RELIGIOUS STUDIES 202.01 (TR 12:15-1:30) NEW TESTAMENT: HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON Spring 2023

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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 this fledgling Jesus movement, 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 ancient literary genres and their relevance for interpretation; (3) to articulate the multiple ways a particular text is interpreted by different, at times competing, early Christian communities; and (4) to understand and appreciate the various methods, assumptions, and practices that inform the academic approach to the New Testament and the Bible generally.

This course presumes no previous knowledge of the New Testament or early Christianity. Some of you will know the Bible from childhood onward, most often through the lens of a particular denomination, while others are encountering it for the first time. I can guarantee you that both groups (and everyone in between) will, at times, be surprised at what they discover in a close reading of the biblical text in its larger ancient context. It should go without saying that you should be respectful of everyone in the class, regardless of background and knowledge, whether religious or otherwise. Academic historical study of the Bible and one's personal views is addressed by Ehrman in his textbook (pp. 18-19).

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).

REQUIRED TEXTS

1) Bart D. Ehrman, The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings. 7th

edition (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). You need this edition! Chapter numbers, pagination, and in some cases content, have changed throughout, so references to the text in the course schedule below, and also in lecture outlines, will make sense only with this 7th edition. Ehrman, a popular author of many books on the New Testament and early Christianity, has written elsewhere of his own journey from extremely conservative Christianity to agnosticism. But this introduction is actually quite traditional, so much so that I have added readings to deal with newer approaches that he does not discuss (e.g., challenges to the traditional criteria regarding the historical Jesus and the emergence of memory studies, and especially newer approaches to Paul and Judaism).

- 2) A Bible. The translation used for this class (available at the College Bookstore) is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), recommended in the following study edition: The New Oxford Annotated Bible New Revised Standard Version 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. An updated version of the translation has recently appeared (NRSVue, 2021), although I have not had a chance to compare it with the earlier one. The more recent Catholic version New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE, 2011) is also an excellent translation, while the revised New International Version (NIV, 2011 translation) is acceptable (but should be used with caution, given some passages are intentionally altered for theological reasons). Please note that biblical passages on the exams will follow the NRSV translation, so if at all possible you should buy (or borrow, but not steal) a NRSV translation, given we will be reading the biblical text closely in class (and you should always bring the text to class!). For the New Testament gospels in parallel format (including the Gospel of Thomas), see http://sites.utoronto.ca/religion/synopsis/. A useful 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 numbered electronic readings (as listed in the syllabus) can be accessed via Oaks in your MyPortal account (click on Content under this class for all readings etc.). For convenience sake, I strongly suggest that you download these PDF files, so you do not have to access OAKS each time to find a reading (OAKS does crash from time to time). I will announce beforehand which reading(s) we will discuss in class. You should read the assignment before we discuss it in class. This will help you in following the points in the lecture and accompanying outlines. We will pay close attention to selected biblical and some other readings in class and you should be prepared to "unpack" their content.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Three examinations (totaling 55%). These consist of fill-in-the-blank, passage identification (identify a passage from a primary text and discuss its significance), and one essay. A detailed study guide will be distributed prior to each exam. It is imperative that, if at all possible, you notify me in advance if you are unable to make it to class on the day of an exam. You should call me at my office; if I do not pick up, leave a detailed message explaining the reason for your absence. Make-up exams will be given only to those students who provide what I deem to be a valid, preferably written, excuse for their absence. Make-up exams may differ in coverage from those taken in class.

Weekly quizzes and other shorter written assignments (15%). It is expected that each student will come to class prepared (having done the readings), motivated, and eager to participate. I will give weekly quizzes over the readings (announced beforehand and given at the start of class), and also some writing assignments (done at home and submitted in class). The grades on quizzes and other

assignments follows a 5 point scale (with 5 as the highest possible score, although I may give a 5+ from time to time). During the course of the term I will give 12 quizzes (or homework equivalents). If you've done all 12, I drop the two lowest quiz grades, so your overall score will be based on 10 of these (out of a possible 50 points maximum). If you miss a quiz or two you need not provide an excuse or ask for a make-up. Barring exceptional circumstances, there are no make-up quizzes. If you miss class, it is *your responsibility* to obtain information on any written assignment and turn it in on time (so make friends in class!).

GenEd Take-home Essay (20%). In this paper prompt (and accompanying materials) you will be presented with a specific issue of scholarly debate regarding the interpretation of a New Testament book and asked to stake out your own position with supporting arguments. **Due April 25 (in class)**.

Class Attendance and Participation (10%). I expect each student to come to class prepared, having done the readings and assignments. 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 respond and also ask questions informed by or stemming from the readings. Whatever you get out of this course is directly related to how much you put into it. You cannot participate if you are not present, although quality counts more than quantity (in other words, I am not expecting you to speak in every class; were that the case, we'd never get past the Gospel of Mark!). You are permitted a total of THREE absences, for whatever reason, over the course of the term (you need not provide documentation for these). Barring exceptional circumstances (prolonged medically related absences, or other urgent personal or family situations), any number greater than this can result in a lowered or failing final grade; 8 or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes on material covered that day or any relevant assignment due the next class (so make friends in class!). Please do not ask me via e-mail to update you on everything we talked about in class. I will, however, be happy to meet with you in person or via Zoom (during office hours or by appointment) to discuss class and summarize the salient points of lecture and/readings. I will announce beforehand (in class and usually in a follow-up email) what readings will be discussed (or subject to a quiz) in the following class(es). Finally, unless absolutely necessary, you should not leave the classroom during the lecture (go pee before class!). Students constantly coming and going is disruptive and rude, especially when you walk in front of me and the entire class during lecture or class discussion (see CofC Student Handbook policy on conduct in the classroom, pp. 117-118).

ELECTRONICS (NOT) IN THE CLASSROOM

Use of laptops, tablets, phones, and other electronic equipment is <u>prohibited in the classroom</u>. Exceptions are permitted only if you present a valid written reason for access to a laptop, iPad, or Tablet during class; please come and speak to me about your situation (not via email). Smart phone use is strictly prohibited; all phones should be set on silent (not vibrate) or turned off, and <u>completely out of view</u> – not on your desk, seat, or within view in your book bag where the cunning cyber Satan can tempt you. If I observe you in violation of this policy in class, I will ask you to put away your phone or close your laptop. In addition, such actions, if repeated, will adversely affect your participation grade for the class. If you are dealing with a family matter or other urgent situation where you need to check your phone during class, please inform me of this beforehand.

OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATION

During my posted office hours above, I will be available to chat in my office or to talk via phone or

Zoom. If you have a logistical question about the course (When is this assignment due? or where can I find that reading? etc.), you should first consult the syllabus, class emails, or Oaks before asking me. Email is my preferred means of communication, so make sure you check yours daily. Please include "RELS 202" and your name in the subject line of any email you send to me (please do not send an email with no subject; chances are I will probably ignore it). I try to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays. I usually do check email on weekends, but may take longer to reply, depending on the nature of your question or concern. Also, if you have the time, you may speak with me briefly after class.

HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code, which, when suspected, are investigated. This applies also to unauthorized collaboration (working together without permission), which is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment (which I will not do in this class), no collaboration is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (e.g., accessing a phone in the classroom), copying from others' exams, or giving unauthorized assistance. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the student's actions appear to be due more to misunderstanding or confusion (Class 3 violation) will be handled by me as the instructor. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty (Class 1 or 2 violations) will be reported to the Dean of Students. If the Honor Board determines that you have violated the code, you will receive a grade of XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This XX sanction will appear on your transcript for up to two years, after which time you may petition for it to be removed. The grade of F is permanent. If you are unfamiliar with the Honor Code or what plagiarism is, see the CofC Student handbook for 2022-23 (pp. 40-41).

Academic Support Services: The Center for Student Learning. I encourage you to utilize the academic support services offered by the Center for Student Learning (CSL) and the Writing Lab for assistance in study strategies and essay writing consultation. The Center offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College (including walk-in or by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching, and Supplemental Instruction). Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic careers and the services are available to you at no cost. For more information on the Center and its many services, go to the CSL website (https://csl.cofc.edu/) or call 843.953.5635.

Universal Learning and Center for Disability Services/SNAP. I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices and our interactions should be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen carefully are crucial to universal learning. If you are eligible for and require any type of accommodation because of a documented disability, please speak with me during the first two weeks of class so that reasonable accommodations can be made. You are responsible for notifying me at least one week before accommodation is needed, and must provide any relevant documentation. For more information, see: http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu or call 843.953.1431.

Religious Observances and Accommodation. The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths with various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. Religious observances will be accommodated. If you anticipate missing class for religious reasons, please notify me by the end of the second week of class.

GRADING SCALE

Letter grades are determined in accordance with the following scale:

A = 100-93	C = 76-73
A- = 92-90	C- = 72-70
B+ = 89-87	D+ = 69-67
B = 86-83	D = 66-63
B- = 82-80	D- = 62-60
C+ = 79-77	F = 59 -

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

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

January 12

Introduction

January 17-31

- I. Setting the Stage: History, "Religion," and Politics in the 2nd Temple Period (515 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.)
 - A. Brief Survey of Israel's History from Abraham to Bar Kokhba

Reading: handouts; time lines in Oaks #1 and primary sources for Roman Period in Oaks #2, with historical surveys (including quotations from primary sources) in Oaks #12 and #13, plus useful list of historical players in Mason, "Who's Who in the New Testament World" (Oaks #2a)

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, "Josephus's Phraisees: The Narratives" and "Josephus's Pharisees: The Philosophy (Oaks #7)

Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History" (Oaks #8)

Ehrman lecture on historical and religious context of Roman Palestine – "Jesus and Roman Rule" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9m_7PzQxlYQ&list="pltyADdgRvywQ6ZhnNQ40q0jGyzobLoul8&index=14

For diversity in early "Christianity, see Ehrman textbook, pp. 6-10, and "Orthodoxy" versus "Heresy" in Ancient Christianity at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W80CbmfRt9s

(from "Religion for Breakfast" Youtube page)

- 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 so-called "Messianic" Revolts

Reading: Ehrman, pp. 261-268

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

Murphy, "Roman Rule" (#12)

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

Optional:

Novenson, "After the Messianic Idea" and "Flavius Josephus" (selections from his *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and its Users* (2017) - Oaks #14

E. The Greek New Testament: Contents and Canonization

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 1-2; Ehrman in Oaks 15 (some early attested canonical lists of NT books classified via different levels of authority)

EXAM 1 - February 2

February 7-21

II. The Gospels: A Composite Portrait of Jesus of Nazareth

A. Introduction to the Study of the Gospels: The Gospel of Mark and The Synoptic Problem Reading: Bible: Gospel of Mark (all) - I will give you a written assignment for this

Ehrman, chaps. 5-7 and "Excursus" on pp. 193-195; selection of non-canonical gospels in Oaks #15a-b (For non-canonical gospels and other writings online, see https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/index.html)

B. The Gospel of John

Reading: Ehrman, chap.10

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

C. Comparing Selected Gospel Passages (see Oaks 16 and class handouts)

For this section, we will read closely the following passages:

- 1. Jesus' genealogy in Matthew and Luke (read Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 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 Ehrman, 286-288 and Box 15.4, and compare the following:

Richardson, "Why Turn the Tables?" (Oaks #17)

Fredriksen, "God's Holy Mountain" (Oaks #18, pp. 43-57) - from her *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation* (2018)

5. Passion Narratives in comparative perspective (gospel texts in Oaks #19 - and online);

see Murphy (Oaks #6, pp. 305-309), Fredriksen, "Holy Mountain," pp. 57-73; and Patterson, "The Dark Side of Pilate" (Oaks #20) for the character of Pilate and Roman historical context (also Mason, "Who's Who," pp. 103-105).

FILM: "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians" - Part I (up to 54:25) (You will watch this outside of class and write a response to it). The best quality version is on the PBS website at https://www.pbs.org/video/jesus-christ-first-christians-part-one-uosmze/ Transcripts are posted on Oaks sub Lecture Outlines module.

February 23

III. Jesus, the Law, and Jewish Polemic in the Gospels

Readings:

Oaks #21 (Sanders on Jesus and the law)

Oaks #22 (two Jewish midrashim on the law)

Oaks #23 (Saldarini on Matthew 23)

Oaks #24 (Fredriksen on Jesus and the purity laws)

Bible: Mark 1:40-45

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 (on the Pharisees; for this chapter, see Saldarini and handout on later Rabbinic texts on the Pharisees and hypocrisy)

Optional:

Collins, "Polemic Against the Pharisees in Matthew 23" (Oaks #25) Crossley, "A 'Very Jewish' Jesus: Perpetuating the Myth of Superiority" (Oaks #26)

February 28 - March 2

IV. Jesus the (Apocalyptic) Prophet, Son of Man, and Messiah

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 15 and 16 with handouts (note also Ehrman on pp. 268-73)

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 (miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha) and compare references to them in 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"

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

Reading: Brown, "Jesus the Messiah" (Oaks #27 and handouts)

Spring Break - March 7-9

March 14

V. In Search of the Historical (the "real") Jesus

Reading: Sanders, "An Outline of Jesus' Life" (Oaks #28)

Ehrman, chap. 13 and Excursus 4 (pp. 255-259)

Olson, "The Testimonium Flavianum, Eusebius, and Consensus" online at: http://historicaljesusresearch.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-testimonium-flavianum-eusebius-and.html

Allison, "How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria of Authenticity" (#29) Miracle-workers of Jesus' day (Oaks #30; review Oaks #4 on miraculous births)

Optional:

Meier, "Methodology: A Refresher Course on the Rules of the Road" (#31) = pp. 8-29 from vol. 5 of his multi-volume work, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (2016); Meier defends the traditional criteria and specifically addresses Allison above (see his endnote 28).

Rubio, "The Fiction of the 'Three Quests': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm" (Oaks #32)

Arnal, "Jesus and Addiction to Origins" (Oaks #33)

March 16

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

Bible: Book of Acts, chaps. 1-15

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 17 and Excursus 5 (pp. 336-338)

Peper and DelCogliano, "The Pliny and Trajan Correspondence" (Oaks #34) and Ehrman, pp. 493-499

EXAM 2 - March 21

March 23 – April 13

VII. A Pharisee Among Us: Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles

A. Paul's Story and his Letters

Reading: Ehrman, chaps. 18 and 22, plus pp. 428-432 (Paul's knowledge of Jesus)

Murphy-O'Connor, "The Workplace and the Apostolate" (Oaks #35)

Elliot and Reasoner, "Paul's Self-Presentation" (Oaks #36)

Optional:

Fredriksen, "Paul, the Perfectly Righteous Pharisee" (#37) Nongbri, "The Concept of Religion and the Study of the Apostle Paul" (#38)

FILM: "From Jesus to Christ"- Part 1 (watch from 54:25 to end)

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. 19 and 20 (up to p. 387 - stop at Galatians)

Murphy-O'Connor, "House Churches and the Eucharist" and "Temple Banquets and the Body" (Oaks #39)

C. Paul and the Law: New(er) Perspectives and "Paul Within Judaism"

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

Reading: Ehrman, pp. 387-396 and chap. 21 (presents mostly traditional view that Paul is speaking to gentiles AND Jews regarding the law; see his Box 21.3 in response to Gager and others)

Nanos, "Introduction" (#40) = selection from *Paul within Judaism: Restoring*the First Century Context to the Apostle (2015)

Gager, "Paul's Contradictions: Can They Be Resolved?" (Oaks #41)

Johnson Hodge, "'A Light to the Nations': The Role of Israel in Romans 9-11" (Oaks #42)

April 18

VIII. The Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John

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

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 28 and selections from two apocalyptic texts similar to Revelation: Second Baruch and Fourth Ezra (Oaks #43)

April 20-25

IX. Some Deutero-Pauline and Other Letters

A. Second Thessalonians and the Pastoral Epistles

Bible: 2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy and Titus

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 23 (pp. 438-445, 453-462)

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

Bible: Epistles of James, Jude, and 2 Peter

Reading: Ehrman, chap. 29 (pp. 521-524, 531-535) and pp. 432-435

April 25 - GenEd paper due (in class)

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

Vermes, "Jews, Christians, and Judeo-Christians" (Oaks #44)

"The Didache" and "The Epistle of Barnabas" (Oaks #45; both also discussed in Ehrman, pp. 488-495 and 524-527)

Goodman, "Modeling the 'Parting of the Ways'" (Oaks #46)

"When Did Christianity and Judaism Part Ways?" - online at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDG5U0inNIE

EXAM #3 - Wednesday, May 3 (in classroom) @ 1:00 - 3:00