

RELIGION 840:202:01
JEWISH STUDIES 563:223:01
NEW TESTAMENT
SPRING 2012

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Office hours: Monday 1-3; **appointments available at other times—just ask!**

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 three exams. The exams will include multiple-choice questions and passages from the New Testament texts for students to identify and analyze.
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.]
- Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). ISBN 978-0-19-975753-4
- Karen King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala*, ISBN-10: 0944344585, ISBN-13: 978-0944344583

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:

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> 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.

Grading:

Map quiz = 5%

3 examinations @ 25% = 75%

Participation = 20%

Please go through this syllabus as soon as possible and put the quiz 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.

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.

Jan. 17: Introductory class; no reading. But it wouldn't hurt to get started on the Gospel of Mark.

Jan. 19: Ehrman, Chapters 1 and 2 and the section "Ancient Manuscripts of the New Testament" that follows chapter 2.

Jan. 24: Ehrman, Chapter 6; Gospel of Mark chapters 1-6

Jan. 26: **Map quiz!!**

Ehrman chapter 7; Gospel of Mark chapters 7-11.

Jan. 31: Ehrman chapter 7; Gospel of Mark chapters 12-16.

Feb. 2: Ehrman chapter 8; Gospel of Matthew chapters 1-7.

Feb. 7: Ehrman chapter 9; Gospel of Matthew chapters 16, 22, 24, 26-28.

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

Feb. 14: No new reading. Review synoptic gospels and synoptic problem for exam.

Feb. 16: First in-class examination

Feb. 21: Ehrman chapters 3-4

Feb. 23: Ehrman Chapter 5.

Feb. 28: Ehrman chapter 11, Acts of the Apostles chapters 1-8

March 1: Acts of the Apostles chapters 9-28

March 6: Ehrman chapter 12, Gospel of John chapters 1-12

March 8: Gospel of John 13-21, *Gospel of Mary of Magdala* pp. 1-34

March 13 and 15: Spring Break

March 20: Ehrman chapter 13; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John; *Gospel of Mary* pp. 93-118, 129-133

March 22: no new reading.

March 27: 2nd in-class examination

March 29: Ehrman chapters 19-21, 1 Thessalonians

April 3: Ehrman chapter 22, pages 324-354 (sections on 1 and 2 Corinthians); 1 Corinthians

April 5: Ehrman chapter 22, pages 354-371 (sections on Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon); 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 10: Ehrman chapter 23, Romans chapters 1-11.

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

April 17: Ehrman chapter 24, James

April 19: **Class does not meet, BUT please read:** Ehrman chapter 25, 2 Thessalonians

April 24: Ehrman chapter 26, *Gospel of Mary* pp. 83-90, 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus

April 26: Ehrman chapter 27, Hebrews

Final Exam During University Final Exam Period as posted at

finalexams.rutgers.edu

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? What criteria do we use to 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.

Standards for Grading Student Participation in
Seminar Courses and Class Discussions

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, or an obstreperous one.

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).]