

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 202.01
NEW TESTAMENT: HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
SPRING 2019

Dr. John R. Huddlestun
Glebe 4B, Room 203 (use sidewalk entrance)
Office hours: TTh 12:15-1:15 and Th 3:00-4:00 (or by appointment)
Office phone: 953-4996 (with voice mail)
E-mail: Huddlestunj@cofc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the student to that group of documents known collectively in Christian tradition as the New Testament. In addition to generous readings from the biblical text, we will examine selected extra-biblical documents (Jewish and Greco-Roman) in order to situate the early Christian canonical writings in their pristine socio-historical, religious, and political contexts. Particular attention will be devoted to: (1) the position of early “Christianity” as one among a number of Jewish sects in the diverse religious world of first-century Palestine, and that movement’s gradual emergence from this ancient Jewish matrix in forging its own identity in light of the life and teachings of Jesus and his earliest followers; and (2) the contentious debate over the requirements for gentile (non-Jewish) believers’ entry into and participation in the fledgling Jewish-Christian community, as reflected especially in the writings of Paul, the self-proclaimed apostle to the gentiles. In written exams and homework assignments, students will acquire the ability (1) to identify and analyze biblical and other ancient texts in their socio-historical, religious, and political contexts; (2) to distinguish between a variety of literary genres and their relevance for interpretation; and (3) to articulate the multiple ways a particular text is interpreted by different, at times competing, religious communities.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- 1) Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 6th edition (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

- 2) A Bible. The translation used for this class is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), available in the following study edition: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible NRSV with the Apocrypha*, edited by Michael D. Coogan et al. (Oxford University Press). A 5th edition appeared in 2018, with revised notes and essays, although the translation itself (from 1989) is unchanged. Earlier or other editions of the NRSV translation are also acceptable, as are a few other translations (NABRE, REB, NIV), although biblical passages on the exams follow the NRSV translation. While these and other translations are available online at <https://www.biblegateway.com/>, I prefer you buy (or borrow, but not steal) a Bible, given we will be reading the biblical text closely in class. For the New Testament gospels in parallel format (including the Gospel of Thomas), see <http://sites.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/>. An excellent reference for reading the New Testament in its ancient Jewish context is *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Bible Version Translation*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Mark Zvi Brettler, 2d edition (Oxford University Press, 2017).

- 3) A collection of readings, available on OAKS (accessed via the MyCharleston site).

GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

In dealing with the New Testament and early Christian movement, the course addresses the following two GenEd learning outcomes: (1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, or valued in

various expressions of human culture; and (2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret that material in writing assignments. These outcomes will be assessed by means of a *Take-home Essay* (see below).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Three examinations (totaling 70%).

These consist of fill-in-the-blank, passage identification (identify a passage and discuss its significance), and one essay. A study guide will be distributed prior to each exam. It is imperative that you notify me in advance if you are unable to attend class on the day of an exam (call me at my office and leave a voice mail if I do not pick up). Make-up exams may differ in coverage from those taken in class and will be given **only to those who provide a valid excuse** from the office of Undergraduate Studies for their absence.

Weekly quizzes/homework assignments (12%) and class participation (8%).

As part of your weekly work, I will give either an in-class quiz over the readings or a written homework assignment. The quizzes (announced beforehand) are designed to motivate you to keep up with the readings and to facilitate class discussion. You will be allowed to miss two of these (please do not send your assignments via e-mail). Any number beyond this will count as a zero, regardless of why you missed the quiz or did not turn in the assignment. In-class quizzes cannot be made up. Exceptions to these policies are possible only in cases of severe illness or other grave circumstances. In either case, suitable documentation is required. I may give unannounced quizzes if you are not keeping up with the assigned material; these will also count in my determination of your grade. If you miss class, it is *your responsibility* to obtain notes on material covered that day (so make friends in class!). Please do not ask me via email to update you on details of what happened in class. You are permitted a total of **three** absences, for whatever reason, over the course of the term (documentation is not required for these three; shit happens). Excessive absences (4 or more) will affect your grade for the course; 8 or more absences results in automatic withdrawal and failure.

It is expected that each student will come to class prepared, having done the readings and assignments, and ready to participate in class. **Please bring your Bible and/or other relevant readings to class!** Although this is primarily a lecture class, I will routinely ask you questions about the readings or an assignment and expect you, in turn, to ask questions informed by the readings and/or offer your own *informed* ideas in class. If you are consistently unresponsive, particularly if you are rarely in class or it is clear you've not done the readings, this will be noted by me in my little lavender book of languid, lethargic, and generally listless students.

GenEd Take-home Essay (10%). You will be presented with an issue of debate among scholars regarding the New Testament and its interpretation and asked to stake out your own position with supporting arguments.

Electronics (not) in the Classroom.

Use of laptops or other electronic equipment is not permitted in the classroom. You are required to print out and have in hand the relevant assigned reading(s) from Oaks for each class. I will announce beforehand (in class or via email) what readings will be discussed in class (we will focus on some more than others). *Smart phone use is strictly prohibited.* All phones should be set on silent (not vibrate) or turned off and *not visible on your desk or in your book bag* (where the cunning cyber Satan can tempt you). If I see you continually staring down at your lap and smiling, I will assume you have a phone (if not, I don't want to know).

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

If you have a documented disability and have been approved to receive accommodations (e.g., use of a laptop in class or extended exam time) through the Center for Disability Services/SNAP (Students Needing Access Parity), please come and discuss this with me as soon as possible during my office hours or by appointment (bring relevant documentation). Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me *at least one week* before that accommodation is needed.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES: The Center for Student Learning (CSL)

The CSL, located on the first floor of the library, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching (PAC), and Supplemental Instruction (SI). All services are described on the CSL website (<http://csl.cofc.edu>) or call 843-953-5635 for information.

GRADING SCALE

Letter grades are determined in accordance with the following scale:

A = 100-94	C = 75-73
A- = 93-90	C- = 72-70
B+ = 89-86	D+ = 69-66
B = 85-83	D = 65-62
B- = 82-80	D- = 61-59
C+ = 79-76	F = 58-

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

This schedule is subject to revision. Please bring all relevant materials to class!

I. Setting the Stage: History, Religion, and Politics in the Second Temple Period (515

B.C.E. to 70 C.E.) -- January 8-24 _____

- A. Brief Survey of Israel's History from Abraham to Bar Kokhba
Reading: handouts; time lines in Oaks #1 and sources for Roman Period in Oaks #2, with historical surveys (including quotations from primary sources) in Oaks #12 and #13

- B. The Religious World of the Second Temple Period: Greco-Roman "Religion" and the Diversity of Jewish Sects
Reading: Ehrman chaps. 3 and 4
Cartlidge/Dungan, "Savior Gods in the Mediterranean World" (Oaks #3)
Talbert, "Miraculous Conceptions and Births in Mediterranean Antiquity" (Oaks #4)
Cohen, "Judaism at the Time of Jesus" and Saldarini, "Pluralism of Practice and Belief in First Century Judaism" (Oaks #5)
Murphy, "Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Sanhedrin" (Oaks #6)
Optional: Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History" (Oaks #7)
Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite was Neither a 'Jew' nor a 'Christian': On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature" (Oaks #8)

- C. The Religious World, continued: The Qumran Community and the Dead Sea Scrolls
Reading: Vermes, "The Community Rule" (#9); "Commentary on Habakkuk" and "Commentaries on Isaiah" (Oaks #9a); Collins, "Son of God" (Oaks #9b)

Flint, "Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls" (Oaks #10)

D. Messiahs, Messianic Expectation, and "Messianic" Revolts

Reading: Ehrman, pp. 258-264

Nickelsburg and Stone, "The Agents of Divine Deliverance" (Oaks #11)

Murphy, "Roman Rule" (#12)

Horsley and Hanson, "Royal Pretenders and Messianic Movements" (Oaks #13)

Mason, "Who's Who in the New Testament World" (Oaks #14)

E. The Greek New Testament: Contents and Canonization

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 1-2; Ehrman in Oaks 15a (some canonical lists)

*****EXAM 1 - January 29*****

II. The Gospels: A Composite Portrait of Jesus of Nazareth -- Jan. 31--Feb. 14

A. Introduction to the Study of the Gospels: The Gospel of Mark and The Synoptic Problem

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 5-8 and "Excursus" on pp. 192-194; selection of non-canonical gospels in Oaks #15

Bible: Gospel of Mark (all)

FILM: "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians" -- Feb. 5

B. The Gospel of John

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 11

Bible: Gospel of John, chaps. 1-12, 18-21

C. Comparing Selected Gospel Passages

For this section, we will read closely the following passages (nos. 1-4 are in Oaks #16):

1. Jesus' genealogy in Matthew and Luke (read Matthew 1:1-17 and 3:23-38)

2. temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11//Mark 1:12-13//Luke 4:1-13)

3. Jesus on marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:1-12//Mark 10:1-12)

4. Jesus' "cleansing" of the temple (Matt. 21:12-13//Mark 11:15-19//Luke 19:45-48; and John 2:13-25) - see Richardson, "Why Turn the Tables?" (Oaks #17)

5. Passion Narratives in comparative perspective (gospel texts in Oaks #18 - and online); see Murphy (Oaks #6, pp. 305-309) and Patterson, "The Dark Side of Pilate" (Oaks #19) for the character of Pilate and Roman historical context (also review Mason, "Who's Who").

III. Jesus, the Law, and Jewish Polemic in the Gospels -- Feb. 19

Readings: Oaks #20 (Sanders on Jesus and the law), #21 (two Jewish midrashim on the law), #22 (Saldarini on Matthew 23), and #23 (Fredriksen on Jesus and the purity laws)

Bible: Mark 1:44

Matthew 5:17-48

Matthew 15:1-20//Mark 7:1-23

Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6

Mark 2:23-28/Matthew 12:1-8/Luke 6:1-5

Matthew, chap. 23 (for this chapter, see Saldarini, "Understanding Matthew's

Vitriol” and handout on Rabbinic views of hypocrisy)

IV. Jesus the (Apocalyptic?) Prophet, Son of Man, and Messiah -- Feb. 21-26

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 17 (pp. 267-272) and 18; handout

A. Jesus as a Prophet

Matthew 17:9-13//Mark 9:9-13 (John the Baptist as Elijah figure)
Matthew 16:14//Luke 9:19; Mark 6:14-16 ("one of the prophets")
Matthew 21:11, 46; Luke 24:19; Acts 3:22 (reference to Moses)
Mark 6:4//Matthew 13:57//Luke 4:24 and Luke 13:33-35 (Jesus' self reference)
1 Kings 17:8-24 and 2 Kings 4:32-37, 42-44 (Elijah and Elisha); compare Luke
7:11-17,39; Matthew 14:13-21 and 15:32-38; Mark 6:31-44 (note especially Jesus'
own parallel in Luke 4:25-7)

B. Jesus, the “Son of Man”

“a son of man” in the Hebrew Bible: Daniel 7
Mark 2:10; Matthew 16:13
Mark 13:24-27 and 14:62; Matthew 26:64
Mark 8:38, Matthew 10:23, and Luke 18:8

C. Jesus as “Messiah” and “Son of God”

Reading: Brown, “Jesus the Messiah” (Oaks #24 and handout)
Bible: Luke 4:40-41; Mark 14:61-62//Matthew 26:63-4//Luke 22:67-70;
compare John 4:16-29, 11:45-53 and Acts 1:6

V. The Quest for the Historical Jesus -- February 28

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 14-15
Sanders, “An Outline of Jesus’ Life” (Oaks #25)
Miracle-workers of Jesus’ day (Oaks #26; review Oaks #4 on miraculous
births)

VI. The Early Church according to Acts: The Gentile Problem and its Solution-- March 5

Bible: Book of Acts, chaps. 1-15
Reading: Ehrman, chap. 19
Fredriksen, “Responses to the Resurrection” (Oaks #27, pp. 142-156)
Peper and DelCogliano, “The Pliny and Trajan Correspondence” (Oaks #28)
and Ehrman, pp. 493-499

*****EXAM 2 - March 7*****

VII. A Pharisee Among Us: Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles -- March 12–April 9

A. Paul's Story and his Letters

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 20 and 24
Murphy-O’Connor, “The Workplace and the Apostolate” (Oaks #29)
Elliot and Reasoner, “Paul’s Self-Presentation” (Oaks #30)

*****FILM: “From Jesus to Christ”- Part 2 (March 14)*****

B. The Parousia, Communal Strife, and Resurrection: Correspondence with the Thessalonians and Corinthians

Bible: 1 Thessalonians (all); 1 Corinthians 1, 7--11, 14:26-39, and chap.15
Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 21 and 22 (up to p. 383 - stop at Galatians)

Murphy-O'Connor, "House Churches and the Eucharist" and "Temple Banquets and the Body" (Oaks #31)

*****Spring Break: March 19-21*****

C. Paul and the Law: The New Perspective and Beyond

Bible: Galatians (all); Romans, chaps. 9-11

Reading: Ehrman, pp. 383-392 and chap. 23

Fredriksen, "Responses," pp. 156-176

Gager, "Paul's Contradictions: Can They Be Resolved?" (Oaks #32)

VIII. The Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John -- April 11

Bible: Revelation, chaps. 1-5, 13, and 17-22

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 30 and selections from two apocalyptic texts similar to Revelation: Second Baruch and Fourth Ezra (Oaks #33)

IX. Some Deutero-Pauline and Other Letters -- April 16-18

A. Second Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles

Bible: 2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy and Titus

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 25 (pp. 434-441, 449-457)

B. The Letters of James, Jude, and 2 Peter

Bible: Epistles of James, Jude, and 2 Peter

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 29 (pp. 513-516, 523-527) and pp. 428-429

C. Forging a Self-Identity and the "Parting of the Ways"

Vermes, "Jews, Christians, and Judeo-Christians" (Oaks #34)

"The Didache" and "The Epistle of Barnabas" (Oaks #35; both also discussed in Ehrman, pp. 484-491 and 516-519)

Goodman, "Modeling the 'Parting of the Ways'" (Oaks #36)

*****EXAM #3 - April 30 (8:00 -11:00pm) in this classroom*****