General Description of the Course

In this course, we will study the origins and development of the New Testament, which is historically important for two major reasons. First, it is the fundamental book of faith for a world religion, Christianity. Second, it is an important source for understanding the history of the time in which it was written. We will learn about the background of early Christianity, the history of the various writings in the New Testament, and the questions and debates that occupy scholars who study the history of early Christianity.

Our questions will be along the following lines: What methods do scholars use when studying the origins of a religion? What can we know about Jesus of Nazareth and his earliest followers? How do we sort historical fact from myth in accounts of his life, death, and resurrection? Is there really any way to do that? What happens to stories and ideas about Jesus of Nazareth in the first three centuries after his death? Who wrote the New Testament books? When? Why? Where? In response to what needs? Given its origins in a Jewish land, its foundation by a Jewish teacher and his Jewish followers, and its early roots in the synagogues of the Mediterranean world, how does Christianity come to be a separate religion from Judaism? What does the New Testament tell us about politics, social issues, Jesus and society, the church(es) and the rest of society? What is the relationship between Christianity and Greco-Roman religion? Greco-Roman philosophy? What is unique about Christianity and what is shared with other religions or philosophies?

That, of course, is a lot to chew. We cannot comprehensively cover a large body of scholarship and a profoundly important set of historical sources in one term, but we will survey many issues. The fundamental aim is to give students a sense of the great variety of New Testament texts and the great variety of approaches to them, with the hope that some students will be intrigued enough to delve deeper. Perhaps most importantly: everyone in the course will read big chunks of the New Testament (assuming, of course, that everyone follows the syllabus).

In a world where Jesus is continually invoked, everyone should at the very least have done that.
This course meets the following **SAS core curriculum requirements:**

- **h.** Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- **i.** Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis.
- **k.** Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time, including the history of ideas or history of science.
- **l.** Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors.

**Course Goals and Assessment:**

The **goals** of this course are as follows:

1. **Content:** Students will learn the history of the New Testament texts, the history of the New Testament canon, the scholarly consensus about the dating and composition of the texts, the Jewish and Greco-Roman context of early Christianity, and the basic theological messages of a variety of early Christian movements.

2. **Approach 1:** Students will become familiar with the ways that secular scholars of religion approach questions of theology and religious evolution; they will learn some of the terminology scholars use to describe religious movements and the religious convictions of individuals; they will learn what kinds of proof are acceptable in scholarly circles and why.

3. **Approach 2:** Students will learn the excitement and caution with which historians approach textual evidence. They will learn to read a text carefully for what it says and what it does not say. They will learn to use internal evidence to place a text chronologically, theologically, and geographically. They will learn to use external evidence to give a text a context, and then to use that context to deepen understanding of the text.

**Assessment** of students’ progress in these three areas will be measured in two ways:

1. Students’ progress in all three areas will be measured in five multiple-choice exams and an extended assignment of exegesis culminating in a paper.

2. Students’ ability to read New Testament texts carefully and analyze them, their ability to put text and context together, and their overall understanding of the joys and pitfalls of studying a religiously important text will primarily be assessed by the instructor on the basis of student contributions to discussions. **Participation is therefore a crucial component of this course.** At the end of this syllabus is a description of the criteria used for judging participation—please read them carefully.
Required Books (available at the RU Bookstore, online, and lots of other places…; try www.addall.com — a clearinghouse for online booksellers):

- *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with Apocrypha/deuterocanonical Books*. ISBN 0-06-065580-1 [You may already have a Bible, and you may use it if you wish. Nevertheless, this particular Bible is especially valuable. It contains all of the apocryphal/deuterocanonical books, extra commentary, maps, and a canon table. If at all possible, you should buy and use it.]


Grading:

- 5 quizzes @ 8% = 40%
- Exegesis pre-writing assignments—2 @ 10% = 20%
- Exegesis paper= 20%
- Participation = 20%
Attendance:

**Self-Reporting of Absences**

In accordance with University policy, if you expect to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Such reporting does NOT EXCUSE your absence.

Because students learn more and retain more when they attend class, **students are required to attend lectures and discussions.** Aware, however, that illnesses, family crises, and such can make even the most diligent student miss class, **the professor allows 3 absences without penalty.** The 3 absences are not recommended, should be used only when you NEED to, and are NOT negotiable. Do not use up three absences just because they seem like a free pass and then expect a fourth absence to be excused when you are ill or have an emergency.

**For every absence beyond three, your total grade for the course will drop 1/3 of a grade-point (e.g., from A to B+, from B+ to B, from B to C+, and so on).**

**Promptness:**

Being late is rude. It interrupts the professor and your classmates, inconveniences those who must move to let you sit down, and generally causes problems for other people. Because all of us run late sometimes, you are allowed to be **moderately late up to three times during the semester without penalty.**

Your fourth late arrival will be treated as an absence, as will any subsequent late arrivals. Please note that **I will not make exceptions for late arrivals caused by work schedules, campus bus schedules, or parking problems.** If you arrive after the roll has been called, you must talk to me after class is over. If you arrive more than 40 minutes after the class begins you are welcome to attend but you will be marked down as absent rather than late for that class.

**IF, BECAUSE OF OTHER COMMITMENTS, YOU CANNOT MAKE IT TO CLASS ON TIME, YOU SHOULD DROP THE COURSE.**
Please go through this syllabus as soon as possible and put the quizzes and paper due dates on your calendar!!!! While the professor will try to remind you about deadlines, the professor is herself absentminded about such things and relies on a DETAILED, WRITTEN calendar. She recommends that you do the same.

Reading assignments:

**NOTE: ALL READING ASSIGNMENTS ARE TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE CLASS PERIOD FOR WHICH THEY ARE ASSIGNED.**
The New Testament does not lend itself to equal distribution as reading assignments. Different books are of vastly different lengths. You will notice, then, that some weeks have many, many pages of reading, while others have very little. I highly recommend that you use the weeks with less reading to get ahead in reading for future weeks.

We will often discuss the assigned readings in class. The standards by which I grade participation are attached to the bottom of this syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with these standards. Participation is an active and rewarding process which requires more than mere attendance.

Sept. 3: Introductory class; no reading. But it wouldn’t hurt to get started on the Gospel of Mark.

Sept. 5: READ THE SYLLABUS and bring any questions you have to class.
Ehrman, Chapters 1 and 2 and the section “Ancient Manuscripts of the New Testament” that follows chapter 2.

Sept. 10: Ehrman, Chapter 6; Gospel of Mark chapters 1-6

Sept. 12: Ehrman chapter 7; Gospel of Mark chapters 7-11.

Sept. 17: Ehrman chapter 7; Gospel of Mark chapters 12-16.

Sept. 19: Ehrman chapter 8; Gospel of Matthew chapters 1-7.


**Sept. 26:** First quiz, covering Ehrman chapters 1-2, 6-9; Gospel of Mark; Gospel of Matthew.


Oct. 3: Ehrman chapters 3-4

**Oct. 8:** Exegesis Assignment, Part 1, due. Submit on Sakai by noon, Oct. 8.
Ehrman Chapter 5.


Oct. 22: Ehrman chapter 12, Gospel of John chapters 1-12


Oct. 29: Ehrman chapter 13; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John

Oct. 31: Third quiz, covering Ehrman chapters 12-13; Gospel of John; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John; Gospel of Thomas

Nov. 5: Ehrman chapters 19-21, 1 Thessalonians

Nov. 7: Ehrman chapter 22, pages 324-354 (sections on 1 and 2 Corinthians); 1 Corinthians

Nov. 12: Exegesis Assignment, part 2, due. Submit on sakai by noon Nov. 12. Ehrman chapter 22, pages 354-371 (sections on Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon); Galatians. Galatians is short. Romans, assigned next, is very long. You might want to start reading Romans after you have finished Galatians.

Nov. 14: Ehrman chapter 23, Romans chapters 1-11.

Nov. 19: Romans chapters 12-16

Nov. 21: Fourth quiz, covering Ehrman chapters 19-23, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans.

Nov. 26: Ehrman chapter 24, James

Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 3: Ehrman chapter 25, 2 Thessalonians

Dec. 5: Ehrman chapter 26, 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus

Dec. 10: Fifth quiz, covering Ehrman 24-26, James, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus

Exegesis Paper due by 8 a.m. December 16, 2013 on Sakai.
Standards for Grading Student Participation in
Seminar Courses and Class Discussions

One big hint: There are suggested discussion questions at the end of most chapters in the textbook. Read them. Think about them.

A:
A student who receives an A for participation in discussion typically comes to every class with questions about the readings in mind. An A discussant engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others, and consistently elevates the level of discussion.

B:
A student who receives a B for participation in discussion typically does not always come to class with questions about the readings in mind. A B discussant waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some discussants in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.

C:
A student who receives a C for participation attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant. S/he may also fail to show respect for the contributions of others, fail to listen carefully to others, or be discourteous in other ways.

D:
A student who fails to attend regularly and prepare adequately for discussion risks the grade of D

Or even F

[These standards are adapted only slightly from those officially adopted by the Princeton University Department of History in 1998. They were authored primarily by Andrew Isenberg (thanks, Drew).]
Exegesis refers to the systematic analysis of a text—in this case a passage from the synoptic gospels. For scholarly purposes, a complete exegesis will include discussion of the form of the text, its sources, its context, and its relation to other texts.

In a devotional context, exegesis also means interpreting the text’s moral and theological meaning, based not only on contemporary texts but on later Christian teaching and theology. This is NOT what we are doing for this class. Do not make statements that you cannot support from the text alone. If you use terms later central to Christian theology—such as Son of God, salvation, redemption, atonement—you must define what they mean to you and to the text’s author. I recommend that you simply do not use such terms in the context of a scholarly exegesis.

If you are worried about this, talk to Professor Kolbaba!

First, select ONE of the following SETS of passages from the synoptic gospels. This set of passages is going to be with you for the whole semester, so try to pick the one that interests you most.


Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30; and consider why Luke doesn’t have it…. The Syro-phoenician/Canaanite woman.


Part 1, due Oct. 8, 2013, no later than noon, on Sakai.

Answer as many of the following questions about your passage as you can. 
*Some questions will not be relevant for some passages.*
*Your answers should be expressed in full sentences, written clearly and concisely, but not in an essay.*

Try to answer them from the texts alone; the idea is to see what YOU can get out of the text, not to cite the commentaries of others. Be aware that many commentaries are written for Christians and presuppose the whole body of centuries of Christian teaching; you want to talk about THIS text, not later Christian interpretation.

Is your passage in two of the synoptic gospels, in all three, or is it unique?

What are the differences between the passages?
   Be sure to note such apparently minor things as different grammar, vocabulary, or punctuation as well as apparently major things.

What is exactly alike?

Are any of the differences significant? That is,
   Do they tell us something about the different emphasis of different authors?
   Do they tell us anything about the relation of the two or three texts to one another?

What is the form of the material? That is, is it a parable, a prayer, a miracle-story, a sermon?

Is it in the same form in each gospel? If not, what is different?

What else do you notice?

Part 2: due Nov. 12, no later than noon, on Sakai.

Answer as many of the following questions about your passage as you can. *Some questions will not be relevant for some passages.* *Your answers should be expressed in full sentences, written clearly and concisely, but not in an essay.*

This time you may consult (and cite) some secondary sources, but only the following: the notes and essays in a study Bible, such as the Harper-Collins Study Bible or the New Oxford Annotated Bible. Ehrman’s textbook. The Virtual Religion Index’s “Synoptic Gospel Primer” and the sources cited there: [http://virtualreligion.net/primer/](http://virtualreligion.net/primer/)
What are the sources behind your passage and how are they used? Are the Hebrew Scriptures cited or quoted? If so, why? What point(s) is the author trying to make? Are ideas or themes from Hebrew history alluded to without direct quotation? What—if anything—would you have to know about the history of the Jews to understand the passage?

Is one of the passages the source for one or more of the others? That is, generally when a story or passage appears in all three synoptic gospels, scholars think that Mark was the source. If something appears in Matthew and Luke, but not Mark, scholars think about Q. But these simple statements can be complicated, since authors may change and rearrange parts of the text they have received. What—if anything—can you deduce about the relations between the three synoptic gospels from your passages?

What is the context of the passage? What comes before and after it? Is this the same or different in the various versions? What do the preceding and following passages add to the excerpt you are analyzing?

At what point in the ministry of Jesus is the passage presented—early, middle, late? Is this the same or different in each gospel? If not, what difference does the different context make? Does the different context change the meaning or importance of the passage?

Part 3: due no later than 8 a.m. December 17, 2013, on Sakai.

A paper, 1200-1500 words in length, on your passages.

The work you did for assignments 1 and 2 was the preparation, note-taking, and research for this paper. The paper will build on the work you have done so far, but it need not use every bit of that work or answer all of those questions.

Instead, the paper will develop an argument that you have formulated after doing all of this preliminary work. EXAMPLES—not the only possible examples—of such arguments:

- A comparison of Matthew xxx to Luke xxx reveals that, although they had the same source, each changed it to reflect his own concerns: Matthew to reaffirm the Jewish Law; Luke to show that Jesus came to save the Gentiles.
- In the parable of xxxx, Matthew and Luke both use Mark as a source, but neither gives the story the same significance as Mark does. Thus we see both that Mark is the source for the other synoptics, and that redaction criticism can reveal the concerns of individual authors.
- Although Mark’s account of xxxx is the basis of Matthew’s account, Matthew’s account is clearly later and concerned with theological issues which had not yet
been raised in Mark’s time. We can see this in both the form the story takes and its context.

See the following website for help developing strong thesis statements:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/588/1/

By the way, EVERYTHING at this website is pretty useful:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu It’s worth exploring.

Your paper will be graded by the following criteria:

An A or A- paper or exam is one that is good enough to be read aloud in class. It is clearly written and well-organized. It contains a perceptive, central argument that shows intellectual originality and creativity, is sensitive to historical context, and is supported by a well-chosen variety of specific examples. It demonstrates that the writer has conducted a close and critical reading of texts, grappled with the issues raised in the course, synthesized the readings, discussions, and lectures, and formulated a compelling, independent argument. That is, it is HARD to get an A.

A B+ or B paper or exam demonstrates many aspects of A-level work but falls short of it in either the organization and clarity of its writing or the formulation and presentation of its argument. Some papers or exams in this category are solid works containing flashes of insight into many of the issues raised in the course. Others give evidence of independent thought, but the argument is not presented clearly or convincingly.

A B- paper or exam demonstrates a command of course material and understanding of historical context but provides a less than thorough defense of the writer’s independent argument because of weaknesses in writing, argument, organization, or use of evidence.

A C+, C, or C- paper or exam offers little more than a mere summary of ideas and information covered in the course, is insensitive to historical context, does not respond to the assignment adequately, suffers from frequent factual errors, contains unclear writing, is unclearly organized, or presents some combination of these problems.

Whereas the grading standards for written work between A and C- are concerned with the presentation of argument and evidence, a paper or exam that
belongs to the D or F categories demonstrates inadequate command of the course material, often accompanied by some of the deficiencies noted for C-range papers.

[These standards are adapted, with only slight modifications, from those officially adopted by the Princeton University Department of History in 1998. They were authored primarily by Andrew Isenberg (thanks, Drew).]

Lists of terms you should know for each quiz

Quiz #1:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<td>adoptionists</td>
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<td>Antithesis</td>
<td>Gospel</td>
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<td>Apostolic Fathers</td>
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<td>Beatitudes</td>
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<td>Gentile</td>
<td>Synoptic Problem</td>
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Quiz #2:  
Alexander the Great  
Apollonius of Tyana  
apology  
canon  
comparative method  
covenant  
cult  
Dead Sea Scrolls  
Diaspora  
Essenes  
fourth philosophy  
general history  
Gentile  
Gospel  
Greco-Roman World  
Hellenization  
Herod the Great  
Josephus  
Law  
Maccabees  
martyr  
Messiah  

monotheism  
mystery cults  
pagan  
Pharisees  
Polytheism  
Sadducees  
Septuagint  
synagogue  
Temple  
thematic method  
Torah  
“we” passages
Quiz #3:
apocalyptic
Christology
contextual method
docetist
epistle
Farewell Discourse
Gnostics
house churches
“I am” sayings
Johannine community
Nag Hammadi
Passion
proto-orthodoxy
secessionists
signs source
socio-historical method
synagogue
Synoptic Gospels
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Quiz #5

bishop

charismatic communities

criterion of contextual credibility

criterion of multiple independent attestation

deacon

dissimilarity, criterion of

Gnosticism

heresy

Marcionites

presbyter

Proto-orthodoxy

Thecla