



INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

SPRING 2011

RLST-2220-01

M/T/W 9 AM

Classroom: CC 21

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Ofc. Hours: MW: 11, TW:

10 & by appt.

I. Course Description

In this course we will be introduced to the academic study of the New Testament, the primary scriptures of Christianity. We will explore the history, cultural context, and ideas of biblical texts. We will also look at relevant literature outside of the New Testament, including several non-canonical texts (that is, writings that circulated during the earliest years of Christianity but were not included in the Bible).

1. Become biblically literate by learning the general content, historical framework, and literary forms of New Testament.
2. Explore various interpretive skills for study of ancient literature.
3. Reflect on the NT and its relation to later Christianities.
4. Create, satisfy, and perpetuate curiosity for biblical learning.

II. Course Policies

THE MILLSAPS HONOR CODE: As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implications and of my responsibility to the Code. In the interests of expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others.

Our community is based on common trust and respect, and our common success depends on each member of the community, students, faculty, and staff. As we all strive to act in accord with our communal ideals we liberate ourselves to relational integrity and confidence. As teacher, I pledge to respect your work and to teach with honesty and

integrity, providing you with accurate information to the best of my ability. From you I need a statement on all assignments and exams informing me that you have followed the honor code.

1. Academic dishonesty is seriously frowned upon and will result in a free trip to visit the Millsaps Honor Council.

2. Students and teacher are expected to attend class in a prepared manner; this is crucial for those desiring to make the most of their personal investments. Experience has shown that there is a direct relationship between attendance and learning and final grade. Absences of 4 or more will merit a final grade of no higher than a C. Perfect attendance is seriously smiled upon :-) and will result in 10 points being added to one's final exam. Persons are always responsible for material missed during absence.

3. Exams, quizzes, and assignments must be submitted at the scheduled time, except in cases of personal emergency. In such cases, appropriate documentation will be required. There will be no make-ups, except by special permission, in which case it must be completed with 1 week. Late papers will be discounted by one grading increment (e.g. B+ to B) per day.

4. Written assignments must be neatly typed and well organized and conform to appropriate academic standards.

5. Students with special needs because of a learning disability or other kind of disability are encouraged to discuss your needs for this class with me at your earliest convenience.

6. At times the complexities and exigencies of life come to bear even on carefully designed course policies and otherwise idyllic classrooms. Whenever you have a question or difficulty, you are welcome to talk to me. I have never bitten anyone. (I am not sure about Jessica) If you have any questions about this course, assignments, policies, grading etc. or about your ability to complete the tasks, please come talk to me. I can help you only if I am informed. For example, if you do not understand an assignment or question, ask as soon as possible; do not wait until it is due to tell me you didn't understand.

III. Readings

1. *The Contemporary Parallel New Testament*, ed. John Kohlenberger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

2. Bart Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford, 2009.

3. Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*. New York: Vintage, 1999.

ALWAYS BRING New Testament and Ehrman TO CLASS

IV. Outline and Assignments (Subject to revision)

Assignments are listed below in the boxes. EACH PAPER SHOULD INCLUDE AT THE TOP, NAME and DATE, and MUST REPEAT THE ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS. NO TITLE PAGES OR COVER SHEETS.

Ancient Writing Reflections Notebook: For each ancient text that you read, write about 1/2 page of summary, reaction, reflection, questions, observations, etc.

Wednesday Discussion Openers: (20 minutes) will be presented by students (in groups of 2) for primary readings What did you find most interesting? What are you most curious about? What was most enlightening? Infuriating? etc.

(and dramas and movies and fun!)

Week 1 10 Jan W: Introduction

Week 2 417 Jan M: Ehrman Introduction stuff, ch.1-3
W:

Assignment 1: What really is the NT? Manuscripts of Mark display 3 different endings, compare them. Describe the differences and explain how each one affects the tone or finale of Mark? WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD TRANSLATORS GIVE READERS? Total 2-3 pages

Week 3 24 Jan M: Mark Matt 1-2, 5-7
W: Ehrman, ch.4-6

Week 4 31 Jan M: Luke 1-10, 22-24; Acts 1-18
W: Ehrman, ch.7-8, 11

Assignment 2: working in groups of 3-4, make a synopticon using **one** of the following pericopes. CAREFULLY READ AND ANALYZE. In 3-4 pages tell us: What are the similarities and major differences? What are possible explanations for these? How would you explain the differences? Choices:
Mark 4.1-2/Mt13.1-17/Lk8.4-10 (parables)
Mark 12.28-34/Mt22.34-40/Lk 10.25-37 (lawyer)
Mark 1.16-20/Mt 4.18-22/Lk5.1-11/Jn 1.35-51 (calling)
Mark 10.2-12/Mt19.3-12/Lk16.18/ (divorce)
Mark 14.66-72/Mt26.69-75/Lk22.56-62/Jn.18.25-27 (denial)

Week 5 7 Feb M & T No Class
W: John 1-2, 13-21; Ehrman, ch.9-10

Assignment 3: Jesus Part 1: So far in the course, we have been discussing the textual Jesus as he is presented to us in each of the Gospels. After reading Chapter 9-10, summarize and critique Ehrman's methods for uncovering the one historical Jesus (OHJ). How do you perceive the relationship (if any) between the textual Jesus(es) (TJ) portrayed in Gospel texts and the OHJ? Reflect on your own thinking: do you personally relate more to the TJ(es) or to what you believe you know of the OHJ?

Week 6 14 Feb M: Mishna; Gospel of Thomas and other Christian Gospels

W: **EXAM**

Week 7 21 Feb M: 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Philemon

W: Ehrman, ch.12-13

Week 8 28 Feb M: Romans 1-13, 2 Thessalonians

W: Ehrman, ch.14-15

Assignment 4: Many readers have noted that Pauline literature makes little mention of the activities or teachings of Jesus (the Gospels' Jesus). Browse 4 Pauline letters looking for references to specific actions of Jesus and list them. In an essay (2-3 pages), reflect on what you found and explain it.

Week 9 7 Mar M: Colossians, Ephesians

W: Ehrman, ch.16-17

-----SPRING BREAK-----

Week 10 21 Mar M: 1-2 Timothy, Titus

W: Ehrman, ch.18

Week 11 28 Mar M: Hebrews, 1 Peter

W: Ehrman, ch. 19

Week 12 4 Ap M: James, Jude, 2 Peter, Revelation

W: Ehrman, ch.20-21

Assignment 5: The Revelation to John was one of the most controversial additions to the NT canon. Working in groups of 7-10, write a report on what you think it adds to the character of the NT? If your group was asked in the 3rd century, would each member have "voted," for or against its inclusion? Write a thorough report

Week 13 11 Ap M: Shepherd, Didache, 1 Clement

W: Fredriksen, 1-154

Week 14 18 Ap M: Fredriksen, 155-270

W: : Final Class, **attendance required**

Assignment 6: Jesus, Part 2: In 2 pages summarize the argument of Fredriksen. In 2 pages evaluate her argument based on your own study and learning in this class.

Thursday 28 Ap, 9:00 **FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM**

