REL 215  - NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY (3 CR.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Surveys the history, literature, and theology of early Christianity in the light of the New Testament. Lecture 3 hours per week.

GENERAL COURSE PURPOSE

To introduce the student to the cultural, literary, historical, religious, and philosophical contributions of the New Testament to western thought. To survey the literature of the New Testament in the light of the best contemporary biblical scholarship. To examine the development of early Christian institutions in their historical context.

ENTRY LEVEL REQUIREMENTS

None

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, students will be able to

- Discuss and define relevant concepts, such as "Son of Man," "Messiah," "Synoptic gospels," "gospel," "word," "disciple," "kerygma," "didache," "messianic secret," etc.
- Identify the primary sources of the Synoptic gospels, using the tools of contemporary biblical scholarship. Understand the historical context of the earliest written material.
- Discuss and evaluate the themes, ideas, and intent of the writings of Paul. Understand the historical background and the purposes for which the letters were written.
- Understand the historical and philosophical background of the gospel of John.
- Examine the literary forms of early Christian writings.
- Identify major characteristics and themes of the apocalyptic tradition and understand the historical context in which they appeared.
- Discuss and evaluate the implications of New Testament ideas for western civilization.

MAJOR ELEMENTS OF CONTENT

Critical attention will be given to the following topics.

- Antecedent ideas and themes from the Hebraic tradition.
- Sources of the Synoptic gospels.
- The picture of Jesus presented in the gospels.
- Themes, ideas, and teachings of Jesus as presented in the New Testament.
- Paul's letters and the spread of Christianity.
- Post-Pauline writings and the development of the church.
- Issues of early Christianity, such as orthodoxy and heresy, ordinations, creeds, the development of the canon, etc.

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