The course offers an overview of the New Testament in its historical, literary, cultural and theological contexts. The course addresses topics such as the development of the Christian canon, the historical Jesus, Paul the Apostle, the early followers of Jesus. Students are invited to a close reading of the primary texts and recognize various literary genres in the New Testament, their enduring theological message and pastoral applications.

Learning Outcomes:

1) Students will demonstrate facility with methods of research in the study of New Testament.
2) Students will articulate the relationship between New Testament theology and their professional practice and spiritual development.
3) Students will demonstrate an ability to critically read and analyze New Testament texts and identify their styles, genres, terminology, contents, historical, literary, and canonical settings.
4) Students will demonstrate an ability to identify major theological themes in the New Testament and to recognize their connections with the Old Testament.
5) Students will demonstrate an ability to relate the historical, theological and spiritual knowledge found in the study of the New Testament to their own ministerial and spiritual life.
6) Students will demonstrate knowledge of topics such as the development of the Christian canon, the historical Jesus, Paul the Apostle, the early followers of Jesus.
7) Students will demonstrate an ability to use an Ignatian reflective exegesis method in addition to contemporary methodological approaches to New Testament texts.
Readings:

The Bible* (both Old and New Testament, in either printed or electronic format) is the main text in this course and needs to be brought to every class. Failure to bring the Bible to class will affect participation. Preferred are: the Revised Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the New American Bible, the Oxford Annotated Study Bible. Bibles in languages other than English are also welcome.


Additional readings, articles, links, and resources will be posted on Blackboard.

[* indicates mandatory books.]

What is expected:

Students are invited to approach the New Testament with receptivity, respect, and curiosity and to be ready to be surprised by what they will find in the texts and about themselves as readers. Students are expected to read the assigned primary texts and the secondary literature and to participate in the discussions. Our discussions on Blackboard (which will be graded) are open also to all kinds of questions, as we recognize that questions are what prompt us to go beyond what we know and seek what we don’t know. Interacting on Blackboard aims also at promoting a communal and dynamic approach to the New Testament texts. In addition to class discussion, each module requires a written activity and a reflective assignment. A final exegesis paper is due within two weeks after the end of the course. Guidelines for the final paper are posted on Blackboard.

For students who are taking an online course for the first time, I would like to say that this course is reading and writing intense. The best way to keep up with the fast pace of the course is to check Blackboard possibly once a day (or to subscribe to the Discussions) and to do some work each day. One cannot speed-read Scripture. Of course, the more you put into the class, the more you will be rewarded with a new understanding and appreciation for the New Testament. Going online once a week and trying to do it all at once will not help you absorb the material and take advantage of the interactions with other students.

Procedure:

Once you log in into blackboard, in the “Learning Space”, you will find the description of all the things to be done in each of the modules. In the “Discussion Board”, you will be able to do your postings; just click on “Discussion Board”, then click on the specific module you want to work on (e.g. “Introduction”, Module 1”), and then click on “Thread” when
you are ready to do your posting. In order to reply to the work posted by one of the students, click first on that specific posting made by the student, and then click “Reply”. When you have clicked on “Thread” or “Reply”, you will be given the option to write or paste directly your text in a window, or to do an attachment. I suggest avoiding the use of “attachments” since some of the students do not have the software required to read some of the attachments (e.g. file.docx, file.rtf, etc.).

**IMPORTANT:** At the beginning of the course, you will be invited to introduce yourself to the rest of the class. After logging onto Blackboard, please go to “Introductions”, read the description for that module, and then post your personal introduction using the “Thread” option. This has to be done no later than the first day of the course: **January 19, 2016**. The Blackboard page will be available starting **January 12, 2016** (“Week Zero”). On week zero, students are invited to visit the page and make sure all the technology is in good working order.

**Course Outline:**
The course is divided in four modules (each including two parts and lasting two weeks) as follows:

**MODULE 1:**
ENTERING THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD

*Part I* is an introduction to the historical, geographical, cultural, literary and religious world of the New Testament in the first century CE. The development of the NT canon is also addressed. Methods: historical criticism; textual criticism, source criticism.

*Part II* is devoted to the Gospel of Mark and the literary genres in the gospels. Methods: form criticism, literary criticism.

**MODULE 2:**
GOSPELS OF MATTHEW AND LUKE

*Part I* of this module is devoted to the Gospel of Matthew, its structure, context, and theological message.

*Part II* is devoted to the Gospel of Luke, its structure, context, and theological message.

**MODULE 3:**
ACTS AND PAUL

*Part I* of the module introduces the book of Acts, its characters and plot and its portrayal of the early communities of Jesus’ followers.

*Part II* presents Paul the apostle, his life and work. Letters.

**MODULE 4:**
JOHN AND REVELATION

*Part I* is devoted to the Gospel of John and its unique literary structure and theology.  
*Part II* focuses on the book of Revelation in the context of Apocalyptic literature and suggests some conclusions on the New Testament as a whole.

**Grading:**
Each assignment, including discussion posts, will be given a maximum of 100 points. 70% of the final grade is the average of the points obtained each week. The final paper is worth 30% of the final grade. The letter grades assigned correspond (roughly) to the following numerical equivalents:

A 94-100% 4.0  
A- 90-93.9% 3.7  
B+ 87-89.9% 3.3  
B 83-86.9% 3.0  
B- 80-82.9% 2.7  
C+ 77-79.9% 2.3  
C 73-76.9% 2.0  
C- 70-72.9% 1.7  
D 60-69.9% 1.0  
F below 60% 0.0  

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity (see Student Handbook.) Should any assignment be even partially plagiarized, the grade will be zero for the assignment and the plagiarizer reported to the Dean.