

# Introduction to the Greek (New) Testament

## Spring 2011

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RL 205.51 ([V](#), [CS](#)): TH 11:00 A.M.-12:15 P.M.,  
BR19

[Consult Dr. McGinn](#) (Tel: 216-397-3087)

Prerequisites: RL 101 or equivalent & **an inquiring mind**  
Recommended companion courses: Roman History; GK  
101+

Dr. McGinn's Office Hours: TR 8:30-11

### [ACADEMIC INTEGRITY](#)

[ASSIGNMENTS, QUIZZES, & EXAMINATIONS](#)

[ATTENDANCE](#) & other [ASSUMPTIONS](#) & [EXPECTATIONS](#)

[CLASS SCHEDULE](#)

[CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[COURSE DESCRIPTION & PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS](#)

[COURSE GOALS](#) & [FORMAT](#)

[FIELD TRIPS](#)

### [GRADING](#)

[JESUIT EDUCATION & IGNATIAN PEDAGOGY](#)

[LEARNING CONTRACTS](#)

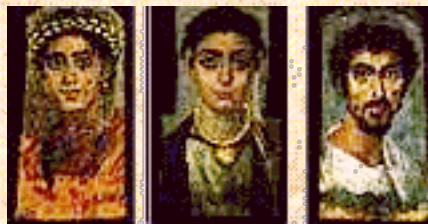
[LEARNING OBJECTIVES](#)

[REQUIRED TEXTS & RESOURCES](#)

[SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES](#)

[TEXT-BASED & ON-LINE RESOURCES](#)

[TIMELINESS](#)



### **COURSE DESCRIPTION & PEDAGOGICAL PROCESS**

This course introduces the participants to the earliest Christian communities and the collection of literature which they produced—i.e., the Second or “New” Testament in the Christian Bible (abbreviated GNT). Some aspects considered are: the origins, formation, and development of these communities as they interact with their socio-political environment; their different theological perspectives—in regard to Jesus, his life, teachings, death and resurrection, and his community of disciples—and how these are influenced by their historical, cultural, economic, political, and social contexts; the influence of Paul; and the apocalyptic perspective of early Christians.

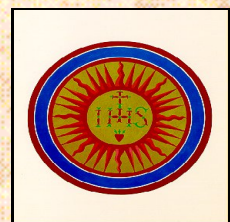
RL 205 is part of the University [core curriculum](#) both for Division V and for the “S” International Studies area, as well as a course in the [Catholic Studies](#) concentration.



**REFLECTIONS on JESUIT EDUCATION & IGNATIAN PEDAGOGY** (based in part on a talk given in September 2005 by the Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus)

Since the founding of their first school in 1548, the Society of Jesus has been committed to educating the whole person, head and heart, intellect and feelings. Disciplined studies engaging critical thinking are constitutive of the call to human excellence. The “product” of a Jesuit education is not a parrot repeating rote knowledge, but a person who exhibits precision of thought, eloquence of speech, moral excellence, and social responsibility. Ignatian pedagogy entails an apprenticeship where teachers “accompany learners in the lifelong pursuit of competence, conscience, and compassionate commitment”—a radically different process than the “banking” model ubiquitous in other educational settings. From this vantage point, the idea of taking a course “for a grade” simply makes no sense.

**SO WHAT?** The ramifications of this pedagogical stance are manifold. First and foremost, it requires students to be active learners. Of course, no one can coach someone who does not want to learn; but, more importantly, what is most significant in Jesuit education—i.e., the drive for excellence, the compassion for others, the commitment to justice—cannot be “taught” but must be “caught.” Teachers can prod, cajole, encourage, dare, and/or provoke, but the student must rise to the challenge. [More fun, of course, is when the student comes to the class and prods, cajoles, encourages, dares, and/or provokes the professor. Turnabout is fair play.] Secondly, Ignatian pedagogy assumes that only God has the fullness of wisdom. Teachers are not divine oracles, but expert learners who guide students in the discovery of knowledge. The best compliment in such a case is to have a student say on a course evaluation, “He/she





didn't teach; I used the course materials and learned it all myself." Thirdly, Jesuit educators really are "professors": they are committed to certain values and ideals grounded in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and especially in the teaching and example of Jesus himself. Not all values are created equal; some are better than others. Helping students discern the best, and then to act on it, is an integral part of the pedagogical process. One could continue, but you get the idea.

### WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

The students who will get the most out of this course are those who want to learn what the New Testament "says," how, and why it conveys different messages to different people. There are different pathways by which this learning can proceed. By creating an individual "Learning Contract," each student can "customize" the course to mesh with her/his specific needs and interests. The Instructor can help you with designing such an individualized program of study. Many students are not accustomed to being "in charge" of their education in this way, having been acculturated to a "passive learning" model. If you are one of those students, this kind of freedom may be enticing, but likewise the responsibility may seem a bit daunting. Trust yourself, take some risks, keep re-evaluating how your plan is working, and don't forget that your professor/"coach" can be of tremendous help.



**CLASS FORMAT** includes lectures, discussions, careful reading of assigned texts, occasional film clips and slides, field trips, and various other activities designed to help students actively engage and understand the material.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The following learning objectives have a cumulative effect such that those at level two build on those at level one, those at level three build on those at level two, and so forth. Because of this iterative process, a select few assignments (in addition to the daily readings, lectures, and discussions) can be used to achieve these objectives. Hence, through the successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate basic **knowledge** of the field of NT study, including:
  1. [Key terms relating to NT study](#)
  2. [Significant personages of the first century CE](#)
  3. The basic outline of Jesus' life and ministry
  4. Dates of the significant events and key writings of the NT
  5. Key themes and characteristics of each of the canonical gospels and of the Pauline corpus
2. **Comprehension**:
  - a. Identify the key themes of Jesus' message and explicate their significance in his cultural context
  - b. Outline and explain the significance of the relationship of the Jesus-movement to the various trajectories of first-century CE Judaism
3. **Application**: Delineate and exemplify the [Roman Catholic view of Scripture](#) and its interpretation
4. **Analysis**: Engage in academic research relating to New Testament interpretation, including:
  1. Showing familiarity with current scholarship on a pericope from the Synoptic Gospels
  2. Demonstrating the use of basic historical-critical methods of analysis
  3. Making fruitful use of the standard reference tools for GNT study (e.g., Bible commentaries, critical apparatuses)
  4. Constructing a clearly written argument in support of a thesis
5. **Praxis**: Engage in action and reflection upon the NT in light of contemporary issues of poverty and homelessness:
  1. **Application**: Identify key NT attitudes, examples, and teachings with respect to poverty and homelessness.
  2. **Analysis**: Identify one critique the NT provokes concerning contemporary U.S./Ohio/Cleveland socio-economic structures.
  3. **Synthesis**: Integrate the understanding of the gospel with the actual praxis of it in addressing the concrete, contemporary reality of poverty and homelessness in Cleveland.
  4. **Action**: Exemplify how the gospel energizes believers to concrete action to foster social justice (e.g., the traditional "works of mercy," political action).
6. **Synthesis**: Delineate a coherent theology of work (or "vocation") that provides the grounds for a Christian lifestyle in the contemporary world involving active leadership that redresses current social problems and assists in God's "reconciliation of the world."



Achievement of these objectives will be measured by the following course assignments. (For more details, see [this page](#).)

1. Objectives #1-3—Discussions, Quizzes, & Exams
2. Objectives #1-2—Creative History Paper & Field Trip Response
3. Objective #4—Synoptic Analysis Project & Exams
4. Objectives #5-6—Social-Justice Praxis & Vocation Essay

## REQUIRED TEXTS & RESOURCES

1. The Greek New Testament (USB4 or NA27) &/or a contemporary English translation of the Bible, with annotations, cross-references, maps, and other study aids. The best available English translations are the NRSV (e.g., the *Catholic Study Bible* from Oxford University Press), the NAB (e.g., St. Joseph's Study Edition from the NCCB), and the NJB.
2. Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
3. Ralph, Margaret Nutting. *And God Said What? An Introduction to Biblical Literary Forms*, rev. ed. (New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 2003). ISBN 0-8091-4129-9.
4. McGinn, Sheila E. [RL 205 web](#)



## RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- Aland, Kurt, ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*. Revised English Edition. American Bible Society, 1985. ISBN 0826705006.
- Collins, Raymond. *Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday/Image, 1983.
- McGinn, Sheila E., ed. *Celebrating Romans: Template for Pauline Theology. Essays in Honor of Robert Jewett*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004. ISBN 0-8028-2839-6.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1984, 1994).

Follow this link to other [recommended resources](#).

## ASSIGNMENTS, QUIZZES, & EXAMINATIONS

Various [written assignments](#), discussion sets, and quizzes will be used to facilitate and assess the student's achievement of the course objectives. The cumulative final exam is required of only those students who have an average quiz score below 75%. See the [Class Schedule](#) for [due dates](#) for readings and other assignments.



## ASSUMPTIONS

This is an introductory survey of the New Testament, so students are not assumed to have any prior knowledge of the finer points of early Christian history or of the NT writings. However, since the RL 101 is pre-requisite to this course, students are assumed to understand the academic definitions of such theological terms as symbol, myth, scriptures, and revelation. In addition, as a college-level introduction, students are expected to have some basic familiarity with the Bible (e.g., how to find the various books it comprises, how to use standard citations for Biblical passages) and with the Biblical world (e.g., in what geographic area and during what historical period these books were produced). It also is assumed that students will have a general idea of who Jesus was (e.g., where and when he lived), and the inclination and ability to consult reference materials when necessary to fill in any gaps in such basic background knowledge. Naturally, those with a broader understanding of NT personages and of Greco-Roman history will have an easier "learning curve" than those for whom this will be the first time they are exposed to the subject matter. I constructed the site of "[Introductory Materials for Biblical Studies](#)" as a resource for students who find themselves in the latter position; if this is the case for you, your best remedy will be to consult this material early and often.

## EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to come to each class [dressed appropriately](#) for a work environment and prepared to participate actively in class activities; to do the assigned readings before each class meeting (including any background material necessary for that individual); to participate actively in class discussions and field trips; to complete the required examinations successfully; and to submit quality, original written work on time. The list of readings and topics for each class session can be found on the [Schedule](#) page.

Basic rules of politeness apply in class as well as elsewhere. Eating in front of others is both distracting and impolite; anyone who wants to eat in class is expected to bring enough to share with the entire class. No cell phones are permitted in class. Anyone phone that is visible in the classroom—whether before, during, or after class—is subject to confiscation. Make sure your phone is turned off before entering the classroom. Anyone whose phone rings during class must bring treats for the entire class the next day.





### FIELD TRIP

Typically this class includes a required field trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) and to a local Greek restaurant. Other than going to study in the Middle East, studying the art and artifacts from the time and place of Jesus and his followers is the best substitute we have. Previous participants have given these trips rave reviews. They are an opportunity for the members of the class to get to know each other in a less structured setting, and to have fun while learning about Near Eastern culture. And it's not bad getting credit for eating and touring a Museum.

Because this year marks the 450th anniversary of the release of the King James Bible, the most influential, early, mass-produced version of the Bible in English, we will have a special class trip focused on this

anniversary celebration. Rather than take another class day for the CMA field trip, we will have the luncheon of Middle Eastern food during class time and students will make the live tour of the museum when it fits their own schedules. (If you need transportation, the JCU bus goes to the CMA each Wednesday evening (departing 6:30 PM from the brown wooden gate at the Carroll Boulevard end of the Admin drive.) To prepare yourself for the CMA visit, review this "virtual tour" of [the CMA collection of Greek and Roman art](#) via the museum website. This brief [tour guide](#) (the traffic patterns for which are based on the previous physical layout of the CMA galleries) provides suggestions of where to focus your attentions. Responses from the self-guided tours are due by the third Thursday of the semester (February 3rd).

**GRADING**(NB: [See here for the grading scale.](#))



- 30% APPA
- 40% Written Assignments (Essays & Course Projects)
- 30% Quizzes & Examinations

**APPA** [= Attendance, Preparation, Participation, Attentiveness].

Students benefit from interaction with their classmates, and they learn better when they are prepared for class. The baseline APPA score (what you have on the first day of class) is a "0." Every contribution to class vitality will raise your APPA score. [See this page for further details.](#)

**Attendance** is expected at every class meeting. More than three unexcused absences will have a *seriously* deleterious affect upon the final course grade. [See this page for further details.](#)

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University expects that students will submit their own original work and properly cite sources for their ideas, including the Bible, web pages, handouts, class notes, and ideas from other students. I am sure that you intend to do this. [Be sure you understand what academic integrity comprises](#) so you can live up to it. Remember, "ignorance is no defense under the law"; you are required to know.



- E.g., do not "loan" papers or other assignments to friends, nor let them copy off your paper on a quiz or exam; this counts as academic dishonesty, too, and you face the same penalties as those who take the assignments and submit the ideas as their own.
- If you work with other class members to prepare an assignment, either submit the assignment jointly (one paper with both names on it) or be sure to credit the other person's ideas so it will not look like you have copied them.
- Bibles are permitted for all examinations, but not notes; so, if you annotate your Bible, be sure you have a pristine copy to use for the tests.

Any student who violates academic integrity will earn an "F" for the course. Every semester there is at least one student who chooses to test this policy and then is very upset when it is implemented; *do not be that student*. See the appropriate section of the *JCU Community Standards Manual* for further clarification.

### CONFIDENTIALITY & PRIVACY POLICY

Universities always have maintained confidentiality of students' transcripts and other records. In an attempt to establish more uniformity in this regard, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) established clear guidelines concerning which records can be available to whom and by what means. Students should be aware of the following policies that conform to FERPA.

- Students always have a right to see their own grades and discuss them with the Instructor(s).
- Students do not have a right to see or discuss anyone else's grades.



- Thus, without a *written* release from the other student, one cannot “do a friend a favor” by retrieving another student’s graded assignment.
- Instructors cannot discuss a student’s grades with parents, fraternity or sorority officers, or other non-university personnel without a written release from the student.
- To preserve your privacy, the Instructors will not discuss grades *via* email or other insecure communications media. Please see Dr. McGinn or the teaching assistant *in person* to discuss any grade details.

### SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with documented disabilities are entitled to necessary and reasonable accommodations. If you believe you need accommodations, consult JCU’s [Coordinator for Students with Disabilities](#) as soon as possible so that timely arrangements can be made. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

This site designed and maintained by Sheila E. McGinn, Ph.D.



[Dr. McGinn's home page](#)

[RL 205 homepage](#)

