INSTRUCTOR: C. F. Baechle, PhD (baechle@fordham.edu); office hours by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course offers an overview of the New Testament in its historical, literary, cultural, and theological contexts. The course will examine the development of the Christian canon, the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, and the theology of the early followers of Jesus including the Evangelists and Paul the Apostle. Students will be invited to a close reading of the primary texts and will learn to recognize various literary genres in the New Testament, their connections with the Old Testament, their enduring theological message, and pastoral applications. Some discussion will be devoted also to methodological approaches to the study of the text.

READINGS:

The Bible (both Old and New Testament, either in printed or electronic format) is the main text in this course. Preferred editions are: the New Revised Standard Version, the New American Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the Oxford Annotated Study Bible, or the Ignatius Study Bible. Mark Allan Powell’s Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey (Baker Academic, 2009; ISBN 978-0-8010-2868-7) will be used as the main textbook.


EXPECTATIONS:

Students are invited to approach the New Testament with receptivity, respect, and curiosity. They should be ready to be surprised by what they will find in the texts and by what they will discover 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 to seek that which we do not know. Interacting with each other on Blackboard seeks to promote a communal and dynamic approach to the New Testament texts. In addition, each module also requires written activities. A final paper is due within three weeks after the end of the course.
For those students who are taking an online course for the first time, please understand that this course is reading and writing intensive. The course requires three posts or other activities each week. The textbook comes with a website that has an abundance of online resources including practice quizzes. All written assignments are posted on the Blackboard Discussion Board, unless otherwise indicated, and are graded.

The best way to keep up with the fast pace of the course is to check Blackboard on a daily basis (if possible) and also to try to do some work each day. One cannot “speed-read” Scripture. And, 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 and the ancient world. Going online once a week and trying to do all of the assignments at once will not help you absorb the material and take advantage of the interactions with the other students.

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

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

**Module 1: Entering the World of the New Testament**
- **Part I:** 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:** The Gospel of Mark and the literary genres in the gospels. Methods: form criticism, literary criticism.

**Module 2: The Gospels of Matthew And Luke**
- **Part I:** The Gospel of Matthew, its structure, context, and theological message.
- **Part II:** The Gospel of Luke, its structure, context, and theological message.

**Module 3: The Acts of the Apostles and Paul**
- **Part I:** The Book of Acts, its characters and plot, and its portrayal of the early communities of Jesus’ followers.
- **Part II:** Paul the apostle, his life and work.

**Module 4: The Gospel of John and Revelation**
- **Part I:** The Gospel of John and its unique literary structure and theology.

**PROCEDURE:**

Upon logging into Blackboard, you will find a description of each module and its readings and assignments in the “Learning Space.” 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 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 to paste your text directly in a window, or to do an attachment. Please do not use the attachment option as some of the students do not have the software required to read these attachments (e.g., file.docx, file.rtf, etc…). Each post will be graded.

**IMPORTANT:** At the beginning of the course, a week before the official starting date (Week Zero) 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 must be done by the first day of class: **August 31, 2015**. The Blackboard page will be available starting **August 24, 2015**.