

Notes on this Online Class

1. This class is a learning experience for me as well as for you. Nothing is set in cement, so anything can be changed to make it a better learning experience for you. Please work with me so that you get as much from this class as you can.
2. My goal is to help you succeed. There is nothing more exciting than learning about Jesus, and I will do all I can to help you meet him through his word, the Bible.
3. Good communication between you and me is the key to helping you learn. If you don't understand something, or something just doesn't seem right, let me know by phone or email.
4. This online course will help you master as much material as we cover in an entire 15-week semester in regular college. It is not a sawed-off, watered-down version. You are paying full price and are entitled to full value.
5. In a 15-week semester we expect the average student to spend 42 hours in class and 84 hours doing homework for a three-hour class. In all that is 126 hours. You will be covering the same material in 34 class sessions. That works out to almost four hours per session.
6. Please do not take this class unless you can spend four hours a session on it during the next 12 months. You can take this class at your own pace. You do not have to do one session in one sitting. You can pause and come back to that session later. You could do three sessions each day for the next two weeks or you could do one session a week for the next year. Do it the way that fits your schedule best. We want you to have a good experience and get your money's worth, but you will have to make a major investment of time to be successful.
7. If I haven't scared you off, let's go. Don't let this syllabus overwhelm you, but let it challenge you. You will be making a big investment of time and effort, and you will reap a great reward.

8. This is an on-line course but you have your choice of media. The workbook lessons are on the website so you can download them, answer the questions at your computer and then email them back to me as attachments. You can also buy a paper copy of the workbook from The Bookcellar and fill out the answers manually and then snail-mail them back to me. With this course comes a CD. On it is the workbook so you don't have to download it, and a copy of each of the lectures. You can also get the lectures off the web, but it ties up your phone line for the 30 minutes the lectures take.

SPRING ARBOR COLLEGE

Exploring the Gospels and Acts
Religion 211

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This document is not an offer
and is subject to change.

Objectives

The objective of this class is to master the content of the first five books of the New Testament, to understand how and why they were written, and to be able to understand their meaning for today.

Specifically, the student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

1. List the major events in the life of Jesus and in the book of Acts in chronological order.
2. Place the didactic passages in their narrative framework.
3. Explain the facts we know about the composition of the Gospels and Acts, and discuss the major interpretations of those facts.
4. Explain sound hermeneutical principles for interpreting the Gospels and Acts.

Texts:

1. The Harmony of the Gospels (NASV). Edited by Thomas and Gundry.
2. Discovering the Gospels and Acts: A Workbook ("WB" in schedule and assignments)
3. John Drane. Introduction to the New Testament, second edition ("Drane" in schedule and assignments)
4. Lee Strobel, The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus ("Strobel" in the schedule and assignments)

Methodology

Workbook

Because mastery of the content of any passage is fundamental to understanding its meaning, induction will be the main method of instruction at the beginning of this course. The student will be sent to the Biblical text repeatedly to discover what it actually says. Half-remembered Sunday school lessons will not suffice. Only a fresh and thorough encounter with the text will provide the background necessary to understand God's word to us. In this first section of the class the students will spend most of their time reading and analyzing the four gospels and Acts using the workbook on line or in paper. Only through regular, diligent completion of the assignments will the student profit from the course. It will take the average student about two hours to complete the homework for each class session.

The workbooks will be evaluated by the professor after they have been submitted on line. These 22 workbook scores will determine 16.7% of the grade, but students must receive a grade of B in order to take the other exams and pass the course.

Lectures

There are 33 on-line lectures. One is short, and the others are about 30 minutes long. You should watch one lecture during each class section.

Reading

Some class sessions assign a chapter from Drane's Introduction to the New Testament and in the final class session the student will read Strobel's The Case for Christ. Study questions for these two texts are available on the website. The student will answer the study questions for the assigned chapter of Drane and submit the answers for each class session, and then will be tested over Strobel during the last class session.

Exams

There will be four unit exams. The first three will test the student's understanding of the lecture material, and the last one will test the mastery of Strobel's text. All the possible questions for the exams are on the website so the student can be well-prepared.

Grades

The final grade will be determined by six factors: the workbook, Drane, and the four unit exams. Each element will comprise 16.7% of the grade, and represent one point. The workbook and Drane must be completed with a grade of at least a B (no more than 35 wrong or unanswered questions in the workbook and 85% correct for Drane) for the student to be eligible to take any of the exams.

For the final grade 5.6 points are necessary for an A, 5.25 for an A-, 4.8 for a B+, 4.5 for a B, 4.1 for a B-, 3.75 for a C+, 3 for a C, 2.6 for a C-, and 2.25 for a D.

The instructor reserves the right to investigate suspected cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of dishonesty by any means he deems necessary, including retesting the student. The instructor will be the sole judge in any case of suspected dishonesty, and reserves the right to determine the punishment when he is convinced the student has been dishonest. The normal penalty for dishonesty is to fail the course.

Schedule and Assignments: For each class listen to the lecture, and, as assigned, answer the workbook questions, answer the study questions for Drane or Strobel, or take the timed unit exam.

For the workbook, Drane and Strobel, answer the workbook or study guide questions and email them to the professor. For the unit exams, take the timed exam on-line. I recommend that you prepare for the exam by answering all the possible questions. The timed on-line exam will require you to answer one easy, one medium, and one hard question. If you answer one question of any kind you get a C. If you answer two kinds of questions, you get a B, and if you answer all three kinds of questions, you get an A. If you do not answer any of the questions, you may turn in your study guide with all the questions correctly answered to get a D.

| Class Number | Lecture | Assignment | Exams |
|--------------|---|------------|-----------------|
| 1 | What difference does Jesus make? | WB 1 | |
| 2 | The genealogy of Jesus | WB 2 | |
| 3 | What kind of Messiah were the Jews expecting? | WB 3 | |
| 4 | How and why do we interpret the Bible? | Drane 1 | |
| 5 | Bibliographic resources | Drane 2 | |
| 6 | What makes it a hard passage? | Drane 3 | |
| 7 | Must we handle snakes? | Drane 6 | |
| 8 | Sample exegesis: the infancy narratives | WB 4 | |
| 9 | The stages Jesus' ministry | WB 5 | |
| 10 | The message of Jesus | WB 6 | |
| 11 | Why did Jesus hide his identity? | Drane 7 | |
| 12 | How dumb were the disciples? | Drane 8 | |
| 13 | How did Jesus pray? | WB 7 | |
| 14 | Why did people oppose Jesus? | WB 8 | |
| 15 | Sample exegesis: Matthew 15 | WB 9 | First unit exam |

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| 16 | Sample exegesis: The Sermon on the Mount | Drane 9 | |
| 17 | Unique features of Matthew | Drane 10 | |
| 18 | Unique features of Mark | Drane 11 | |
| 19 | Unique features of Luke | Drane 12 | |
| 20 | Unique features of John | WB 10 | |
| 21 | When and why were the gospels written? | WB 11 | |
| 22 | How were the gospels written? | WB 12 | |
| 23 | The case for Matthean priority | WB 13 | |
| 24 | Is Luke an accurate historian? | WB 14 | |
| 25 | Who wrote John's gospel? | WB 15 | |
| 26 | How did Jesus die for us? | WB 16 & Drane 4 | |
| 27 | How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? | WB 17 & Drane 5 | |
| 28 | Why did people become Christians? | WB 18 | |
| 29 | Why did Luke write Acts? | WB 19 | |
| 30 | Important ideas in Acts | WB 20 | Second unit exam |
| 31 | What is significant about this pericope? (A) | Drane 13 | |
| 32 | What is significant about this pericope? (B) | WB 21 | |
| 33 | What is significant about this pericope? (C) | WB 22 | Third unit exam |
| 34 | | Strobel | Fourth unit exam |