

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 280, SECTION 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY
SPRING, 2006

COURSE DESCRIPTION, PURPOSE AND METHOD

This course is designed as an in-depth study of the formation of the New Testament and its related literature, and of their role in early Christianity. The course title, "Introduction to the New Testament and Early Christianity," is descriptive of the content of the course, which will concentrate on four things: 1) the Greco-Roman pagan and Jewish backgrounds within which Christianity arose and with which it eventually struggled and broke; 2) the possibility of knowing anything about an "historical" Jesus; 3) the development of the distinct religion known as "Christianity" from its sectarian origins and the varieties of early Christianity; and 4) the sacred literature, both canonical and extra-canonical, produced within this framework, and the very diverse Christians to whom it appealed.

The method employed in presenting this course will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Some acquaintance with the New Testament (as gained in RS 101) is assumed. The close and critical method of reading and interpreting biblical texts is a requirement. The approach will be primarily historical and critical: that is, it will examine the plural contexts -- religious, historical, and cultural -- in which these sacred texts were developed. An important part of the course will be the examination of the conflicts, political and religious, that were experienced by the early Christians, and how those conflicts shaped the New Testament canon and the early Christian view of the world.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- 1) Ehrman, Bart (Ehrman). *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, reprinted 2005. ("**Reader**" on the syllabus) [Please note: This text contains the same version of the New Testament canon as the NOAB or New Oxford Annotated Bible, so all of the books in the NT canon appear in both places. There ARE, however, several readings related to the New Testament and Early Christianity that are contained only in the Ehrman reader. Page numbers in the Reader have been indicated for all books. **Please use only the version—NRSV -- required for this class.** Anything else results in confusion.]
- 2) Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 3rd ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press,). ("Ehrman, **Intro**" on the syllabus)
- 3) Fredriksen, Paula. *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*. New York: Random House/Vintage Books, 2000. ("Fredriksen" on the syllabus)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) Weekly in-class quizzes: 30%. Each quiz will consist of several simple questions on the reading. **The lowest two grades may be dropped, but all quizzes must be taken.** Quiz dates are noted on syllabus
- 2) Attendance and class participation: 25%. **A significant proportion of the participation grade includes the submission of a 3X5 card with comments or questions on the reading for the day.** These questions or comments should focus on one of the following areas: *What especially surprised, shocked, or intrigued you in the reading?* It is your responsibility to keep up with your submissions, not mine to keep track of what you owe.
- 3) One three-to four-page **critical research** paper on a selected topic: 25%. Information about the paper and topics will be given out well in advance of the due date.
- 4) One final **comprehensive** examination: 20%

All quizzes and the paper due date are indicated on the syllabus. **They must be taken when scheduled; all missed work must be made up.** If you know you are going to be absent for a legitimate reason on the day a test, quiz, exam, or paper is due, you should make arrangements to do the work **in advance**. Please make all travel plans accordingly. **Do NOT purchase (or let anyone else purchase for you) any airline tickets** for flights prior to the final exam in this course, which is **Wednesday, May 3, at 8:30 a.m.**

Please note: All readings are to be prepared for the class period *for which* they are assigned.

OFFICE AND OFFICE HOURS FOR SPRING, 2006:

Clough 406 (phone and voice mail: 843-3742)
E-mail: gstreete@rhodes.edu

Office hours: MWF 10:10-10:50 a.m.; TuTh 2:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

COURSE CALENDAR

JANUARY

- Wed., Jan. 11: Introduction to the Course: Jesus and the New Testament
- Fri., Jan. 13: Jesus and the New Testament
Film: "From Jesus to Christ" Part I (in class)
Read: Fredriksen, "Introduction"; Ehrman, **Intro**, Chapter 1 & Chapter 29; Ehrman, **Reader**, pp. 1-6
- Mon., Jan. 16: NO CLASS; MLK, JR. HOLIDAY OBSERVED
- Wed., Jan. 18: Jesus and His Contexts
Read: Fredriksen, "Prelude 1" and Chapter 1
- Fri., Jan. 20: Jesus and His Contexts
Read: Fredriksen, "Prelude 2" and Chapter 2 (1st quiz)
- Mon., Jan. 23: Jesus and the Texts
Film: "From Jesus to Christ" Part II (in class)
Read: Fredriksen, Chapter 3, pp. 74-124; Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 2
- Wed., Jan. 25: Jesus and the Texts
Read: Fredriksen, Chapter 3, pp. 125-154; Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 3
- Fri., Jan. 27: Jesus and the Contexts
Read: Fredriksen, Chapter 4, pp. 155-197 top (2nd quiz)
- Mon., Jan. 30: Jesus and the Contexts
Read: Fredriksen, Chapter 4, pp. 197 bottom-234

FEBRUARY

- Wed., Feb. 1: Jesus and the Gospels: The Passion
Read: Fredriksen, Chapter 5 and “Afterword”; Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 4; Ehrman, **Reader**, Papyrus Egerton 2: The Unknown Gospel (pp. 133-134)
- Fri., Feb. 3: Jesus and the Gospels: Mark
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 5; Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to Mark (all), concentrating on Chapters 4, 8, 13 & 16 (note multiple endings) (3rd quiz)
- Mon., Feb. 6: Jesus and the Gospels: Matthew
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 6 (“The Synoptic Problem”), Chapter 7; Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to Matthew, Chapters 1-13, concentrating on Chapters 1-2; 5-7
- Wed., Feb. 8: Jesus and the Gospels: Matthew
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to Matthew, Chapters 14-28, concentrating on Chapters 22, 23, and 27
- Fri., Feb. 10: Jesus and the Gospels: Luke
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 8; Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to Luke, Chapters 1-9, concentrating on Chapters 1-2 and 4 (4th quiz)
- Mon., Feb. 13: Jesus and the Gospels: Luke
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to Luke, Chapters 10-24, concentrating on Chapters 14-15 (Parables) and Chapters 23-24 (Passion)
- Wed., Feb. 15: The First Missionaries: Luke, Part II
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 9; Ehrman, **Reader**, Acts of the Apostles (all); concentrating on Chapters 2, 7, 9, 10, 15, 17, and 26
- Fri., Feb. 17: NO CLASS; INSTRUCTOR ATTENDING CONFERENCE
- Mon., Feb. 20: Jesus and the Gospels: John
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 10; Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to John, Chapters 1-11, concentrating on Chapter 1:1-18; Chapters 2, 3, 4, 9 and 11 (5th quiz)
- Wed., Feb. 22: Jesus and the Gospels: John and the Johannine Community
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to John, Chapters 12-21, concentrating on Chapters 13-17, 20; Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 11; Ehrman, **Reader**, 1, 2, 3 (Epistles of) John, concentrating on 1 John
- Fri., Feb. 24: Jesus and the Gospels: Thomas
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 12; Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel According to Thomas, concentrating on Sayings 1-2, 13, 21, 22, 18, 64, 70, 77, 113, 114
- Mon., Feb. 27: Jesus and the Gospels: The Infancy Gospel
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapters 13-14; Ehrman, **Reader**, The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (6th quiz)

MARCH

- Wed., Mar. 1: From Jesus to Christ
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapters 15-17
- Fri., Mar. 3: Paul the Apostle
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapters 18-19; Ehrman, **Reader**, 1 Thessalonians, concentrating on 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11
- Mon., Mar. 6: Paul the Apostle and His Churches
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 20; Ehrman, **Reader**, 1 Corinthians, concentrating on Chapters 7, 11, 12, 15 (7th quiz)
- Wed., Mar. 8: Paul the Apostle and His Churches
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Galatians, concentrating on Chapters 1-2; Chapter 4:21-31
- Fri., Mar. 10: The Gospel According to Paul
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 21; Ehrman, **Reader**, Romans 1-8, concentrating on Chapters 1-2, 5, 7

SPRING BREAK

- Mon., Mar. 20: The Gospel According to Paul
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Romans 9-16, concentrating on Chapters 9-11, 13, 16 (8th quiz)
- Wed., Mar. 22: Paul and His Legacy
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 22; Ehrman, **Reader**, 3 Corinthians
- Fri., Mar. 24: Paul and His Legacy
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Acts of Paul and Thecla
- Mon., Mar. 27: Paul and His Legacy
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 23; Ehrman, **Reader**, Colossians, concentrating on Chapter 1:1-20; Chapter 3:18-4:1; Ephesians, concentrating on Chapter 5:22-6:9
- Wed., Mar. 29: Paul and His Legacy
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 24; Ehrman, **Reader**, 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy, Titus; concentrating on 1 Timothy (9th quiz)
- Fri., Mar. 31: Christians and Jews:
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 25

APRIL

- Mon., Apr. 3: Jewish Christianity:
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Gospel of the Ebionites; Gospel of the Nazoreans; Gospel of the Hebrews
- Wed., Apr. 5: Christianizing Judaism:
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Epistle to the Hebrews, concentrating on Chapters 1, 10, 11, 12 (10th quiz)
- Fri., Apr. 7: NO CLASS; INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE
- Mon., Apr. 10: Christians and Pagans:
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 26
- Wed., Apr. 12: Christians and Pagans:
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, 1 Peter; Ignatius to the Smyrneans; Ignatius to Polycarp (11th quiz)
- Fri., Apr. 14: NO CLASS; EASTER RECESS
- Mon., Apr. 17: Christians and Christians:
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 27; Ehrman, **Reader**, James; Jude
- Wed., Apr. 19: Christians and Christians:
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, 2 Peter; Polycarp to the Philippians; *Didache*, concentrating on the *Didache*
- Fri., Apr. 21: Christians and the Cosmos:
Read: Ehrman, **Intro.**, Chapter 28; Ehrman, **Reader**, Revelation 1-11, concentrating on Chapters 1-3 & 6 (12th quiz)
- Mon., Apr. 24: Christians and the Cosmos:
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Revelation 12-22, concentrating on Chapters 12, 13, 17, & 21
- Wed., Apr. 26: Christians and the Cosmos:
Read: Ehrman, **Reader**, Apocalypse of Peter
- Fri., Apr. 28: AWARDS CONVOCATION (9:00 A.M.) AND URCAS (10:20 A.M.)

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Determination of Final Grade:

The percentages of graded work are noted as above. The range of grades is as follows:

A (93-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (below 60).

Please note: Grades are not the result of a negotiation process between you and me. A grade will be re-examined *only if there is substantial evidence that it was wrongly calculated*. Scholars are not “given” grades; they earn them.

Honor Code:

All work for this course is to be pledged according to the Rhodes Honor Code. “Plagiarism” is a violation of the Honor Code and defined under Article III, Section C of the Code in your handbook. This definition also applies to *any material taken from the Internet*. As supporters of the Honor Code, we are all bound to report any and all cases of cheating or plagiarism as well as to refrain from them ourselves.

The following “Inclusive Language Policy Statement” is in effect in all Religious Studies classes:

In accordance with the editorial policy and practice of the majority of publications in our field, and consistent with the policy of official Rhodes publications, the department of Religious Studies will require students in their written work to avoid the use of the term “man” (including also “men,” “mankind,” “family of man,” “brotherhood,” and the compounds of “chairman,” “clergyman,” etc.) as a generic term, and to use inclusive terms (e.g., “human being,” “human,” “humanity,” “humankind,” “people,” “minister,” etc.) to designate both individuals and groups. [This applies to humans only and not to the deity.]

Consistent with this policy, the pronoun “he” is not regarded as generic. Sound policy is to use appropriate pronouns when the antecedent is known. The MLA Handbook is recommended as a guide to good inclusive style for both editors and authors.

Quotations are of course to represent the original exactly. Translations are to reflect as precisely as possible the translator's understanding of the original text with regard to gender.

PLEASE READ ALL OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION *BEFORE* YOU PURCHASE BOOKS FOR THIS COURSE.

Please read the following declaration, sign it, and turn it in on Friday, January 13, 2006, if you intend to remain in the class.

DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE

I have received a copy of the syllabus and requirements for the course, Introduction to the New Testament and Early Christianity, and they have been fully explained to me. I understand that by continuing in this course and section I have given my consent to abide by the course structure, requirements and guidelines.

Signature:

January 13, 2006

