



Bible 201 - Course Syllabus

Course Title: The World Behind the Text: New Testament Kingdoms and Cultures (*1 Credit*)

Course Description: The World Behind the Text: New Testament is a 7-week course that investigates Hellenistic influences as well as the historical, cultural, and political dynamics of the Roman Empire during the Intertestamental and New Testament eras. This course will examine the impact of Greco-Roman religion, politics, and social structures on Jewish society and religion as well as on early Christian communities via archaeological evidence and historical sources. Students will develop a richer understanding of the New Testament's background, enhancing their interpretation of the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles within their first-century context. Student learning will be evaluated based on weekly quizzes, a final exam, and a final project, completed in weekly segments, which demonstrates some familiarity with the culture or time of the kingdom you choose.

Prerequisites: None

Instructors:

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Course Materials:

- Bible (unless otherwise specified, you may use the translation of your choice)
 - Lecture notes and quiz blanks will use the ESV translation.

Class Time: Class will meet once weekly on Thursdays from 5pm-7pm from 03/13/25 – 04/24/2025. Class will take place at Hope Community Church, located at 2100 Ellsworth Rd. Ypsilanti, MI, 48197. Class time will be broken down into the following general schedule:

- Quiz (5:00 - 5:10)
- Review of Homework (5:10 - 5:15)
- Lecture (5:15 - 6:25)
- Discussion (6:30 - 7:00)

Assignments:

- **Quizzes** - There will be 6 quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will generally take place at the beginning of class time each week and will cover the previous week's study materials. The quiz format will include multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short-answer-style questions. The purpose of these quizzes is to provide the students with regular graded feedback on their understanding of the course material and to prepare them for the exams. The quizzes also ensure a student's regular and on-time attendance for the weekly class time. The lowest quiz score for each student will be dropped.
- **Homework** – Homework will include weekly reading, writing, and final project steps. The reading will consist of biblical texts and assigned handouts related to the empires that intersect with the New Testament. For each empire studied, you will write two paragraphs summarizing your personal insights regarding how the historical and cultural context of that empire can inform our understanding of Scripture and its connection to extrabiblical history and culture. The final project, which will take the form of a poster or replica artifact presentation, is broken down into steps assigned weekly. These steps are detailed below.

Final Project - The final project, which will take the form of a poster or artifact presentation, will be due 04/24/25. There are weekly steps students are expected to accomplish to build up to the completion of this project:

- Step 1: Choose a New Testament empire covered in this course. Read over the assigned biblical texts and class handouts about that empire, and list five significant aspects of its history, geography, or culture.
- Step 2: Explore secondary sources related to your chosen empire, and identify five additional noteworthy details about its role in biblical and extrabiblical history.
- Step 3: Revisit sources that discuss the historical, geographical, and cultural context of the empire. Use this information to write an introductory description of the empire, similar to what you might find in a historical guide or travel brochure.
- Step 4: Write two paragraphs: one summarizing how the chosen empire's context illuminates a specific biblical narrative or passage, and another comparing and contrasting its significance with other empires studied in class.
- Step 5: Research and document key cross-references in Scripture related to your chosen empire. Additionally, gather visual aids such as photos, maps, or diagrams that could enhance your poster or artifact presentation.
- Step 6: Assemble your poster or replica artifact presentation, incorporating all the content developed in the steps above to create a cohesive and engaging final project.

These steps will guide you in developing a thorough and insightful project that integrates biblical, historical, and cultural insights.

- **Final Exam** - The final exam will take place on 04/24/25. The exam will be cumulative. The purpose of the exam is to encourage each student to review the entire course material and to ensure that each student retains the information learned throughout the course of the semester. The exam will be structured in the same format as the quizzes.

Canvas: Canvas is an online course management system for college courses. It will be used in this course for online submission of assignments and for posting grades, announcements, and access to relevant course documents. Further details on how to set up a Canvas account and access this course can be found in the appendix to this document.

Assessment: Assignments will have the following grade weights:

Assignment	Grade Weight	Notes
Quizzes	30%	Almost weekly, according to the course schedule. Lowest quiz score dropped
Homework	10%	Weekly application paragraphs according to the course schedule.
Final Exam	30%	On 04/24/25
Final Project	30%	Steps due each week. Final Poster due on 04/24/25

We will use the following thresholds to convert raw scores in the course into letter grades:

- A+: $\geq 98\%$
- A: $\geq 92\%$
- A-: $\geq 90\%$
- B+: $\geq 88\%$
- B: $\geq 82\%$
- B-: $\geq 80\%$
- C+: $\geq 78\%$
- C: $\geq 72\%$
- C-: $\geq 70\%$
- D+: $\geq 68\%$
- D: $\geq 62\%$
- D-: $\geq 60\%$
- F: $< 60\%$

Depending on the distribution of raw scores at the end of the semester, these thresholds may change; however the final thresholds will be no stricter than the current thresholds. For example, if you receive a raw score of 85% in the course, you will be guaranteed a letter grade of at least B; however, it may happen that you receive a higher letter grade depending on the overall distribution of raw scores.

Class Schedule:

Date	Topic	Study Material	Assignments Due
03/13/25	- Topic: The Persian influence on Alexander and his empire	- Handouts of relevant sources - Lecture Notes	Nothing Due First Day of Class
03/20/25	- Topic: The Ptolemies and Hellenism's influence on Second Temple Judaism	- Handouts of relevant sources - Lecture Notes	<i>Quiz</i> - The Persian influence on Alexander and his empire <i>HW</i> – The Persian influence on Alexander and his empire Final Project – Step 1
03/27/25	- Topic: The Sects of Judaism; The Herodian Dynasty	- Handouts of relevant sources - Lecture Notes	<i>Quiz</i> - The Ptolemies and Hellenism's influence on Second Temple Judaism <i>HW</i> - The Ptolemies and Hellenism's influence on Second Temple Judaism Final Project – Step 2
04/03/25	- Topic: The Roman Empire	- Handouts of relevant sources - Lecture Notes	<i>Quiz</i> - The Sects of Judaism; The Herodian Dynasty <i>HW</i> - The Sects of Judaism; The Herodian Dynasty Final Project – Step 3
04/10/25	- Topic: The Roman Empire	- Handouts of relevant sources - Lecture Notes	<i>Quiz</i> - The Roman Empire <i>HW</i> - The Roman Empire Final Project – Step 4
04/17/25	- Topic: The Roman Empire	- Handouts of relevant sources - Lecture Notes	<i>Quiz</i> - The Roman Empire <i>HW</i> – The Roman Empire Final Project – Step 5
04/24/25	Final Exam and Presentations		<i>Final Exam</i> – Cumulative <i>HW</i> - The Roman Empire Final Project – Completed Poster Board or artifact

Late Policy:

Assignments are expected to be submitted prior to the due date. If there are extraordinary circumstances outside of the student's control, they may request an extension from the teaching staff.

Additionally, it is often the case that due to any number of other circumstances, a student finds that they are unable to adequately complete a given assignment. In such cases, the student is welcome to submit the assignment after the due date, up to the end of the semester; however, a late penalty will be given for such a late assignment. The standard late penalty is a 20% flat reduction in grade for the given assignment. This late penalty is meant to penalize late submissions and encourage timeliness, while still allowing the student to still finish the given assignment to the best of their ability even if they are unable to complete the assignment for some time due to any extended circumstances.

This late policy is subject to instructor discretion. The 20% late penalty policy is intended

to allow for unique or difficult but not extraordinary circumstances. Any student who abuses this policy, per the instructor's discretion, is liable to have this policy revoked and the grade revert to either a zero or that based on any submission prior to the due date.

Appendix: How to set up your Canvas Account

This course will use the free version of Canvas. This means that you will be able to set up a Canvas account with your regular email and will be able to access the course on Canvas with a simple course invitation sent to your email. Please perform the following steps to set up your Canvas account:

- Check your email for a course invitation to Canvas.
- Click the “Get Started” button, which should redirect you to a Canvas page.
- Accept the course invitation. Upon accepting, it should redirect you to a page that will allow you to either set up a new Canvas account or link a current Canvas account.
- If you do not already have a free Canvas account, proceed to create a new account. To create a new account, it will set your login to be your email, you simply need to set your password and accurate time zone.

Your new account should be all set. To log in to Canvas in the future, go to the following URL:

<https://canvas.instructure.com/login/canvas>

Use your email and password to log in. Then click on your Bible 207 course.

To use the mobile Canvas app, you'll want to download the Canvas app. Upon downloading and opening the app for the first time, it will prompt you to “Find my School.” Select this option and put in “Free Canvas Accounts.” Select this option and proceed to log in with your email and password associated with your free Canvas account.

Appendix: How to submit assignments on Canvas

From the course's Canvas home page, navigate to the assignments tab. Select the specific assignment from the list of assignments. Follow the instructions for the different cases of typed and handwritten submissions.

For typed documents:

- Click “Start Assignment” (“Submit Assignment” in the mobile app)
- Click “Upload File” (“Files” in the mobile app)
- Click “Choose File” (simply select the file in the mobile app)
- Navigate to the proper file and select it
- You may add any number of files by selecting “Add Another File”

For handwritten documents:

You may use a scanner, scanner app, or simply take photos of your work and submit the files by following the same steps outlined for typed documents. The best option may be to use the Canvas mobile app to submit the assignment and use the scanner feature as an option after selecting “Submit Assignment.”

Please note, you may submit as many times as you would like prior to the assignment deadline. The most recent submission will count as your graded submission.

Appendix: Academic Integrity

Students are expected to hold themselves to a Christian standard of ethics in all matters. This includes, but is not limited to, refraining from any forms of plagiarism, cheating, sharing or acquiring any materials that would give a student an unfair advantage, or any dishonest representation of one's work. Below are outlined the consequences for an infringement of academic integrity for a given assignment:

- First offense – A grade of zero is given for the assignment; the professor must notify the Registrar and Dean of Students. A statement goes into the student's file.
- Second offense – A grade of F is assigned for the course; the professor must notify the Registrar and Dean of Students. A statement goes into the student's file. The Dean of Students and/or Registrar will notify faculty of students who incur a second offense in this area.
- Third offense – The professor must notify the Registrar and Dean of Students. A statement goes into the student's file and the student may be suspended or dismissed from this institution.

Appendix: Policy on Use of Generative Language Models For Written Assignments

The use of generative language models, such as ChatGPT, is not strictly prohibited and in some cases is very much encouraged as a research and brainstorming tool. However, all written assignments submitted as your own work should reflect your own personal writing. This prohibits copy and paste use of such tools, however, you may feel free to quote such tools provided that you make clear it is a quotation.

In general, you should treat generative language models as equivalent to speaking to another person. You may gain insight from them and be able to improve your value and productivity, but you should not misrepresent someone else's work as your own. These tools may also be treated somewhat like calculators in a math class. You may use them when appropriate and assignments may even assume their use in some ways, but all submitted work must be your own unless specified otherwise.