



NT002-512/612/812

The Early New Testament Church

About this Unit Outline

This unit outline contains information essential to finding your way around the unit **The Early New Testament Church (on campus)**. It provides a structure for your learning, giving details of lesson topics, assessment requirements, and key resources.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Teacher



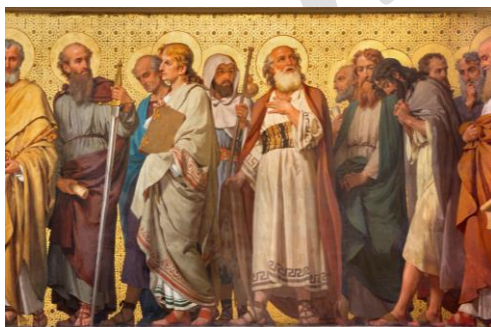
This unit will be taught by Rev. Andrew Stewart. Rev. Stewart teaches New Testament and Theology as an adjunct lecturer at RTC. He combines teaching with full-time pastoral ministry as minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Geelong. He has served congregations in Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Australia for more than thirty years. As well as pastoring and teaching, Andrew has written commentaries on First Chronicles and Second Chronicles as well as Deuteronomy for the popular Welwyn Commentary Series with Evangelical Press. In 2020, he was awarded a Doctor of Theology degree for his work on a thesis entitled *Consistency and Creativity in the Three Accounts of Paul's Conversion in Acts*.

1.2. The RTC

The RTC is a reformed, evangelical theological college based in Melbourne, Australia. We offer flexible study options across a broad range of courses, providing high quality training for Christian life and ministry. The RTC values and strives for ministry training and theological education that is: Biblically Grounded, Theologically Robust, Gospel Hearted, Spiritually Rich, Culturally Relevant, and Winsomely Engaging. We are committed to a historic Reformed theological understanding of the gospel and biblical truth. The Reformed doctrinal position is stated fully in four documents that the Christian church developed in the 16th & 17th Centuries. RTC is committed to these four confessions of faith (The Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, The Canons of Dort and The Westminster Confession of Faith). More information about the RTC can be found on its home page, www.rtc.edu.au. The courses provided by the RTC are accredited through the agency of the ACT, the Australian College of Theology (see page 12 of the 2016 of the ACT Handbook).



1.3. The Unit



Jesus had died and been raised to life, appeared to the disciples, and finally ascended to the right hand of the Father. Before he left, Jesus gave his followers the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them for the work of telling the gospel. The church was born – but not abandoned. The early decades of Christianity were intense as the church grew. Fearless proclamation of the gospel brought opposition, internal conflict and new questions about what it meant to follow Israel's God. This foundational unit takes us through these formative years of the church via the books that record this exciting time. It equips us for studying the New Testament as we learn to interpret and apply the book of Acts and New Testament letters, invaluable skills for ministry and personal bible knowledge.

2. Unit Description

NT002-512 Learning outcomes

The following descriptions are found at the Australian College of Theology's [website](#). On completion of this unit, students will:

A. Know and understand

Demonstrate foundational knowledge and understanding of the contents, themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of major New Testament Epistles.

B. Be able to

1. Outline: a) the history, themes and theology presented in the Book of Acts; and b) the contents, themes and theology of selected New Testament Epistles
2. Trace key developments and emerging patterns in the beginnings and expansion of the early church
3. Present Organised evidence-based perspectives on the themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of the selected New Testament Epistles

C. Be in a position to

1. Relating perspectives from 'The Early New Testament Church' to contemporary Christian living and ministry contexts

NT002-512 Unit Content

Section A:

the beginnings and expansion of the church as reflected in the New Testament documents, with special attention to the Acts of the Apostles. Topics to be covered include:

1. The Jerusalem church
2. Early Christian preaching
3. Stephen and the Hellenists
4. The Pauline mission and churches
5. The Council of Jerusalem
6. Schism, heresy and external threat in the early church.

Section B:

The main issues confronted in and the teaching of at least **seven** major New Testament epistles.

Note: Both Section A and Section B should be weighted at not less than 25% of the content and assessment.

NT002-612 Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, students will:

A. Know and understand

Demonstrate Developing knowledge and understanding of the contents, themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of major New Testament Epistles.

B. Be able to

1. Analyse a) the history, themes and theology presented in the Book of Acts; and b) the contents, themes and theology of selected New Testament Epistles
2. Critically Reflect on current scholarship regarding key developments and emerging patterns in the beginnings and expansion of the early church
3. Present Critical evidence-based perspectives on the themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of the selected New Testament Epistles

C. Be in a position to

1. Present Analytical evidence-based perspectives on the themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of the selected New Testament Epistles

NT002-612 Unit Content

Section A

The beginnings and expansion of the church as reflected in the New Testament documents, with special attention to the Acts of the Apostles. Topics to be covered include:

1. The Jerusalem church.
2. Early Christian preaching.
3. Stephen and the Hellenists.

4. The Pauline mission and churches.
5. The Council of Jerusalem.
6. Schism, heresy and external threat in the early church.

Section B

The main issues confronted in and the teaching of at least **seven** major New Testament epistles.

Note: Both Section A and Section B should be weighted at not less than 25% of the content and assessment.

NT002-812 Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit, students will:

A. Know and understand

Demonstrate Advanced knowledge and understanding of the contents, themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of major New Testament Epistles.

B. Be able to

1. Critically analyse a) the history, themes and theology presented in the Book of Acts; and b) the contents, themes and theology of selected New Testament Epistles
2. Critically analyse key developments and emerging patterns in the beginnings and expansion of the early church
3. Evidence-based perspectives on major themes and theology of the Book of Acts and of selected New Testament Epistles

C. Be in a position to

1. Apply knowledge and Critical thinking skills and perspectives from The Early New Testament Church to contemporary Christian living and ministry contexts

NT002-812 Unit Content

Section A

The beginnings and expansion of the church as reflected in the New Testament documents, with special attention to the Acts of the Apostles. Topics to be covered include:

1. The Jerusalem church.
2. Early Christian preaching.
3. Stephen and the Hellenists.
4. The Pauline mission and churches.
5. The Council of Jerusalem.
6. Schism, heresy and external threat in the early church.

Section B

The main issues confronted in and the teaching of at least **seven** major New Testament epistles.

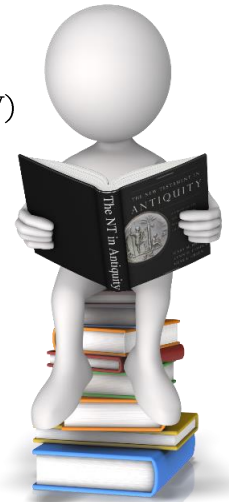
Note: Both Section A and Section B should be weighted at not less than 25% of the content and assessment.

3. Textbooks

3.1. Required Texts

English Text of Acts to Revelation: The English Standard Version (ESV) is recommended.

Kruger, Michael (ed.) *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2016.



3.2. Recommended Texts

Carson, D. A. and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Leicester: Apollos, 2005.

Gundry, R. H. *A Survey of the New Testament*. 5th edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012.

Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993.

Martin, Ralph P. and Peter H. Davids, eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1998.

Thompson, Alan J. *The Acts of the Risen Lord: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*. Nottingham: Apollos, 2011.

Davies, John A. "Luke-Acts as Prophetic Proclamation." *Journal for Gospels and Acts Research* 5 (2021): 66-81.

Evans, David. "A Jerusalemite Source for the List of Nations in Acts 2." *Journal for Gospels and Acts Research* 2 (2018): 101-114.

Stenschke, Christoph. "'When they heard this they were silenced' (Acts 11:18): Some Inner-Christian Conflicts and Their Resolution in Acts 6-16:35." *Journal for Gospels and Acts Research* 4 (2020): 69-89.

3.3. Select Bibliography

Alexander, Loveday C. A. *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context*. New York: T & T Clark, 2008.

Barnett, Paul, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity: A History of New Testament Times*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1999.

Bird, Michael, F. *A Bird's-Eye View of Paul: The Man, his Mission, and his Message*. Nottingham: IVP, 2008.

Craig Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos: An Introduction to Acts through Revelation*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2006.

Bock, Darrell L. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

- Bock, Darrell L. *Acts*. BECNT. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2007
- Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit*. Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992.
- Bruce, F.F. *The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles*. Tyndale Monographs. London: Tyndale Press, 1942.
- Burge Gary M., Lynn H. Cohick, Gene L. Green, *The New Testament in Antiquity: A Survey of the New Testament Within Its Cultural Contexts*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.
- deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Context, Methods and Ministry Formation*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove: IVP, 2018.
- Dunn, James D. G. *Beginning from Jerusalem*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Elwell, Walter A., and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*. 3rd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Goulder, M. *St Peter Verses St Paul: A Tale of Two Missions*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.
- Green, Joel B., and Lee Martin McDonald (eds.) *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Hagner, Donald A., *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.
- Harrison, E. F. *The Apostolic Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.
- Hawthorne, Gerald F., Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1993.
- Hengel, M. *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003.
- Hemer, Colin J. *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. Conrad Gempf. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1989.
- Jobes, Karen H. *Letters to the Churches*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J., L. Scott Kellum and Charles L. Quarles. *The Cradle, The Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. 2nd edition. Nashville: B&H, 2016.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*. Biblical Theology of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- Ladd, George E. *A Theology of the New Testament*. 2d ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Longenecker, Bruce W., and Todd D. Still. *Thinking through Paul: A Survey of His Life, Letters, and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.
- Marshall, I. H. *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.
- . *The Acts of the Apostles*. Leicester: IVP, 1980.

- Marshall, I. H., Stephen Travis, and Ian Paul, *Exploring the New Testament, Volume 2: The Letters and Revelation*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2002.
- Marshall, I. H. and D. Peterson (eds). *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Pate, C. Marvin. *The Writings of John: A Survey of the Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.
- Peterson, David G. *The Acts of the Apostles (PNTC)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Polhill, John B. *Paul and His Letters*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999.
- . *Acts (NAC)*. Nashville: Broadman, 1992.
- Porter, Stanley E. *The Apostle Paul: His Life, Thought, and Letters*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- . *Paul in Acts*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001.
- Powell, Mark A. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.
- Rowe, C. Kavin. *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age*. Oxford: OUP, 2009.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2020.
- . *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2019.
- . *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013.
- Tenney, M. C. *New Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.
- Thielman, Frank, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005
- Thompson, Alan J. *The Acts of the Risen Lord: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*. Nottingham: Apollos, 2011.
- Williams, D. *Acts*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1990.
- Wenham, David and Steve Walton, *Exploring the New Testament, Volume 1: A Guide to the Gospels and Acts*. 2nd edition. Downers Grove, IVP, 2011.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Wright, N. T. and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019.

4. Work Expectations

The Early New Testament Church represents a normal unit load or a quarter of a full-time study course over one semester. The following guide indicates the hours we expect this unit to require, though this will vary from student to student. If you invest this amount of time, we would expect an average student to receive a reasonable grade. More time may be required for very high grades or for those who read or work more slowly. Much more time will be required if you frequently check Facebook or are generally inclined to distraction or procrastination! Our guideline for study is that a full unit will equate to 36 hours in class and ten hours of study in total per week (including lectures when they occur). This amounts to 150 hours of study over the fifteen-week semester.

Activity	Hours	Suggestion
Lectures	36	Lecture hours: three hours each week.
Assessment 1: Minor Essay	22	This is critical reading and research time for the essay. Allow for 10 hours of reading. At 20pp/hour this allows for reading about 200 pages in various books, articles and commentaries. This will then allow you 12 hours to write up the essay.
Assessment 2: Major Essay	30	This is critical reading and research time for the essay. Allow for 15 hours of reading. At 20pp/hour this allows for reading about 300 pages in various books, articles and commentaries. This will then allow you 15 hours to write up the final essay.
Assessment 3: Exam	50	Allow around about 50 hours for exam preparation. This will give you enough time to work through your unit notes and do any further reading to fill in any gaps in your knowledge.
Weekly Reading	12	Spend an hour a week reading the prescribed and recommended texts, working through questions in the handouts in preparation for the class.

5. Unit Overview

Wk	Date	Activity	Reading
1	26 th July	<i>Luke the Historian of the Early Church</i>	The chapter on "Acts" by Robert Cara in Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , ch 6.
2	2 nd Aug	<i>Survey of Acts chapters 1-7 – the early Church in Jerusalem</i>	Acts 1-7 Thompson, <i>Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus</i> , Introduction and chapter 1, p. 17-70.
3	9 th Aug	<i>Survey of Acts chapters 8-11 – the early Church in Judea and Samaria</i>	Acts 8-11 Thompson, <i>Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus</i> , chapter 2, p. 71-101.
4	16 th Aug	<i>Survey of Acts chapters 12-20 – Paul's mission and Public Ministry</i>	Thompson, <i>Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus</i> , chapter 3-4, p. 103-143
Study Week Aug 22 – 26			
5	30 th Aug	<i>Survey of Acts chapters 21-28 – Paul the prisoner – Jerusalem to Rome</i>	Thompson, <i>Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus</i> , chapters 5-7, p.145-196.
Minor Essay due (2nd Sept)			
6	6 th Sept	<i>Summary of the theology of Acts in its New Testament canonical context</i>	Voorwinde, "How Normative is Acts?" <i>Vox Reformata</i> , 75 (2010): 33-56.
7	13 th Sept	<i>Galatians and the Gospel</i>	Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , chapter 8.
Study Week Sept 19 – 23			
Study Week Sept 26 – 30			
8	4 th Oct	<i>The Corinthian Correspondence – a Pastor's Heart</i>	Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , chapter 7.
9	11 th Oct	<i>James – Faith that works</i>	Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , chapter 20.
10	18 th Oct	<i>The Letters of Peter – perseverance and preservation of the Faith</i>	Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , chapter 21 & 22.
11	25 th Oct	<i>The letters of John – Test all things</i>	Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , chapter 23
Major Essay due (28th Oct)			
12	1 st Nov	<i>Revelation – Christ Victorious</i>	Kruger (ed.), <i>Biblical-Theological Introduction</i> , chapter 25
13	Nov 7 – 11	Revision Week	
14	Nov 14 – 18	Exam Week	

6. Assessment

6.1. Assessment Overview

Assessment Piece	Percentage
Exam	45%
Minor Essay	15%
Major Essay	40%
Total	100%

6.2 Minor Essay (15% of Final Mark)

- **For NT002-512 Students:**

An 850-word essay is due on **Friday, 2nd September** on the topic: “Describe the structure of the Book of Acts.” (Worth 15% of Final Mark)

- **For NT002-612 Students:**

A 1,000-word essay is due on **Friday, 2nd September** on the topic: “Analyse the structure of the Book of Acts.” (Worth 15% of Final Mark)

- **For NT002-812 Students:**

A 1,500-word essay is due on **Friday, 2nd September** on the topic: “Critically analyse the structure of the Book of Acts. To what extent is it structured as a continuation of Luke’s Gospel?” (Worth 15% of Final Mark)

6.3 Major Essay (40% of Final Mark)

- **For NT002-512 Students:**

A 2,250-word essay is due on **Friday, 28th October** on the topic: “Describe the main features of apostolic preaching as described in the speeches in Acts.” (Worth 40% of Final Mark)

- **For NT002-612 Students:**

A 2,750-word essay is due on **Friday, 28th October** on the topic: “Analyse the various settings of Paul’s preaching in Acts. To what extent do they present a common apostolic kerygma and to what extent do they address specific historical situations?” (Worth 40% of Final Mark)

▪ For NT002-812 Students:

A 4,000-word essay is due on **Friday, 28th October** on the topic: “Assess the historical reliability of the accounts of Paul’s preaching in Acts, making specific reference to the discussions of this topic by Martin Dibelius and F. F. Bruce.” (Worth 40% of Final Mark)

6.4. Suggested Resources for the Major Essay:

The following is just a suggested selection of resources to get you started; your research for the essay should not be limited to this list.

- Bock, Darrell L., *Acts*. BECNT, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007. (See p.20-23)
- Bruce, F. F., *The Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles*. London: The Tyndale Press, 1942. (https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/speeches_bruce.pdf)
- Bruce, F. F. “The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years After,” Pages 53-69 in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*. Edited by Robert Banks. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1974. (https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/rh/acts_bruce.pdf)
- Bruce, Frederick F., *The Book of The Acts*. Revised ed. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Dibelius, Martin, “The Speeches in Acts and Ancient Historiography.” Pages 138-85 in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*. Edited by Heinrich Greeven. London: SCM Press, 1956.
- Dudley, Merle B., “The Speeches in Acts”. *The Evangelical Quarterly* 50 (1978): 147-55.
- Gartner, B., *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation*. (Uppsala, 1955)
- Kistemaker, Simon J., “The Speeches in Acts.” *Criswell Theological Review* 5 (1990) 31-41. (<http://biblicalelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Kistemaker-SpeechesActs-CTR.pdf>)
- Keener, Craig S., *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. 4 vols., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012-15. (See volume 1, pp.258-319.)
- Marshall, I. Howard, *Acts - An Introduction and Commentary*. TNTC, Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980. (pp.41-44).
- Padilla, Osvaldo, *The Acts of the Apostles: Interpretation, History and Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016. (See pp.123-97.)
- Ridderbos, Herman N., *The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles*. London: Tyndale Press, 1962. (https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/tp/speeches_ridderbos.pdf)
- Soards, Marion L., *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context and Concerns*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994.

Stonehouse, N. B., *Paul Before the Areopagus And Other New Testament Essays*. London: Tyndale Press, 1957. ("The Areopagus Address" can be found at http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/areopagus_stonehouse.pdf)

von Ehrenkrook, Jason Q., "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Areopagus Speech and its Missiological Implications." *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* 14 (1998): 1-15.

Witherington, Ben. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. (pp.116-123).

Late submissions of Summary Statements and the Essay will be penalised at a rate of 3% per day, or part thereof. No submission may be accepted more than 14 days after the due date. (Students who need extensions must ask for these prior to the due date, and the grounds must relate to circumstances that are unforeseen and beyond the student's control.)

6.5. Exam:

The exam will include 8 questions; you must answer three of them. Answers of 500-750 words per questions are ideal. Students must choose one question that focuses on Acts (50% weighting) and one that focuses on the epistles or Revelation (50% weighting).

The questions focus on themes and issues from the book of Acts, the NT epistles, and Revelation and ask you to identify key developments and patterns in the NT church as these themes and issues relate accordingly.

7. Assessment Criteria: Major Essay

Your essay will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. **Introduction (10%):** clear introduction setting out the topic to be discussed and the approach taken.
2. **Scholarly literature (30%):** ability to engage with a number of contemporary books/articles, degree of engagement, level of critical evaluation and assessment of viewpoints.
3. **Clarity and quality of argument (30%):** accurate reading of the question and what it requires, clear and well-argued answer.
4. **Style (20%):** well-written, clearly structured, grammatically correct, interesting presentation, accurate referencing, footnotes and bibliography.
5. **Conclusion and overall impression (10%):** clear summary, no new points in the conclusion but highlighting the central features of the essay's argument.