

RELIGION 840:202:01
JEWISH STUDIES 563:223:01
NEW TESTAMENT
SPRING 2010

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Office hours: Tuesdays 10-noon; **appointments available at other times—just ask!**

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 can we know about Jesus of Nazareth and his earliest followers? 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.

The following pages contain essential information related to the course. They are, so to speak, your Bible, your fundamental guide to passing the course. **If you lose or misplace them, they are available on the ecompanion site for this course. Point your browser to www.rutgersonline.net for copies of all course documents, announcements, and a variety of other useful information.**

Attendance: 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: 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.**

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.]
- Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). ISBN-10: 195322592, ISBN-13: 978-0195322590
- Karen King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, ISBN-10: 0944344585, ISBN-13: 978-0944344583

Grading:

Map quiz = 5%

3 examinations @ 25% = 75%

Short assignment 9/28= 20%

Please go through this syllabus as soon as possible and put the quiz, assignment, and examinations on your calendar!!!! While the professor will try to remind you about upcoming exams, 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.

January 20: Introductory class; no reading. But it wouldn't hurt to get started on the Gospel of Mark.

January 25: Ehrman chapters 1-2; Gospel of Mark chapters 1-6.

January 27: Ehrman chapter 3; Gospel of Mark chapters 7-11.

February 1: Ehrman chapters 4-5; Gospel of Mark chapters 12-16.

February 3: **Map quiz!!**

Ehrman chapters 6-7; Gospel of Matthew chapters 1-7.

Start working on short assignment—see February 15 below.

February 8: Ehrman chapter 8; Gospel of Matthew chapters 16, 22, 24, 26-28.

February 10: Ehrman chapter 9; Gospel of Luke chapters 1-4, 9-11, 14-16, 21-24.

February 15: **NO CLASS and NO READING ASSIGNMENT**

Turn in short assignment (instructions below).

Short assignment (due Feb. 15) instructions.

Choose one of the following sets of passages:

Mt 6:7-15, Mk 11:25, Lk 11:1-4
Mt 27:45-56, Mk 15:33-41, Lk 23:44-49
Mt 26: 17-29, Mk 14:12-25, Lk 22:7-23
Mt 5: 3-12, Lk 6:20b-23
Mt 13:53-58, Mk 6: 1-6a, Lk 4:16-30
Mt 15:21-28, Mk 7:24-30
Mt 16:13-23, Mk 8:27-33, Lk 9:18-22
Mt 13:1-23, Mk 4:1-25, Lk 8:4-18

Answer each of the following questions thoroughly but as briefly as possible. For comparisons and contrasts (questions #3 and #4) you may present your answer as a table, as a paragraph of discussion, or in any other clear manner. The important thing is to be THOROUGH—prove that you have read all of your passages carefully and compared them point-by-point.

1. Which set of passages did you choose to analyze and what is the theme of those passages or the story told in them?
2. Compare the passages. What material does each of your passages have in common with the others? In other words, where do their accounts overlap?
3. Contrast the passages. What differs from one to the other? Where do they not overlap?
4. What scene comes before and what scene comes after this passage in each gospel? Is the same for each gospel or different?
5. Ehrman chapter 6-9 outlines what he argues is the overall argument or perspective of the author of each of the synoptic gospels. For example, he argues that Mark is the gospel of the Messianic Secret, the Suffering Servant, and the misunderstood savior. In what ways do the passages you have chosen support or illustrate Ehrman's arguments? (The answer may be, "They don't.")

Your short answers are due in the dropbox at the rutgersonline site for the course no later than 5 p.m. on February 15. Late assignments will not be accepted.

February 17: First in-class examination

February 22: Ehrman chapter 10, Acts of the Apostles chapters 1-8

February 24: Acts of the Apostles chapters 9-28

March 1: Ehrman chapter 11, Gospel of John chapters 1-12

March 3: *Gospel of Mary of Magdala* pp. 1-34, Gospel of John 13-21

March 8: Ehrman chapter 12, *Gospel of Mary* pp. 93-118, 129-133, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John

March 10: Ehrman chapters 13-14

March 13-21 Spring Break

March 22: Ehrman chapters 15-17

March 24: Ehrman chapter 18

March 29: second in-class examination

March 31: Ehrman chapter 19, 20; 1 Thess.

April 5: Ehrman chapter 21

April 7: Galatians

Galatians is short. Romans, assigned for next week, is very long. You might want to start reading Romans after you have finished Galatians.

April 12: Ehrman chapter 22, Romans chapters 1-11.

April 14: Romans chapters 12-16; *Gospel of Mary* pp. 119-127

April 19: Ehrman chapter 23, James

April 21: Ehrman chapter 24, 2 Thessalonians

April 26: Ehrman chapter 25, *Gospel of Mary* pp. 83-90, 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus

April 28: Ehrman chapter 26, Hebrews

May 3: no reading

Final exam: Friday, May 11, 2010, noon to 3 p.m.: DO NOT BE LATE!!!