



Spiritual Education and Enrichment
SCS105 – Overview: Christian Scriptures class
10 Hours
Unity of Houston Hybrid Course

Instructor	Rev. Dr. Thomas Shepherd, RevDr.TomShepherd@gmail.com
Required Texts	<i>New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*</i>
Recommended Reading	<i>Glimpses of Truth</i> , by Thomas W. Shepherd (blue cover, ©2014)

*Inexpensive paperback NRSV recommended, something student can mark with personal notes.

Course Description:

This course explores the Gospels, letters, history (Book of Acts), and apocalyptic literature (Book of Revelation) that comprise what is more commonly known as the “New Testament” of the Judeo-Christian Bible. The student will develop a basic understanding of the Christian Scriptures’ meaning for the people to whom they were written. This course is based on the premise that, whatever else the Christian Scriptures may be; they most definitely are the response of early Christian writers to both the person and the message of Jesus Christ. This course examines the Christian Scriptures as a testament about Jesus by early Christian communities.

Topics and questions explored in this class include:

- There is no such thing as “the Bible”.
- Who wrote the books and letters which would comprise the Christian Scriptures?
- What issues were the authors addressing to their readers?
- What was the impact of Jesus upon his first century world?
- Do we have Christianity or Paul-ianity today?
- How radical was the Christian message in Roman society? (Hint: EXTREMELY)
- When fishermen, civil servants and assorted hippies conquered the world.
- Letters and teachings of the early Church.
- Unpacking the Book of Revelation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course learners will be able to:

- Describe and explain the four major divisions of the Christian Scriptures
 - Gospel

- Letter
- History
- Apocalyptic literature
- For each of the four canonical Gospels, describe the Jesus presented by each writer.
- Trace the emergence of the Christian church as an organization separate from Judaism in the Roman world.
- Describe the essential elements of the Apostle Paul's theology.
- Give a one-sentence summary of the message of the Revelation to St. John

Instructor: The Rev. Thomas W. Shepherd, D.Min, M. Div, B.S. Ed., is an ordained Unity minister who taught Historical and Theological Studies at Unity Institute and Seminary 2005-2016. His Q&A column "Good Questions" has appeared in *Unity Magazine* for over thirty years. "Dr. Tom" is the author of *Friends in High Places*, *Good Questions*, *Jesus 2.1*, and *The Many Faces of Prayer*. Shepherd holds a B.S. Ed. from the University of Idaho, Master of Divinity from Lancaster Theological Seminary, and Doctor of Ministry from St. Paul School of Theology. In 2011 he received the Charles Fillmore Award from Unity Worldwide Ministries. Shepherd is a retired US Army Chaplain, long before which he flew medical evacuation helicopters during the Vietnam War. Dr. Tom and his wife, Carol-Jean, live in Tucson, Arizona, where he writes science fiction novels.

Assignments and Expectations:

1. Read assignments and complete written work prior to each class sessions.
2. Attend all classes and participate in classroom discussions.
3. Write a 1,200 word paper sharing your insights and learnings about a specific topic in the biblical theology of Christian Scriptures. Due June 30, 2024. You will receive a handout NLT the last day of class describing the specific topic and requirements for the paper.

Additional Expectations:

1. **MS Word is required.**
2. **PowerPoint capability highly recommended.** The instructor will make all lectures available on MS PowerPoint slides. These will allow you to review the day's activities and could provide a set of building blocks to teach the materials to others.

Grade Scale:

- AU Audit – student is not seeking credentialing (no assignments required).
 I Incomplete – waiting for final assignment.
 NC No Credit – did not complete final assignment within three months of end of course and/or did not meet attendance requirements.
 S Satisfactory – met all requirements.

10 course credits are granted on successfully completing the course.

Instructor's Commitment:

Regardless of your background or previous exposure to the Bible, this course will challenge you to re-think your basic ideas about how the radical, equalitarian Christian Scriptures exploded onto the ancient world. I will arrive at class prepared to engage you in discussions about Unity's heritage in those Christian Scriptures. I will create a positive, creative environment for the learner to grow and explore the literature of the early Church. I will read and comment on all papers and assignments you complete. We will laugh and learn together.

Class 1	<p>1st hour – Biblical Theology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening Meditation• Introductions and course overview.• BYOB Exercise (Build Your Own Bible)• Biblical Theology of the Christian Scriptures• Sequencing the Literary DNA: Who's up First? <p>2nd hour - Gospels, Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lecture/discussion: Drama on Roman stage• Historical context of First Century CE• Hellenistic Judaism in Roman Thought• Questions and discussion. <p>Assignment: Read: Luke 6:17-38, Matthew 5:1-48. Be prepared to compare and contrast biblical theologies of Luke and Matthew in these passages.</p>
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<p>Class 2</p>	<p>1st hour – Gospels, Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Meditation • Thoughts & Remarks from the previous day • Lecture/discussion: Synoptic Problem + John • Two-Source Hypothesis • Matthew-Luke battleground Jewish Christianity vs Gentile Christianity. (Discussion of Reading Assignment Luke 6:17-38, Matthew 5:1-48) • Target Audience, Ratings Driven • Luke-Acts, Part 1 <p>2nd Hour - What do we know about Jesus?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker of Wonders • Healer • Teacher of Wisdom • Did Jesus believe he was divine? • Why does “<i>Jesus loves you</i>” speak to so many? • The Crucifixion-Resurrection Thingy <p>Assignment: Read I Corinthians Chs. 12-14. Be prepared to discuss what’s going on in the Corinthian church that required Paul to write the Hymn to Love (Ch 13).</p>
<p>Class 3</p>	<p>1st hour – The Perils of Paul</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Meditation • Thoughts & Remarks from the previous day • Luke-Acts, Part 2 • Lecture/discussion: Seven Undisputed Letters of Paul • Paul’s theology & “Interim ethic” • I Thessalonians • I and II Corinthians <p>2nd Hour – Christianity or Paul-iainty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture/discussion continues: • Galatians – Paul’s angry letter • Philippians – Paul’s happy letter • Philemon – Free the slave(s)? • Romans – Paul’s <i>Summa Theologica</i> • Questions and thoughts. <p>Reading Assignment: Skim Ephesians, Hebrews, James</p>

<p>Class 4</p>	<p>1st hour More “Letters” and Essays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Meditation • Thoughts & Remarks from the previous day. • Lecture/discussion on Deutero-Pauline “School” to include: II Thessalonians, Colossians & Ephesians • Distinctly non-Pauline Letters of Paul: I & II Timothy, Titus <p>2nd Hour – Sampling Other Writings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hebrews • James • I, II & III John • 1 & II Peter • Jude <p>Assignment: Skim the Revelation to St. John.</p>
<p>Class 5</p>	<p>1st hour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Meditation • Thoughts & Remarks from the previous day(s). • 2 Basic types of biblical prophets: classic and apocalyptic • Unpacking the Revelation to St. John. <p>2nd Hour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concluding Lecture/discussion: Biblical Theology, Christian Scriptures and Unity—Bonded for Life • Class reflections.