



RLGN 1103 New Testament Writings in Context

Course Syllabus (Online)
Summer I 2014 (May 19-June 28)

Course Description

A study of the New Testament writings in the context of Greco-Roman civilization. The course asks students to reflect on the impact of Christian scriptures on Western civilization and consider their implications for the contemporary world.

Course Instructor

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Course Credit

Three hours

Core Curriculum

RLGN 1103 meets the requirement for the Exploratory Studies in the LaGrange College Core Curriculum.



LaGrange College Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate creativity by approaching complex problems with innovation and from diverse perspectives.
2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking by acquiring, interpreting, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reason out conclusions appropriately.
3. Students will demonstrate proficiency in communication skills that are applicable to any field of study.

“New Testament Writings in Context” Student Learning Objectives

The religion and philosophy program is dedicated to challenge and support students to think critically and creatively and to enhance their communication skills as they deal with fundamental issues of self, world, and God. We seek to provide a safe, caring, and ethical community where our students grow and mature as global citizens.

In this course we will:

1. Students will demonstrate creativity as they observe and formulate responses to early Christian tradition. (Supports LC SLO 1.) Assessment: Readings & Exam
2. Students will develop critical thinking about approaches to the earliest Christian tradition in its original context. (Supports LC SLO 2.) Assessment: Readings, Exams, Discussion Forums & Reflection Papers
3. Students will explore their own faith commitments in a complex, global world. (Supports LC SLO 2 & 3.) Assessment: Discussion Forums & Reflection Papers
4. Students will develop communication skills in undergraduate research, writing, and speaking. (Supports LC SLO 3). Assessment: Discussion Forums & Reflection Papers



Electronic Resources

The library recommends that LaGrange College Humanities students use electronic sources available through GALILEO or the library's [Online Catalog](#) when conducting research for papers required by LC faculty.

Required Textbook

Cory, Catherine. *A Voyage Through the New Testament*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008.

Online Course Requirements & Assignments

Readings in the New Testament

Key readings from the New Testament will be assigned each week and a reading report submitted to the online course. You may read out of the translation of your choice.

Readings in the Cory Text

Key readings from *A Voyage Through the New Testament* by Catherine Cory will also be assigned each week and a reading report submitted to the online course.

Discussion Forums

Each module will also include at least one Discussion Forum, based on the reading in the New Testament and/or from the Cory text. Each student is required to post an original response and reply to at least two other students. (If there are more than 12-14 students in the course, it will be divided into two discussion groups). A grading rubric will be provided on the online course site.



Written Assignments

There will be a variety of written assignments:

1. Reflection papers that discuss the readings in both the New Testament and the Cory text. (References to both must be included and documented.)
2. A "Faith Reflection Paper" discussing how the overall course has influenced your faith personally.

Each paper will be 3-5 pages in length. A grading rubric will be provided on the online Welcome Module in Moodle.

Exams

There will be two exams:

1. Exam 1, at the end of Week 3, covering the readings from Weeks 1-3
2. Exam 2, at the end of Week 6, covering the readings from Weeks 4-6

The exams will be taken online using the link provided for the appropriate week.

Online Course Calendar

Each week will have assignments that must be completed no later than midnight on the last day of that week's schedule. All completed assignments can be posted to the online course site

Week One (May 19-25)

Readings in the New Testament: Gospel of Mark & John

Readings in the Cory text: Introduction through chapter 6

Discussion Forum Topic 1: The books of the New Testament were not written in a vacuum but rather in a specific time and place and for a special purpose. As you have read material about the context of the New Testament writings, what has stood out in your mind as particularly helpful or clarifying?

Discussion Forum Topic 2: The Gospels provide the witness of a New Testament writer to a specific audience. If you were Mark's audience (Roman believers), how might his witness have encouraged your faith in Jesus and the Gospel?



Written Assignment: Reflect on the first century Judeo-Greco-Roman context of the New Testament writings and how that might differ from our 21st-century western context.

Week Two (May 26-June 1)

Readings in the New Testament: Book of Acts

Readings in the Cory text: Chapter 7-12

Discussion Forum Topic 1: There were certain noncanonical gospels circulating in the church during the early years of the second century. Why do you think they were not accepted by the church as authoritative? Use one of those gospels as an example.

Discussion Forum Topic 2: The book of Acts is “volume 2” to the Gospel of Luke, providing an extended account of the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. Discuss one element of the first church that impresses you as important to the spread of the Gospel.

Written Assignment: Reflect on the dynamic elements of the first church in Jerusalem and how they might differ from our own experience of the church.

Week Three (June 2-8)

Readings in the New Testament: Books of Romans & Galatians

Readings in the Cory text: Chapters 13-14 & 17

Discussion Forum Topic: Paul’s theology is best represented in the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians. Choose one verse/passage you consider to be a key to understanding Paul’s teaching and explain why it is particularly meaningful to you.

Written Assignment: Reflect on Paul’s understanding of “salvation by grace through faith” and how that compares to your own experience of the Christian Gospel.

Exam: Over the readings from Week 1-3

Week Four (June 9-15)

Readings in the New Testament: Books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon

Readings in the Cory text: Chapters 15-16, 18-19



Discussion Forum Topic: Paul's "Prison Epistles" provide important insight into his view of the church. In your own words summarize Paul's understanding of the church. How might that be relevant to the church today?

Written Assignment: Reflect on Paul's view of the Church/Body of Christ (universal) and the place of a specific local congregation in that bigger picture.

Week Five (June 16-22)

Readings in the New Testament: Books of Hebrews through Jude

Readings in the Cory text: Chapters 20-23

Discussion Forum Topic: The "General Epistles" add important ideas about the Christian community. Think about the possibility of the book of Hebrews being addressed to Jewish believers in Jesus as the Messiah who were discouraged and considering going back to orthodox Judaism. How would Hebrews strengthen their commitment to Christian faith?

Written Assignment: Reflect on the presentation of the Good News about Jesus presented by James. Why do you think theologians (e.g., Martin Luther) objected to it? Why do you think it was included in the canon of the New Testament?

Week Six (June 23-28)

Readings in the New Testament: Book of Revelation

Readings in the Cory text: Chapter 24

Discussion Forum Topic 1: Think about the book of Revelation as a writing intended to encourage persecuted believers at the end of the first century. If you were one of those believers, how would reading the Revelation encourage your commitment to Jesus?

Discussion Forum Topic 2: Share how the elements of the course have affected your personal faith. What would you recommend for future classes?

Written Assignment: The "Faith Reflection Paper"

Exam: Over the readings from Weeks 4-6

Assessments

Here is a list of assignments and their relative total point value for the course:

Readings in the NT	15%
Readings in the Cory text	15%



Discussion Forums	20%
Written Assignments	30%
Exams	20%

Late assignments will be accepted. Grades for late assignments will be reduced at a rate of 10% of the maximum permission grade per day that the assignment is late for five days.

Grading

The definitions of grades given at LaGrange College are as follows:

A+		4.0
A	superior	4.0
A-		3.75
B+		3.25
B	above average	3.0
B-		2.75
C+		2.25
C	average	2.0
C-		1.75
D+		1.25
D	below average	1.0
F	failing	0.0

Academic Integrity Policy

Each student is bound by the [LaGrange College Honor Code](#).

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, LaGrange College will provide reasonable accommodation of all medically documented disabilities. If you have a disability and would like the College to provide reasonable accommodations of the disability during this course, please notify Ms. Pamela Tremblay, Director, Counseling and Career Development Center, located in Smith Hall (x8313), as soon as possible.



Contact via Email

Email and LaGrange college accounts will be used in accordance with the following student handbook statement:

“Students are expected to treat their campus [e-mail] accounts as a business account. Faculty and administrators rely on these accounts to disseminate important information regarding College protocol and events; therefore, students are responsible for any College information sent out over campus e-mail.”

Consequently, personal email addresses will not be used for instructor-student email contact. Contact will instead be by the messaging system built into the course. You must get into the habit of logging into the course page daily. The instructor will be diligent to respond within 24 hours of receipt of the message (except on weekends).

Netiquette

When leaving comments or asking questions in the forums of an online course, one is reminded to recall a few things to avoid and a few reminders:

- all caps locks and multiple exclamation points are typically taken to imply anger,
- neither vulgarity nor any form of rudeness or denigration is acceptable; these will be addressed,
- emoticons (such as ‘:’) for a ‘smiley face’) are fine for use in relaxed submissions (forum threads and posts), and
- in general, do your best to use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation; these work to ensure that your meaning is fully conveyed.

Discretion of Instructor

The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus with consent of the class.

Agreement by Continued Enrollment

By remaining enrolled in the course, students agree to the terms of the syllabus as a binding contract between the student, the instructor, and LaGrange College.