Summary – Common Contexts – Biblical and Theological Canons

New Testament

2004

1. RS 010  This has not directly helped the students understand the goals of the GE. This understanding to some extent may come indirectly as students, through a combination of all their classes, get a better sense of what the classes are emphasizing. We have discussed, "why study the New Testament," with some of the answers to this question along the lines of the GEs, but we have not discussed the GE program directly. The syllabus, in discussion of the goals of the class and the nature of the course, is supportive of the GEs. Once again, the GE program is not directly mentioned, but the syllabus is none less excellent with regard to what the student is expected to gain from the class. This includes being "[a] cross-culture experience," being aware of the issues, having a wide breadth of applications, having the potential to change how you think and act, etc.

7. RS10 - The course was very difficult and came as sort of a shock to me, having not taken religious classes before. I came from a public high school and while it was cool, i thought that the class was maybe a little "too advanced" for me. I have been a Christian for a couple years now, but was raised in "Bible knowledge" since I was about 8 years old. Maybe a more elementary class should be created? such as New Testament 1 or 2. Regarding GE, i thought it was very appropriate that a Christian school stay true to its roots and require this as a GE. Although i had a difficult time, I did learn a lot about the New Testament than i thought i knew, especially regarding taking the times and culture into account.

10. RS 010  The goals for this course and subsequently the goals for the GE requirement were spelled out pretty clearly in the syllabus. There is a brief but in-depth look at why it is an important course to take, especially in the context of a Christian liberal arts education. There is an emphasis upon the fact that the course is really all about asking who Jesus Christ is, and trying to understand him as a basis of our faith.
The course itself did a good job of answering this question and exploring the historical and cultural contexts in which we might have encountered Jesus in his own time. I came away from the class with a much greater understanding of the New Testament as a whole and a broader understanding of its significance both in history and in my own life.

14. RS010 Dr. Jobes began each class meeting with prayer. That was truly refreshing! This class combined scripture reading with textbook and fiction reading. The curriculum and teaching style amounted to a great mix of Sunday School and regular school, so to speak. I learned about Jesus and his teachings in a deeper way in light of the historical context provided by the textbook and Dr. Jobes. ALSO: While on one hand I appreciated the multiple choice exams, at the same time I recognize that we probably would’ve benefited from more demanding tests.

17. RS010C a. My professor and his syllabus very clearly explained the goals of the GE for this class. b. I loved this class. I learned so much and the goal of the GE was most definitely accomplished. I think I am definitely going to get a well-rounded education because of it. My schedule this semester was pretty diverse, and I think it’s been a good experience being exposed to all the different kinds of classes we have to take. I’m not sure of what I want to major in yet, so this is helping me to get a taste of lots of different areas I could potentially study in. At Westmont College, the General Education Program strives to give students a strong foundation for the rest of their education at Westmont. Christian learning is combined with higher education as students take a wide variety of courses, ranging from Calculus to Water Aerobics to French.

Spring 2005

RS 010B
I have gained a greater understanding of the New Testament and having taken Old Testament and now taking Christian Doctrine I am able to make connections between the three. We also bring in other ancient texts to show similarities and differences and broaden our understanding. Unfortunately, our assignments do not require the reading of the actual New Testament and it is often difficult to grasp certain topics discussed in the textbook without knowledge of the New Testament.
RS010B

New Testament has helped me to understand the importance of learning to look at my faith from an educated perspective. It has allowed me to really learn why it is important that as a Christian, I do not just accept what people tell me as truth, but that I really research everything I believe. This helps me understand Jesus better so that I can more fully love him and be convinced of his truth.

RS 10

The syllabus was thoroughly discussed on the first day of class. Why should we take New Testament? It involves us in the cross-cultural experience of reading a text written by people who lived in a culture and time vastly different from our own, yet which addresses the universal questions of life, death, and love.

I definitely think this course has contributed to, and achieved these goals. We have read two books which give us another view of the biblical times, and the discussions are always very focused. Almost each class session, the professor incorporates a "thinking deeper" question which is applicable to our lives. My Christian worldview has been biblically informed, and I am appreciative of this GE course.

RS010C

I have learned so much from this class. I would say it has deepened my Christian faith by learning the past and history of what we have learned to follow and believe in. I would not have learned about this from another college. The lectures are deep and seek conversation among students and with the professor. It has helped me see what other people have been coming from and their point of view seeking from their own level of faith. I have learned how to study my Bible and get a different newer meaning than just reading it.
RS010C
New Testament has helped me understand the goals of the GE program both in the class syllabus and in class discussions. This class helped me to approach the New Testament more academically. I now have an increased respect for the Bible’s historical and social context. Dr. Fiske discussed with us how biblical study draws on nearly all the liberal arts. Social scientists, for example, can help us understand the early church and the dynamics of its social forces and pressures. Scholars of literature can help us identify the structure of the written word and find meaning behind language. Historians are able to interpret historical texts. Archeologists use artifacts to reveal how biblical characters lived and what they cared for. Philosophers analyze ancient world views influencing the biblical world. This helped me understand the purpose of the general education program in biblical studies, a liberal arts education, and my life in general.

RS010C
The syllabus for this course described the GE requirement that it fulfilled and described how/why it was fulfilled. I think that it served its purpose; I am much more educated in the New Testament teachings and doctrine.

RS010B
Being at a Christian college, I felt that taking a course in New Testament has been fundamental in forming my further understanding of the faith which I proclaim. I believe that an institution of learning which declares Christian values should provide an education firmly founded in Biblical teaching, and should be supplemented by Bible-oriented courses. To be educated as Christians, I believe that we need to understand our religion, and the historical context and development of that faith. This course provided me with knowledge that has supplemented my learning in other avenues of study, while giving me an in-depth study of the Book I form my life around. This class was also successful in providing controversial points of view, and acknowledging areas of scholarly debate in regards to the Bible. Rather than give us the school’s or professor’s opinions, I feel that this class offered a well-rounded context of information through which we as students could develop our own beliefs. Learning to discern such has been a
significant part of my education at Westmont. Therefore, I found it more than appropriate that such learning be a required part of the GE program.

**Fall 2005**

1. RS 010
After taking New Testament I see why it is important to learn about the text that we as Christians hold to be the ultimate truth. This class has helped me to learn the context behind the text, and has enabled me to grasp certain aspects of Christianity stronger.

7. RS 010
Professor McDowell helped me to better understand the goals of the GE primarily through his instruction. He encouraged us to read the New Testament looking behind, within, and in front of the text. Looking behind the text focuses on such aspects as the author and the context that the piece was written within. Looking within the text focuses on the actually literary aspects of the piece, and looking in front of the text involves identifying our own ways of thinking as well as how they may keep us from understanding the original meaning of the text in the ancient world. Studying the New Testament in such a way made the bible more real and accessible to me, and has enabled me to better understand and find more meaning in everything that I read.

8. RS010-3
New Testament with Professor Work was a challenging class. The class is titled "Life and Literature of the New Testament" and I feel that we spend more time on the literature aspect and failed to recognize the life. Professor work himself did not address how this course was meeting with the goals of the GE, but his syllabus vaguely hinted at how we were to learn the New Testament in order to deepen our understanding of the Christian faith. Through his instruction I believe that the students did gain a wider knowledge of the history of the church and origin of our basic beliefs as followers of Christ.
10. RS 010
a. This course was not particularly effective in specifically communicating the GE goals. The syllabus did not even mention how the course fit into the General Ed requirements or explain why it is part of the GE. The course goals presented fit with the GE goals but, there were never direct connections drawn between the two.
b. New Testament focuses on certain aspects of the GE goals more than others. As expected in an RS course, the class participated in many conversations about how we integrate our faith with the subject material. The course presents ideas about authorship and reading the Bible historically and literarily that are new for many students. As a result, most professors take the time to explain how these concepts should shape our faith, if at all.