

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

RELS 3396H, 37211: Spring 2008

MW 1:00-2:30, H32

Instructor: Steven DiMattei
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Texts: Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*
C.K. Barrett, ed., *The New Testament Background: Writings from Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire That Illuminate Christian Origins*
L. Michael White, *From Jesus to Christianity: How Four Centuries of Visionaries & Storytellers Created the New Testament and Christian Faith*
Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*
Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*
Marcus Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith*
New Testament (preferably NKJV, edition w/Textual Notes)

Course Description: This course introduces students to the literature and historical context of the New Testament. In addition to reading all 27 books of the New Testament in chronological order (roughly from 50 to 130 AD), thus becoming familiar with the ever evolving face of Christianity and its split from Judaism, we will also study the social, political, and religious climate of First-century Palestinian Judaism within the larger context of the Roman Empire. Emphasis will be placed on understanding these texts in their historical setting. Students will additionally become familiar with the literature of Second Temple Judaism, through reading excerpts from the Prophets, Daniel, the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1 Enoch, and the book of Maccabees. Appropriate selections from Greco-Roman literature will also supplement our reading of the New Testament. Students will additionally be introduced to the various scholarly methods and criteria used in studying the Gospels. No prerequisite is required.

Course Objectives: This course is designed as an introduction to the study of both the literature and historical context of the New Testament writings. Students will therefore be introduced to the Jewish, Hellenistic, and emerging Christian backgrounds to the New Testament, including both the political and religious context in which the writings of the New Testament were composed. As such, students will:

- gain a familiarity with Jewish literature of the Second Temple period
- acquire knowledge of the history of Palestinian Judaism under Hellenistic and Roman rule
- understand the intricacies and dynamics of emerging Christianity in the social and political context of the Roman Empire
- be able to discuss the various pieces of literature that make up the New Testament and the various communities represented through such texts
- be introduced to textual criticism and how the New Testament texts were copied and transmitted
- become familiar with various scholarly methods and criteria used in studying the Gospels

Grading: Each of the following contributes to 25% of your total grade: 1) Daily preparation and participation; 2) Writing Assignment #1 (4-5 pp.); 3) Writing Assignment #2 (4-5 pp.); Final Exam

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT
Daily Syllabus

—Introduction—

Wk. 1 M Jan. 14 Introduction to Course Goals and Structure, Textbooks and Contexts
Introduction to the New Testament: Texts, Transmission, and Translation
Introduction to Judaism, its Literature and History: The Destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC
and the Origins of Messianic Prophecy (selected readings from the Prophets)

—A Brief History of Palestinian Judaism under Hellenistic and Roman Rule—
Social, Religious, and Political Contexts

W Jan. 16 Palestine under Hellenistic Rule, the Maccabean Revolt and Hasmonean Rule (331–63 BC):
Persecution, Martyrdom, and the Birth of the Apocalyptic
Excursus: the Qumran Community and their Literature: Waiting for the Messiah
_____ Readings: 1 Maccabees 1; 2 Maccabees 6:1-11, 7; Daniel 7-12; Dead Sea Scrolls
(excerpts); 1 Enoch (excerpts); Barrett, ch. 7 (pp. 135-143), ch. 9 (pp.
218-251)

Wk. 2 M Jan. 21 — No Class: Martin Luther King Holiday —

W Jan. 23 Roman and Herodian Rule: From Pompey’s Seizing of Jerusalem in 63 BC to the end of
Herod the Great’s, the ‘King of the Jews,’ kingdom in 4 BC
Excursus: Augustus, Savior of the World, and the *Pax Romana*
_____ Readings: White, ch. 1- 2; Barrett, ch. 1 (pp. 1-9), ch. 7 (pp. 148-155); Suetonius
Lives of the Caesars: Augustus, 94

Wk. 3 M Jan. 28 Roman Rule under Herod Antipas (4 BC–39 AD) in Galilee & Pontius Pilate (26–36 AD)
in Judea till Titus’ Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD
Excursus: A Jew named Joshua: Tried an Insurrectionist, Proclaimed a Messiah
_____ Readings: White, ch. 3-6; Horsley, ch. 1-2; Barrett, ch. 1 (pp. 10-13), ch. 7 (pp.
155-159); Psalm of Solomon 17

—Paul: A Jew amongst the Greeks—

W Jan. 30 Introduction to Paul: The Man and his Mission; the Apocalyptic Paul and Jesus’ *Parousia*
Excursus: Letter Writing in the Hellenistic World
_____ Readings: 1 Thessalonians; Ehrman, ch. 18 & 19; White, ch. 7, ch. 8 (pp. 169-176)

Wk. 4 M Feb. 4 Paul and the Crisis in Corinth
_____ Readings: 1 Corinthians; Ehrman, ch. 20 (pp. 316-328); White, ch. 8 (pp. 176-185)

W Feb. 6 Paul: Reinterpreter of Israel’s Scripture
_____ Readings: Philippians, Galatians; Ehrman, ch. 20 (pp. 331-344); White, ch. 8 (pp.
185-201)

Wk. 5 M Feb. 11 Paul: Corinth revisited
Readings: Philomen; 2 Corinthians; Ehrman, ch. 20 (pp. 328-331, 344-347); White, ch. 8 (pp. 201-209)

W Feb. 13 Paul's Theology of the Cross: Salvation through Faith in Jesus Christ
Readings: Romans; Ehrman, ch. 21; White, ch. 8 (pp. 209-214)

—An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism: copies of copies of copies...—

Wk. 6 M Feb. 18 Manuscripts, Changing Scriptures, and the Quest for Originals
Readings: Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, ch. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, Conclusion

—The Gospel(s) of Jesus Christ—

W Feb. 20 In the Wake of 70 AD: The Gospel according to Mark and the Apocalyptic Son of Man

Wk. 7 M Feb. 25 In the Wake of 70 AD: The Gospel according to Mark and the Apocalyptic Son of Man
Readings: Barrett, ch. 1 (pp. 13-19), ch. 7 (pp. 162-170); White, ch. 9; Mark 1:1-8:30;
Paper #1 DUE

W Feb. 27 The Gospel according to Mark continued
Readings: Mark 8:31-16:8; Ehrman, ch. 5 (other apocalyptic lit ??)

Wk. 8 M March 3 Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels
The Gospel according to Matthew: Jesus the Messianic Teacher of Righteousness
Readings: Ehrman, *NT*, ch. 6; Matthew 1:1-9:38

W March 5 The Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Mark: Some Comparisons
Readings: Matthew 10:1-20:34; White, ch. 10 (pp. 239-247)

Wk. 9 M March 10 The Gospel according to Matthew continued
Readings: Matthew 21:1-28:20; Ehrman, ch. 7

W March 12 The Gospel according to Luke: Jesus, Savior and Ethical Role Model
Readings: Luke 1:1-24:53 (all of it); White, ch. 10 (pp. 247-258); Ehrman, ch. 8

—Spring Break—

Wk. 10 M March 24 The Gospel according to John: Jesus, the Divine Logos from Heaven
Readings: John (all of it); Ehrman, ch. 10

—The Jesus(es) of the Gospels and the Historical Jesus: An Introduction to the Field of Study—

W March 26 Jesus, the Apocagblyptic Prophet
Readings: Ehrman, ch. 13, ch. 16

Wk. 11 M March 31 Jesus as Social Revolutionist

Readings: Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*

W April 2 Borg's Jesus: Compassionate Man of the Spirit/Sage
Readings: Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*

—**Christianity in the Roman World: Origins, Communities, and Crises**—

Wk. 12 M April 7 The Story of Christian Origins, according to Luke
Excursus: Ancient Historians on Writing History and Speeches
Readings: Acts; Ehrman, ch. 9; **Paper #2 DUE**

W April 9 Jesus' Legacy: The Jerusalem church and James, or the Gentile church and Paul, or Peter?
Readings: Acts; 1 Peter; James; Galatians 2:11-21; Ehrman, ch. 22, ch. 26 (pp. 426-436), ch. 27 (pp. 445-447); White, ch. 11 (pp. 272-279)

Wk. 13 M April 14 Deutero-Pauline Letters and the Expansion of Gentile Christianity
Readings: Colossians; Ephesians; 2 Thessalonians; White, ch. 11 (pp. 259-271); Ehrman, ch. 23 (pp. 372-385)

W April 16 The *Parousia* of Jesus and its Delay: A Reinterpretation in the Midst of Persecution
Readings: The Book of Revelation; 4 Ezra (excerpts); Barrett, ch. 1 (pp. 19-22); White, ch. 11 (pp. 279-290); Ehrman, ch. 28 (pp. 461-474)

Wk. 14 M April 21 Early Christian Self-Definition
Readings: 1, 2 & 3 John; Hebrews; Ehrman, ch. 25 (pp. 408-418); White, ch. 12, ch. 16 (pp. 414-419)

W April 23 Pastoral Letters: Defining Right Doctrine
Readings: Jude; 2 Peter; 1 & 2 Timothy; Titus; White, ch. 16 (pp. 419-433); Ehrman, ch. 23 (pp. 385-394), ch. 27 (pp. 455-459)

—**Beyond the New Testament: Non-canonical Gospels, Early Christian Letters, and Apologists**—

Wk. 15 M April 28 An Introduction to the "Gnostic" Gospels and Their Jesuses
Readings: The Gospel according to Thomas