

# Course Prospectus

## For THL 416 General Epistles

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### Overview

The general epistles (also called the Catholic Epistles) are a set of seven letters in the New Testament anciently placed between Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul. "Epistle" simply means a formal letter. The General Epistles are technically part of the historical writings (Acts of the Apostles and the General Epistles) as preserved anciently in a single scroll. Before the writing of the book of Revelation, the New Testament consisted of three rolls—the memoirs of the apostles (the Gospels), the historical writings (Acts and the General Epistles), and the Epistles of Paul (fourteen epistles addressed in three parts, that is letters to seven specific congregations, a letter to the church-at-large, and letters to the ministry).

In this course you will encounter information concerning the New Testament and some issues and matters not dealt with elsewhere in the New Testament. Here you should find opportunity to hone your critical thinking skills and aptitudes in discerning and understanding the teachings of God's Word. This course should provide you with a deeper comprehension of the historical content of the New Testament through scholarly information and presentations.

### Course catalog description for this course

This course introduces the historical setting, purpose, and central theme of the letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude. Emphasis is on the use of critical, historical, archeological, and cultural analysis. Upon completion, students should be able to use analysis tools to read, understand, explain, and expound these biblical writings.

### Prerequisites and corequisites

*Prerequisites:* None.

*Corequisites:* None.

### Course credit

Three (3) semester hours.

### Instructional objectives

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On completion of this course, a student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the author, background, theme and content of each letter;
2. Discuss important concepts contained in each letter that relate to understanding the history and development of the New Testament Church and its doctrines;
3. Identify and discuss key points of letters that are subject to textual criticism;

4. State and demonstrate each author's teaching on various doctrines and themes in each of his epistles;
5. Identify each author's views on Christian living; and
6. State the definition of basic terms.

## Your instructor

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The instructor of record for this course is Dr. Michael P. Germano. To contact him on course details and issues please use the "Contact Instructor" link on your course home page.

## Students with disabilities

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please inform your instructor through the "Contact Instructor" link on your course home page.

## Technology access

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This course requires web access. You also have to have an established e-mail account. The Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary to view documents that are PDF files. If you do not already have it, you may download the free Adobe Acrobat reader at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>, which you may then install and use to access PDF documents on this site.

## Course evaluation

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We welcome your input for improving this course. Making suggestions to us by e-mail is helpful. Our goal in this course is to facilitate the successful achievement of all instructional objectives by all students. At the end of the course you will have the opportunity of assessing the course. We want to make distance learning courses as effective as we can. We may also ask some other questions concerning your experience in distance learning to help us improve our program. We appreciate your letting us know how we can improve our products and services for you and other distance learners. We welcome your input for improving the course and making suggestions by email is helpful.

## Textbooks

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Required textbooks for this course are:

Elwell, Walter A and Robert W. Yarbrough. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. 2nd Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

*The Bible* - preferably a New King James version (also consult other translations)

## Icebreaker assignment

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To officially begin a course you must complete an icebreaker assignment by which you introduce yourself to your classmates through posting a short autobiography on the course Discussion Forum. The icebreaker assignment must be submitted by the eighth day of the semester. Post your biography as a reply to the "Icebreaker" topic on the course Discussion Forum. You can earn 25 bonus points in this course by doing so "on time." Simply tell the class about yourself and your goals and comment on two other peoples Icebreaker postings. This is not the place for a profession of faith, or the details your conversion experience, or problems you have had with previous fellowships, as that information is more of a private nature. Here you inform your classmates what you would like them to know about you. As we have people from all over the world enrolled in this course each autobiography will help us know, understand and appreciate each other. Please read and comment on each other's bios throughout the first week of class.

## Course requirements and grades

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### Due dates

The last official day of instruction is December 18. The semester ends December 23.

### Reading assignments

Refer to "Course outline and assignments" section for reading assignments and the program schedule.

### Study tips

Distance learning emphasizes self-motivation. Your instructor functions as a facilitator with you as the driving force in mastering course content. Do not put off completing your readings and assignments. While there are many different learning styles the following strategy should serve the needs of most students.

- Look over assigned readings.
- Read the assigned readings making notes before viewing the assigned lecture.
- Define terms in the assignment. The exams will specifically test basic terminology. Develop your biblical and theology vocabulary as you proceed assignment by assignment.
- As you view lectures complete your notes.
- Complete your answers for the writing assignment.
- Each week review your notes, geographical terms and locations, and the words you defined.
- If you have a question, ask. Questions should arise in the teaching-learning process. By bringing questions to our attention you not only acquire assistance but you also maintain the interaction necessary in higher education. Use the Inbox on your course home page to send questions.

## Lectures

This course includes lectures by faculty and guests. Links to lectures will be placed in lessons.

## Forum questions & comments

Each student will have the opportunity to post on-line comments to a Forum Question for each assignment. This will enable students to interact with each other and with the instructor.

## Quizzes and examinations

Each assignment has an associated online Drill and Practice Quiz. These range from 10-20 questions. They are open book quizzes and there is no time limit. A quiz should help you master the material in the assignment. It also provides you with practice in test taking. You will be given two chances to take each quiz. The **two exams** discussed below draw heavily but not exclusively from the quizzes. Therefore, it is important for you to understand and commit the quiz material to memory.

On the other hand, exams have time limits, closed book tests to be taken online and you have only one opportunity to complete an exam. They are not proctored. As Living University students do not cheat, steal or lie, we rely on our students' integrity during these examinations.

## Writing assignments

Each assignment will include Writing Assignments that will involve writing out certain verses, defining key terms and explaining important scriptural passages. For instructions in how to post assignments, visit the Frequently Asked Questions pages through the link on the course homepage. The preferable way to post assignment is by attachment so that their format will not be corrupted.

**Always keep a copy of your work for this course.**

## Grading

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Your course grade will be determined based on the number of points you have earned over the semester as follows:

- Drill & Practice Quizzes (16 worth 20 points each, 320 points)
- Writing Assignments (16 worth 20 points each, 320 points)
- Exam 1 [Mid-term Exam] (100 points)
- Exam 2 [Final Exam] (100 points)
- Research Paper (160 points)
- Total 1,000 points

By getting your autobiography posted on time you can earn 25 bonus points and by posting your annotated bibliography by the due date you can earn an additional 25 bonus points. These points could make the difference between an A or a B, or passing or not passing.

You also can earn a total of 10 points extra credit for this course by developing a one or two sentence glossary entry for each of the Words and Phrases listed in Lesson 1. You have to complete the whole set

to receive the extra credit. See the Extra-Credit Assignments on the Assignments section of the course website.

You can earn extra credit for Lessons 2-5 by developing four multiple choice questions for each of the lectures in a lesson. Each question must have only one right answer and four decoys. You have to complete the whole set to receive the extra credit. You must indicate the correct answer to receive credit. See the Extra-Credit Assignments on the Assignments section of the course website.

Grades are assigned in the traditional American style of an A, B, C, D, or F. In distance learning we believe that mastery of the subject matter is achieved when a student can demonstrate that they have achieved 80% of the objectives for a course. That means that we want you to earn at least 800 points in this course. If you do not do so then you have not developed the mastery we would like you to have.

We want this course to be competency-based and so it is possible for the entire class to receive an A or a B. There is no artificial curving of scores in the assignment of grades (if you don't know what that means, don't worry about it). Also, don't go on a guilt trip if you get a C. That is an honorable grade, but if you receive a D or below, then you might want to retake the course. Mastery of the material is what your goal should be.

Grades are assigned by points as follows:

- A 900-1000 points
- B 800-899 points
- C 700-799 points
- D 600-699 points
- F Below 600 points

## Academic irregularity

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Students have the responsibility for conducting themselves in such a manner as to avoid any suspicion that they are improperly giving or receiving aid on any assignment or examination. An academic irregularity not only includes cheating but also includes plagiarism (taking another's ideas and/or words and presenting them as if they were your own) and the submitting of the same paper in separate courses without prior consent from the faculty members concerned.

In cases of suspected academic irregularity, faculty members are authorized to refuse to grade such papers, in whole or in Module, or examinations, and to record each of them as a failure.

If an academic irregularity is sufficiently serious, the University may take one or more of, but not limited to, the following actions:

1. Drop the student from the course with a grade of F;
2. Place the student on academic probation; and/or
3. Dismiss the student from the University.

## Course calendar

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All reading and viewing assignments are set forth in the lessons on the course website. Other readings are found in the lessons.)

### Lesson 1 Introduction to the General Epistles

Intro. to the General Epistles

### Lesson 2 James

Module 1 Background

Module 2 James 1-2

Module 3 James 3-5

### Lesson 3 I & II Peter

Module 1 Background

Module 2 I Peter 1-3

Module 3 I Peter 4-5

Module 4 II Peter 1-3

## Exam 1 (Mid-tem Exam)

### Lesson 4 I, II & III John

Module 1 Background

Module 2 I John 1-2

Module 3 I John 3-5

Module 4 II John

Module 5 III John

### Lesson 5 Jude

Module 1 Background

Module 2 Jude

Research Paper due  
Exam 2 (Final Exam) due