

SC-531 - NEW TESTAMENT SURVEY

Spring 2026

Cleotha Robertson, Ph.D., D.Min.

Class modality: Wednesdays @ 5:00- 6:50 PM. In person and online via Canvas and Email (crobertson@hartfordinternational.edu)

Office Hours: To be arranged with students upon email request

Email Policy: Please check your **Hartfordinternational** email account regularly.

I. Course Description

What is the New Testament? Who are its authors? Why *these* texts? What was going on when they were written? And for whom? How are these texts read today? This course, which explores the New Testament texts in a broad, survey fashion, will tackle these questions. We will read the biblical texts closely, critically, and constructively, and engage in literary and rhetorical inquiry. We will also incorporate several types of biblical methods and lenses that are used in New Testament scholarship.

II. Objectives

To help students:

- gain familiarity with the New Testament (NT) texts
- examine biblical texts in their ancient contexts
- to enhance and practice dialogue about biblical texts
- Critically engage and evaluate secondary scholarship (monographs, articles, essays, commentaries, etc.) by asking questions and challenging arguments based on the student's own biblical analysis.

III. Institutional Learning Outcomes (fulfills the following MAIRS Degree program outcomes):

- To gain an understanding of the role of the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, being able to explain contemporary and historical approaches to the

interpretation of scripture, as well as to recognize various communal and individual approaches to scriptures.

- To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one's own religion.
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

IV. Required Text and Commentaries

1. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) [978-0190461850]
2. Nijay K. Gupta, *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Studies: Understanding Key Debates* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020) [978-0801097577]
3. Bruce W. Longenecker and Todd Still, *Thinking through Paul: A Survey of His Life, Letters, and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014) [978-0310330868]
4. Esau McCauley, *Reading While Black* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

**The following two commentaries are for consultation purposes. The student will be required to consult and cite these for a particular assignment. As such, the student may choose to borrow these from a theological library rather than purchase them.

1. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament). (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) [978-0802823151]
2. Joseph A. Fitzmyer *The Gospel according to Luke, Vols. 28A and 28B* (Yale Anchor Bible). (New York: Double Day, 1985) [978-0385005159 and 978-0385155427]

V. Recommended Texts

Students may wish to purchase the following for their personal libraries.

1. Brian K. Blount et al., eds. *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007). [ISBN: 978-0800634216]

2. Cain Hope Felder, ed. *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991). [ISBN: 978-0800625016]
3. Chris Keith and Larry W. Hurtado, *Jesus among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010). [ISBN: 978-0801038952]
4. Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999). [ISBN: 978-0664256944]
5. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley eds. *Women's Bible Commentary: Revised and Updated* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012). [ISBN: 978-0664237073]
6. Daniel Patte, ed. *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004). [ISBN: 978-0687064038]
7. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds. *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007). [ISBN: 978-0567637079]

VI. Course Requirements and Assessments

1. Method of Determining Grade: Your grade will be determined based on the following calculation:
 - i. eWorkbooks—30% (Due Weekly)
 - ii. Discussion Forums – 20% (due weekly)
 - iii. First Paragraph assignment – 10% (Session 5) Essay – 30% (due TBA)
 - iv. Final Paper - 20%
- A. eWorkbooks are due weekly (with a few exceptions) over the course of the semester. These will be submitted via Canvas in the form of a Word document or pdf. This document will contain three elements:
 - (1) a bullet-point summary of the specified reading;
 - (2) a short reflection on the reading;

(3) 3 Critical questions for Group discussion. See Canvas for an example of this assignment.

B. Discussion Forums are due weekly (with a few exceptions) over the course of the semester. The student is expected to contribute to class regularly via Canvas by writing thoughtful and respectful comments that demonstrate engagement with the course material.

C. The First Paragraph assignment will serve as the start of your Essay. The ideal paragraph is approximately 100 words (150 words maximum). This is a single paragraph that deals with a single verse from Luke's Gospel. The student must choose a verse that illustrates (or relates to) one of the following Lukan themes:

- (i) Inclusion of outsiders
- (ii) focus on women;
- (iii) the role of the Holy Spirit;
- (iv) poverty and wealth.

In the First Paragraph the student will summarize their chosen verse and explain how it develops a key Lukan theme. The student should include at least two footnotes demonstrating interaction with the following commentaries: Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) and Joseph A. Fitzmyer *The Gospel according to Luke* (Yale Anchor Bible). The student should demonstrate awareness of both Green and Fitzmyer and how they interpret the student's chosen verse. The final sentence of the First Paragraph should begin with the phrase "I will argue . . ."* It is typical for the professor to ask for the First Paragraph to be revised multiple times before a grade is determined.

*Example of final sentence: "I will argue that Jesus' lesson about the widow in Luke 21:1-4 is meant as a lament rather than praise."

D. The student will write an Essay on the topic selected in the First Paragraph assignment. The essay will be between 1,250 (word minimum) and 1,600 (word maximum) for Masters/Certificate students; between 2,000 and 2,500 words for PhD/DMin students. Word limits exclude bibliography.

****IMPORTANT** PLEASE CONSULT THE ATTACHED GRADING RUBRIC FOR FURTHER DETAIL. THIS IS INCLUDED ON THE FINAL PAGE OF THIS SYLLABUS.**

1. Your essay will introduce, analyze, and interpret a Lukan verse (as determined by the First Paragraph assignment). This essay will include five clearly defined elements:

A. Introduction – Present a clear statement of the thesis (identical to First Paragraph)

B. Contextual–Literary Analysis – Discuss how the passage functions within its thematic context

C. Detailed Analysis – Explain the verse with attention to key words, repeated words, causes and effects, surprising developments, etc.

D. Synthesis – Argue toward of the main purpose and/or function of the text within Luke’s overall narrative

E. Reflection – Suggest a contemporary application of the text for modern religious life and/or social wellbeing

The essay should be divided by these five subheadings.

The culmination of these stages will be an integrated essay that ties all segments into a unified whole, describing what your selected text *meant* to its original readers, what it *means* to you and how it applies to contemporary life.

2. Document Format and Language.

a. Papers are to be submitted as **Word files**.

b. You are to use **12 pt Times New Roman** font and **1 inch margins** on all sides of the page. All papers should be **double-spaced**. Be sure to include your **first and last name** on your document.

c. **Transliterated words** should be italicized (e.g., the Greek words for “Christ” is *Christos*). If you use **biblical language fonts**, please use SBL Greek and SBL Hebrew fonts (or unicode). These can be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.sbl-site.org/educational/biblicalfonts.aspx>

d. **Proofread** and **revise** your work! No one writes a perfect essay the first time. Essays that contain many errors are distracting and communicate a lack of care and/or effort.

e. Scholarly Sources and Citation Format.

1. The biblical text is the primary text of this course. You are, however, expected to employ various **up-to- date scholarly** sources in your writings (published in the last 20 years is best). Scholarly sources include the resources like those listed at the end of this syllabus or suggested by our library staff. They **do not include** popular works (e.g., the *Access Bible*, books by authors such as Charles Swindoll), most websites (e.g., Wikipedia, About.com, blogs) or commentaries by figures from the distant past (e.g., John Calvin, John Barclay, Matthew Henry). While these commentaries may help you note the history of interpretation of a given passage, they do not replace recent,

scholarly contributions. Your ability to identify, interact with, and constructively employ these resources for your congregations will make you a more effective interpreter of Scripture.

2. Students are recommended to follow the **Chicago Manual of Style** (a.k.a. Turabian; the standard format for United) or the **SBL Handbook of Style** for citations. Whatever style format you choose, be consistent throughout. *Biblical passages* may be noted parenthetically, for example: Jesus cries, “It is finished!” (John 19:30, NRSV).

VII. Learning Resources and Expectations

Hartford Seminary Grading Scale

Master’s Students:

A (95-100) - Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) - Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

B+(87-89) - Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.

B (83-86) - Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B- (80-82) - Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+ (77-79) - Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.

C (70-76) - Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.

F (below 70) - Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

*Grades range from A to C and F; A+’s and C-’s are not part of the grading system.

****On a 4.0 GPA scale – A (4.00), A- (3.66), B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.66), C+ (2.33), C (2.00) and F (0.00). A grade point average of no less than B- (2.66) is required to maintain good standing. The minimum G.P.A. required for graduation is 2.75.**

DMin students: High Pass (95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass (70-82), and Fail (below 70)

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. **Plagiarism exists when:** a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

Appropriate Classroom Etiquette:

The student is expected to engage with others thoughtfully and respectfully.

Inclusive Language:

Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

Extensions:

Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

Official Handbooks:

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

The course schedule is detailed on the Canvas webpage dedicated for this purpose.

Rubric for Essay

Element	Comments
Introduction (1-2 paragraphs)	This single page should make it plain why the reader should give attention to your topic. Raise the issue or state the problem that your text addresses. Clearly state your thesis(the proposition you are setting forward for consideration, to be discussed and proved or to be maintained against objections). Be definitive and concise. Cite at least two critical commentaries that deal with your topic.
Contextual -Literary Analysis	Discuss what immediately precedes and follows your passage and the part your text plays in the development of the argument or thought of the section and book as a whole. How does your passage help the author advance a rhetorical/ literary agenda(s)? At least five sources must be represented in a balanced way. Do not overly rely on one source.

Detailed Analysis	Thoroughly examine the key words and concepts of your text. If there is a cultural backdrop or intertextual concept that sheds light on your passage, explain what, why, and how your passage is better explained in light of this information. At least five sources (do not simply repeat the sources used above) must be represented in a balanced way. Do not overly rely on one source.
Synthesis	Clearly identify the key purpose and/or function of the text. In this section the student will draw together all the results of his or her research and writing. Conclusions will be drawn and the major literary/theological principles of your passage spelled out.
Reflection/ Application (2-3 paragraphs)	Here you are answering the questions: “How does this passage relate to contemporary life?” “How might the ancient author’s point/argument influence or contradict my own?”

NB: Include a formal bibliography. Ten graduate-level publications are required. This is the absolute minimum. Bible translations and websites do not count toward this total. Papers that do not include at least ten works cited will not receive a passing grade.