

# **Introduction to the New Testament**

**Orientation conference call Tuesday September 8 at 7:30 PM Central Time**

**Sept. 11- Nov. 19, 2020**

Facilitator: Dr. Jennifer McNeel

## **Course Description**

In this course students will be introduced to key themes and issues in the study of the New Testament, and learn basic skills to equip them to be competent and creative interpreters of New Testament texts. The *Introduction to the New Testament* DVD presents a model for interpreting Scripture that emphasizes the importance of reading New Testament texts in their cultural and literary contexts with a view to relating them to contemporary cultural and ministry contexts. The course will focus on the practice of interpreting New Testament texts. Students will use the models and insights from presentations on the Select DVD to explore questions raised by the study of specific New Testament texts and then discuss how these texts continue shape our faith and practice in today's world.

## **Purpose and Goals of the Course**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the study of the New Testament for those living out their baptismal vocation. The course is designed to provide a variety of strategies and tools for understanding the message of New Testament texts in their ancient social and religious contexts with a view to relating them to contemporary ministry contexts. The course employs learning activities that include lectures, readings, study guides, and online discussion to accomplish the following learning goals:

- Obtain a basic grasp of the content and message of the Gospels, Pauline epistles, Acts and Revelation
- To become aware of the cultural and theological assumptions you bring to the interpretation of New Testament texts and learn to ask questions of the text that allow you to hear the text anew
- To become familiar with basic strategies for interpreting New Testament texts and practice using them by interpreting specific passages discussing your interpretive work online
- To better understand how New Testament texts were responding to specific political, social and religious issues and circumstances in order to provide fresh readings of New Testament texts that speak to contemporary cultural contexts

## **Facilitator as Resource**

The class facilitator will be familiar with the lectures and reading material, read student postings, and will be rotating the type of interface he uses with the student each week. The weeks that there are Zoom calls that will be the interface. Other weeks the facilitator will be responding to either essays or to threaded discussions or give a general written response to the issues of that week. The facilitator for this course is the Rev. Dr. Jennifer McNeel who teaches at United Lutheran Seminary, and has taught at Luther Seminary, and Union Presbyterian Seminary.

**Orientation week September 7:** You will be enrolled in the course site just before the orientation week. Please take this time to explore the course site. There are a number of tasks to do during the orientation time: update your profile, introduce yourself in the “Getting to Know You” forum, and indicating your choice about “Why are you taking this course?” You can’t hurt anything, click around the course homepage and explore! There will also be an orientation phone call with the course facilitator **will be Tuesday Sept. 8 at 7:30 Central Time.** This call will be done with a videoconference tool called Zoom. You do not need to download any software in advance and instructions will be in the class site. If you do not have a camera and microphone connected with your computer you may call in by phone instead.

## **Weekly course guide:**

Sometime Friday –Monday of each week

- read the assigned readings in both the New Testament and textbook
- watch the lectures on DVD
- post your discussion essay by Monday evening

Tuesday-Wednesday

- respond to at least 2 of your classmates’ essays

Wednesday - Thursday

- Compose your key question essay for the session and post by Thursday evening

Thursday-Friday

- Respond to at least 2 people

**Zoom calls:** in Sessions 3 and 9 there will be a one hour Zoom call on Tuesdays at 7:30 Central Time. This will give students an opportunity for immediate feedback on both process and content of the course.

## **Schedule**

September 11 Session 1: Interpreting the New Testament in its Contexts

September 19 Session 2: The Gospel of Mark

September 25 Session 3: The Gospel of Matthew

Zoom call

October 2 Session 4: The Gospel of Luke

October 9 Session 5: The Gospel of John

October 16 Session 6: The Acts of the Apostles

October 23 Session 7: Letters of Paul I: Introduction, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Galatians

October 30 Session 8: Letters of Paul II: 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans

November 6 Session 9: Letters of Paul III: Philippians, Philemon, Deutero-Pauline & Pastoral Epistles

Zoom call

November 13 Session 10: Revelation

Final paper due Dec. 4, 2020