

The New Testament (REL 102.01)
Duke University, Summer 2007 Term 2
M, T, W, Th, F - 9:30 -10:45 A.M.
Gray 319
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I. Course Description

Bulletin Course Description: Examination of the major books of the New Testament, covering their contents, ethical implications, historical and social setting, authorship, date, and theology. Religion 102, The New Testament, falls within the Civilization (CZ) area of knowledge and within the focused areas of Cross-Cultural Inquiry (CCI) and Ethical Inquiry (EI).

We will begin our study by placing the writings of the New Testament within their historical contexts (Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman). After an overview of the world(s) in which our documents were written, we will study the major interpretative methods used in the academic study of the New Testament, including such approaches as historical-critical, literary, social-scientific, etc. Next, we will turn our focus to the individual books of the New Testament, exploring similarities and differences in terms of genre, setting, date, authorship, theological content, and ethical implications. Our investigation will bring to light issues of diversity and continuity within the various early Christian communities. We will conclude our course by discussing the process by which the books of the New Testament came to assume canonical status.

An introductory course in the New Testament, just like any other introductory course in a university setting, is usually composed of students from a wide variety of backgrounds. Although many students may read the New Testament from the perspective of personal faith, this course will study these books from an academic perspective. Therefore, it is important that all students understand from the outset that this course is not about determining “theological truth” or about the ways in which the New Testament documents support the various doctrines of contemporary Christianity. Rather, the focus of this course is to explore the many ways that the books of the New Testament reveal the life and beliefs of the earliest Christian communities. We seek to understand how these Christians constructed their identity in relationship to the religion from which Christianity originated, Second Temple Judaism, and in relationship to the Greco-Roman world in which these communities existed. Although all students will be expected to understand and be able to discuss the academic issues presented in the required readings and lectures, no student will be required to adopt any particular point of view on a personal level. Please note, however, that many students who do view these documents as an important part of their faith find that the historical information gained in an introductory course can be incorporated into their devotional reading of the New Testament.

II. Learning Objectives to be accomplished by the end of the course:

- You will be able to discuss the social, political, and religious world(s) in which the texts of the New Testament were written and in which the early Christians lived and practiced their faith.
- You will be able to compare and to evaluate critically the various methodological approaches used in the academic study of the New Testament.

- You will be able to articulate the major theological issues addressed in the various books of the New Testament in light of the particular social and community setting of each text.
- You will be able to identify theological and ethical similarities and differences between New Testament books and to relate those similarities and differences to issues of diversity and continuity within the beliefs of various early Christian communities.
- You will understand the issues involved in scholarly discussions of the Synoptic Problem and be able to argue for the cogency of a particular theory regarding this problem.
- You will be able to discuss Paul’s mission to the Gentiles and the various theological and ethical issues reflected in his letters.
- You will be able to explain the criteria for and the process by which these documents became part of the canonized New Testament.
- You will be able to assess the degree to which various chronological and cultural “gaps” may or may not hinder contemporary interpretations of the New Testament.

III. Course Texts

The following texts are required for this course:

- 1) Attridge, Harold W., ed. *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (rev.ed., San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006).
- 2) Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (3d ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 3) Sanders, E.P. and Margaret Davies. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989).

IV. Course Requirements and Grading

40% **Attendance, Position Papers, Discussion Board Postings and Class Presentation** – Your attendance at all classes is expected, and informed participation is a vital component of this class. The attendance portion of your grade (10% of your final course grade) includes not only being physically present during our class sessions, but also it includes the completion of the required readings for the day in order that you can actively participate in our discussions in an *informed* manner. Please note that *informed* participation means that your comments in our class discussions should reflect your understanding of the required readings rather than theological opinions that have their basis in a personal religious setting. Absences and lack of preparation will adversely affect this portion of your grade. All required readings that are not from one of our required texts will be posted on the Blackboard website for our class under Course Documents. Please note: When the syllabus calls for the reading of a particular New Testament book, you will greatly benefit from reading the Introduction for that book in the *HarperCollins Study Bible*.

You will be asked to write three position papers during our term. The average of your three position papers will constitute 10% of your final course grade. These papers should be typed and double-spaced using 12-pt font (Times New Roman or similar acceptable fonts). Your paper should be 1-2 pages in length (no longer!) and defend a particular position on a topic that we have discussed in class. The topics for the position

papers will be posted on Blackboard under Assignments. The due dates for the Position Papers are: Monday, July 9th; Monday, July 16th; and Monday, July 30th. All position papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Failure to turn in Position Papers at the assigned time will result in a grade of zero for that assignment.

You will be expected to post a response to three questions on the Blackboard Discussion Board. The first Discussion Board post will be due on Thursday, July 12th by 9:00 PM. The second will be due on Thursday, July 26th by 9:00 PM, and the third will be due on Thursday, Aug 2nd by 9:00 PM. Your posts will be graded on the basis of timely completion and whether or not the post demonstrates critical reflection on the question in light of our readings. The average of the discussion post grades will constitute 10% of your final course grade.

Our last two class sessions, Tuesday, Aug. 7th and Wednesday, Aug. 8th, will be reserved for individual presentations. The particular topic of your presentation needs to be chosen in consultation with the instructor, and each presentation should last about 20 minutes. After each presentation, the other students are expected to ask the presenter questions regarding the presentation. Your presentation grade will constitute 10% of your final course grade.

30% **Mid-term Exam** – The exam will take the entire class period and will give you the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of all the material covered up to the date of the exam. The exam will be on Friday, July 20th and will consist of multiple choice, short answer, identification, and short essay questions.

30% **Final Exam** – The final will be cumulative; however, it will concentrate most heavily on the material covered from the Mid-term through our final class session. The date and time of the exam is scheduled by the University and cannot be altered. Our Final Exam will be on Saturday, August 11th from 9:00 AM – Noon.

V. **Procedures**

- A. **Contacting the Professor/Appointments**: I will be available to talk with you immediately following our class sessions. Otherwise, the best way to contact me is via email (kbd2@duke.edu). I will check email before each class and at the end of the workday. I will be happy to arrange an appointment time to meet with you if you have any concerns that cannot be conveniently addressed after our class; however, since I do not have scheduled office hours, we need to arrange an appointment in advance.
- B. **Access to Blackboard and Email**: The Summer Session Office has created a Duke Email account for all summer visitors. If you are a summer visitor and you do not already know your NetID and password, you may obtain this information by contacting either Kim Price (kprice@duke.edu; 684-5375) or John Witek (jw115@duke.edu; 684-2621) in the Summer Session Office. You may also obtain this information from the OIT HelpDesk by presenting a photo ID. All students will need immediate access to Blackboard with their NetID and password in order to keep up with class announcements, assignments, and posted readings, etc.
- C. **Required Readings and Optional Readings**: Required readings are listed in **boldfaced** print on the Schedule of Classes and Assignments below. Any reading that is not

- boldfaced is optional, but it may be of interest to some of you if you choose a related topic for your class presentation or discuss a related topic in a position paper. Neither the Mid-Term Exam nor the Final Exam will quiz you on material that is mentioned solely in optional readings.
- D. Absences and Missed/Late Work: As delineated in IV above, attendance at all class sessions is expected. Therefore, absences will adversely affect your grade. However, if you have a short-term illness that prevents you from coming to class on a day that an assignment is due (e.g., Mid-Term Exam, Position Paper, or participation in the Class Debate), Duke University requires that you adhere to the official policies of the University. You will find the policies and proper notification procedures at <http://www.aas.duke.edu/trinity/t-reqs/>.
 - E. Classroom Discussions and Blackboard Postings: I anticipate that many different opinions will be voiced in our discussions and postings. Since the subject matter of this course has the potential to evoke very strong emotions and will frequently touch on matters of extreme importance to some, I require all students to be respectful of others' opinions. We all have the potential of learning from others, and we should all welcome and graciously respond to a diversity of opinions. The only restriction that I will place on discussions and postings is the requirement that all comments must be based on our primary or secondary readings.
 - F. Disabilities: If you anticipate the need to request academic assistance due to learning disabilities, please contact the Disabilities Services' Office at 668-1267 as soon as possible. Any disability must be officially documented through this office prior to requesting any change in class operating procedures.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic/Paper Due</i>	<i>Assigned Reading</i> <i>(All required readings are boldfaced and should be completed prior to the class session for which they are scheduled. Optional readings are not boldfaced.)</i>
Week 1 (July 2nd – 6th)		
Mon.	Syllabus; Course Introduction	
Tues.	The New Testament in Context: Part 1 First-Century Palestinian Judaism	Ehrman: xxxi-xxxv & Chap 15
Wed.	The New Testament in Context: Part 2 The Greco-Roman World Judaism within the Greco-Roman World	Ehrman: Chap 2
Thurs.	Academic Methods in the Study of the NT	Blackboard Reading #1
Fri.	The Synoptic Gospels; Questions of Genre	Sanders: Chap 1 & 2

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assigned Reading</i>
Week 2 (July 9th – 13th)		
Mon.	Position Paper #1 is due The Gospel According to Mark	Ehrman: Chap 5 Read Mark 1-8
Tues.	The Synoptic Problem Theories Regarding the Existence of Q Solutions in lieu of Q	Read Mark 9-16 Ehrman: Chap 6 Sanders: Chap 3-7
Wed.	The Gospel According to Matthew	Ehrman: Chap 7 Read Matthew
Thurs.	The Gospel According to Luke Post Response to Discussion Question by 9:00 PM	Ehrman: Chap 8 Read Luke
Fri.	Theological Perspectives in the Resurrection Accounts	Mark 16:1-8, Matt 28: 1-20, and Luke 24:1-56
Week 3 (July 16th – 20th)		
Mon.	Position Paper #2 is due Gospel of John	Read John Ehrman: Chap 10
Tues.	John and the Synoptic Gospels	Ehrman: Chap 11
Wed.	Other Gospels The Historical Jesus	Ehrman: Chap 12 & 13
Thurs.	Discussion and Review	
Fri.	Mid-term Exam	
Week 4 (July 23rd – 27th)		
Mon.	Pre-Pauline Christianity Introduction to Paul	Ehrman: Chap 9 Read Acts
Tues.	Paul's Mission to the Gentiles	Ehrman: Chap 19 Read 1 Thess

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assigned Reading</i>
Wed.	Problems at Corinth	Ehrman: p. 316-331 Read 1 Cor; 2 Cor 1-7
Thurs.	Galatians: Paul and the Jewish Law Post Response to Discussion Question by 9:00 PM	Ehrman: p. 331- 347 Read Galatians
Fri.	Romans	Ehrman: Chap 21 Read Romans
Week 5 (July 30th – Aug. 3rd)		
Mon.	Position Paper #3 is due Deutero-Paulines and Pastorals	Ehrman: Chap 23 Read Colossians, Ephesians, & 1 Tim
Tues.	Hebrews Christianity and Anti-Judaism	Ehrman: Chap 25 Read Hebrews
Wed.	1 Peter James Persecution	Ehrman: Chap 26 & 27 Read James & 1 Peter
Thurs.	Revelation Post Response to Discussion Question by 9:00 PM	Ehrman: Chap 28 Read Revelation
Fri.	Manuscripts of the New Testament http://www.earlham.edu/~seidti/iam/interp_mss.html	Ehrman: Chap 29
Week 6 (Aug. 6th – 11th)		
Mon.	Canonization: Process & Criteria	Ehrman: Chap 24
Tues.	Class Presentations	
Wed.	Class Presentations	
Thurs.	No Class: Term 2 Reading Period	
Sat.	Final Exam: 9 AM – Noon	