



**SCTR 33: Narratives of Christian Scripture
Spring 2009**



TR – 3:40-5:25 pm; Kenna 111

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Office Hours: TR 2:00p-3:00p or by appointment

Course Description

This course explores the stories that emerged with the Jesus event, their historicity and their role in forming the early Christian communities. No previous knowledge of Christianity is needed.

Course Objectives

This course provides a basic introduction to:

- 1] the origin, content and stories that comprise the twenty-seven books of the Christian Scriptures;
- 2] the social, historical, political, and cultural context of the world in which early Christianity developed, especially how these factors operated in the transformation of the teaching of Jesus into their final narrative form in the proclamation of the good news;
- 3] the variety of literary genres present in the Christian Scriptures and their embedded stories;
- 4] the various critical approaches to interpreting the Christian Scriptures, especially as these are used in our contemporary world;
- 5] the principle theological themes evident in these Christian narratives;
- 6] the address and relevance of these narratives for our contemporary world.

This course seeks fundamentally to integrate theology and spirituality and address the challenge of the writings of the Christian Scriptures today in the context of a global church and multicultural society. There will be emphasis on the political and social consequences of the message of Jesus and how these aspects of his message can be uncovered and heard in our contemporary context. The classroom will be the arena where we will discover how both individually and as a group we can listen to these ancient narratives as they provoke us in new ways of living and thinking.

Required Texts

David L. Barr, *New Testament Story: An Introduction* (Cengage Advantage

Books – Wadsworth Publishing) [Paperback-4th edition] February 2008.

ISBN –

10: 053462748X; ISBN -13: 978-0534627485.

St. Mary's Press College Study Bible (New American Bible), Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-88489-907-5.

Additional materials posted at the ANGEL course website. Pin:
NARRATIVES

Evaluation

1] *Class Attendance:*

There are 20 class sessions, four points for attendance at each session. The instructor will take roll at the beginning of each class. If you arrive late and after your name has been called, please let the instructor know at the end of the class. Those who are late can only earn three points for that specific session. If you depart after roll is taken, you lose all four points. **(20%)**

2] *Mid-Term Examination:*

This is scheduled for May 7. The exam will be subjective in nature and cover assigned reading and lecture and discussion material. A study guide will be distributed one week prior to the mid-term examination. **(10%)**

3] *Short Assignments:*

These short assignment will be of two types: 1] Short assignments that involve responding to a few questions on the assigned reading or the reading of a passage from the New Testament and attempting to summarize what it means in light of our discussion and readings. 2] Short assignments that focus on the application of the specific passages under study as they are evident in contemporary cultural texts, such as theology, literature, film, music, art, etc. These assignments are due for the specified assigned class and should be posted in the drop box on the Angel course website before class. **(20%)**

4] *Group Project:*

Each student will participate in a group project. This will consist of a group of students evaluating and interpreting specific book(s) of the New Testament in an attempt to shed some insight on a current practical issue or problem. Upon completion of the task, the group will be asked to share their insights with the class in a presentation designed to illustrate the viability of the New Testament for our world today. More details will be listed on the Angel course website. Group Presentation Dates: 6/2 and 6/4 **(20%)**

5] *Semester Projects:* (20%)

Two Options:

a] A 6-8 page exegesis paper, i.e., taking of a specific section of the New Testament (about 20 verses) and attempting to interpret and apply it to our world after consulting the instructor and various commentaries. (During the course of the quarter the instructor will post a list of possible New Testament passages, as well as guidelines for writing an “exegesis paper” on the Angel course website.) Date Due: June 11.

OR

c] A 6-8 page research paper following the suggestions on pp. 499ff in Barr’s *New Testament Story*. Please clear your topic with the instructor who would be happy to assist you in any way. Many “possible” topics are listed at the conclusion of each of the chapters of the textbook along with very helpful resources for writing such a paper. Date Due: June 11.

6] *Final Examination*

This exam, like the mid-term, is also subjective in nature and covers the material cover in lecture and readings since the mid-term examination. Date: Tuesday, June 9-- 1:30pm-4:30pm. (10%)

Grading Scale

95%-100%	A
90%-94%	A-
87%-89%	B+
83%-86%	B
80%-82%	B-
77%-79%	C+
73%-76%	C
70%-72%	C-
67%-69%	D+
63%-66%	D
60%-62%	D-
59% & below	F

COURSE ORGANIZATION

I. Introduction to the Christian Scriptures

- 3/31 Introduction to the course;
- 4/2 New Testament background; Three Worlds of the Text; Methods; Rhetoric and the Ancient World
Reading: Barr – Introduction, pp. 2-25
- 4/7 Jewish, Greek and Roman Contexts of Developing Christianity
Reading: Barr – chapter 1, pp. 26-53.

II. Gospels/Acts

- 4/9 Introduction to Story; the Gospels; Gospel Interpretation
Reading: Barr, chapter 2, pp. 54-77.
- 4/14 Gospel according to Mark
Reading: Barr, chapter 9, pp. 279-308.
- 4/16 Gospel according to Mark
Reading: Read the entire gospel of Mark in one sitting; Handouts.
- 4/21 Gospel according to Matthew
Reading: Barr, chapter 10, pp. 297-337; Gospel according to Matthew
- 4/23 Luke-Acts: The Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles
Reading: Barr, chapter 11, pp. 338-379; Gospel according to Luke
- 4/28 Luke-Acts: The Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles
Reading: Barr, chapter 11, pp. 338-379; Acts of the Apostles
- 4/30 Gospel according to John
Reading: Barr, chapter 12, pp. 380-417; Gospel according to John
- 5/5 Gospel of John and Gnostic Gospels
- 5/7 Mid Term Examination

III. Letters

- 5/12 Introduction to Paul; Ancient Letters; Thessalonian Correspondence
Reading: Barr, chapter 3, pp. 74-97; 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 5/14 Philemon, Philippians, Galatians, Corinthians
Reading: Barr, chapter 4, pp. 98-142; Letters to Philemon; Philippians; Galatians; Corinthians.
- 5/19 Romans
Reading: Barr, chapter 5, pp. 143-175; Letter to the Romans
- 5/21 Colossians, Ephesians, Timothy, Titus
Reading: Barr, chapter 6, pp. 176-207; Letters to Colossians, Ephesians, Timothy, Titus.
- 5/26 James, Jude, Hebrews, Peter
Reading: Barr, chapter 7, pp. 208-240; Letter to James, Jude, Hebrews, Peter.

IV. Apocalypse

- 5/28 Apocalypse of John/Revelations
Reading: Barr, chapter 13, pp. 418-458; chapter 14, pp. 459-483; Apocalypse of John/Revelations

V. Group Project/ Presentation & Conclusions

- 6/2 and 6/4

OTHER INFORMATION:

■ Disability Accommodation Policy:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahmman Center in Benson, room 214,

(408) 554-4111; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

■ Academic Integrity Policy

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the *Community Handbook*. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action.

■ Because of the large amount of material under study, we will focus generally on each of the books of the New Testament, and then on specific examples and sections of the New Testament as a window into the rest of the text. It is recommended that you read the specific book(s) of the New Testament under study along with the material listed above from the textbook by David Barr. There will be supplemental materials and handouts. In addition, several resources that are very helpful for research and further study follow each chapter of the textbook. Bibliographical entries are also listed at the end of each chapter specific to the particular book of the New Testament under study.

■ If you have a question or confusion about something in class or in the text, please do not hesitate to bring it to the attention of the instructor either during class or after or during office hours.

■ You are encouraged to use gender-neutral language in your discourse. This means, e.g., saying and writing “humans” (“humanity,” “humankind,” “people”) instead of “mankind.” It is important that our speech be inclusive and reflective of all humanity, mirroring Jesus’ inclusive ministry.

■ When quoting from, or alluding to the Bible, integrate the references directly into your text (instead of using footnotes or endnotes), and abbreviate the titles when you place the reference within parentheses – e.g., “Paul, in Romans 9-11, struggles with the role of the Jews after the coming of Jesus”; “Paul sometimes struggles (most notably in Rom 9-11) with the role of the Jews after the coming of Jesus”; “John’s gospel opens with the words, ‘In the beginning was the Word’ (John 1:1).”

■ Note the following abbreviations of biblical books (used without closing punctuation) now common in North American scholarship: Matt Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Rom, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil, Col, 1 Thess, 2 Thess, 1 Tim, Titus, 2 Tim, Phlm, Heb, Jas, 1 Pet, 2 Pet, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Rev. Also, note that “2 Thessalonians” does not mean chapter 2 in a letter called Thessalonians, but the entire letter itself (two letters have this name, so they are distinguished by numbers, based on length, i.e., 2 Thessalonians is shorter than 1 Thessalonians). And note the punctuation (colons, semi-colons and commas) when indicating chapter and verse from the Bible == e.g. Romans 9:1-4 (=Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 9, verses 1-4); Romans 9:1-4; 11:3-6, 9-12 (=chapter 9, verses 1 to 4, as well as chapter 11, verses 3 to six and [still chapter 11] verses 9 to 12).