic honesty and plagiarism:**

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at

<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

**With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. **Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers.** Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

### **11. Suggested Topics for the Term Papers**

- 1) How did the first-century Christians (through their texts, e.g., Gospels, Letters, Apocalypse) respond to the Greco-Roman cultural/religious/political contexts?
- 2) How to interpret specific texts (you can choose some texts about Christians' conflicts with the Jewish people) against the backdrop of the Second Temple Judaism.
- 3) Please dialogue with scholars in historical Jesus as to the reasons for Jesus's death.
- 4) Why are there different portrayals of Jesus's birth/death/resurrection or other events in his ministry in the Gospels? You can compare two or more Gospels according to their particular concerns and writing contexts.
- 5) How did Paul's life and ministry end?
- 6) Try to explain the similarities and differences between the Pauline and Lukan report about the Jerusalem Conference.
- 7) How to interpret specific texts from deutero-Pauline or Catholic letters considering their internal logic and external contexts.
- 8) Try to reconstruct or explain a Christian group's origin or development from a historical (not confessional) perspective.
- 9) What is the relationship between canonization and canonical texts? Use a specific book as a test case.