



BIBS 121

Interpreting the New Testament

Distance/Campus Course Description

Lecturer: Prof Paul Trebilco

Brief Introduction to the Paper

This is one of the foundation papers in Biblical Studies for the Bachelor of Theology (BTheol) degree. The paper offers a study of the world from which the New Testament writings emerged, an introduction to methods of interpretation, the exegesis of selected texts, and a study of the New Testament evidence about Jesus and the apostle Paul.

The course is divided into the following six modules:

Module 1: The World of the New Testament

- 1) Historical overview: Alexander the Great to the Bar Kochba war
- 2) Jewish religious life: The Temple and the Torah
- 3) Jewish religious life: The Synagogue
- 4) Jewish parties: The Qumran Community

Module 2: Pharisees and Sadducees, the Synoptic Problem, Canon and Oral Tradition

- 1) Jewish parties: The Pharisees and the Sadducees
- 2) The Synoptic question – Marcan priority
- 3) The Synoptic question – Q
- 4) The New Testament Canon
- 5) Oral Tradition and Eyewitnesses

Module 3: Reading the Gospel of Mark

Exegesis of Mark 1-3

Module 4: Jesus in the New Testament

- 1) What do we know about Jesus?
- 2) The reign of God in the teaching of Jesus
- 3) What did the presence of God's reign mean to Jesus?
- 4) The symbols Jesus used
- 5) What can we say about Jesus' self-understanding?

Module 5: Methods of Interpretation, Paul's Life and Letters

- 1) Redaction criticism
- 2) Literary approaches
- 3) Feminist interpretation
- 4) Hermeneutics
- 5) Māori Interpretation of the New Testament
- 6) Introduction to Paul's life

Module 6: Paul

- 1) Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 1-3
- 2) The centrality of Christ for Paul

Assessment

This paper is assessed by means of an 1,800-word essay (20%), an 1,800-word exegesis (20%) and a three-hour examination (60%).

Teaching schedule

The **campus class** will be taught through 3 x 1hr lectures per week.

The **distance class** will be taught through 6 2-hour videoconferences through the semester.

Timetable details are available at <https://www.otago.ac.nz/theology/study/> (See the hyperlinks under "Timetables", on the right hand side)

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this paper should be able to:

- describe the major social, political, and religious features of the first century Jewish world;
- discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the most common methods of biblical interpretation;
- discuss some of the historical issues surrounding the life and work of both Jesus and the apostle Paul; and
- exegete selected texts, using the methods of biblical interpretation.

For more information

Please direct any administrative enquiries to the Theology Administrator:

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