

# Rel-142: New Testament

EAST COLLEGE 108 // T&TH: 10:00-11:30AM

FALL 2009

RELIGIOUS STUDIES, DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

Instructor: William E. Smith III

Email: [willsmith@depauw.edu](mailto:willsmith@depauw.edu)

Office and Phone: TBA

Office Hours: T. 1:00-2:00/Th. 11:45-12:45

and by appointment

This course provides a historical introduction to the collection of ancient Christian literature commonly called the New Testament. There are 27 writings in the New Testament and we will treat each independently since different people wrote these various texts. Furthermore, each author had a particular approach to the “Christ event” and how to live the Christian life. While these works eventually became considered scripture (often very soon after their composition) and thereby foundational to the directions of later Christian traditions, our investigation is limited to the religious and cultural contours of these writings within the historical context of the first- and second-century Mediterranean world. After an introduction to the Mediterranean context that covers several aspects of ancient Judaism and the Roman Empire, our investigation refocuses on the various New Testament writings themselves. The course concludes with discussions about the “making” of the New Testament in which we will attempt to answer this question: since the writings within the New Testament only represent a fraction of the literature about Jesus and the Christian life circulating around the ancient world, why were they selected to be in the New Testament and not others? We will explore the various processes that resulted in the canonization of these writings as the “New Testament.” The student should emerge from this course with a basic knowledge of the historical context of the New Testament writings as well as key religious and literary themes prevalent within them. The student can expect to read all 27 books of the New Testament, some other ancient Christian writings, and secondary literature (textbook and other supplementary readings).

## Required Texts:

The Harper Collins Study Bible. Revised Edition. Ed. by H.W. Attridge and W.A. Meeks et al. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006). **Note** This is the *required* translation for this course.

Bart D. Ehrman, The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings. 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr. Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992).

### Grading

Exam 1: 20%  
Exam 2: 20%  
Final Exam: 20%

Paper 1: 15%  
Paper 2: 15%

Participation: 10%

Exams: These are designed to test your basic command of the material. The exam will assess competency over core content or what might be called the “factual level” as well as critical handling of and mastery over the conceptual material or level of the course. What I mean by the latter is that there will be questions that challenge you to use what you have learned about certain people and texts and make short persuasive arguments about them. The tests will mainly feature multiple choice, true/false, and short essay questions.

Papers: Like the exam’s short essay questions, these will require you to produce a persuasive argument. These papers, however, demand more complex and careful use of evidence and overall development (organization, level of thought, etc) than the exam essay. Methodologically, these assignments will require you to employ close reading (a technique we will practice in class) of a particular passage or several passages as well as a comparative element between more than one text for at least one of the papers. The essay will either address a historical or theological issue raised by the passages. More specific instructions will be given for each paper assignment.

### Basic Paper requirements:

- Every paper has to have a thesis and be conceptually well organized. In terms of formatting, these papers must be 4-5 pages in length, typed in 12 point, New Times Roman font, and double spaced with standard margins. Papers must be printed and handed in on the due date. I do not accept papers via email. If you turn it in one class session late, there will be a full letter grade deduction from whatever grade the paper garnered (ex. B to C).
- These papers need to be proofread for accuracy in spelling and grammar. Hint: we are usually our own worst proofreaders (this is certainly true in my case). Find a friend or two who will read a paper over for you and read your own writing out loud to yourself to help see/hear mistakes. An occasional error in these matters is forgivable, but more than that will mean a slight grade reduction depending on the number of errors. This penalty to the grade will usually either be a “minor” reduction (B+ to B)

or, if the mistakes make reading the paper particularly difficult (such as multiple incomplete sentences), a “major” one (B+ to B-).

--A final suggestion: an “A” paper will not only feature a thesis, be well written with few to no basic errors, but would probably impress your “better-read” peers. In other words these people constitute your core audience (those whom you imagine reading your essay when you write it). You want to present an argument that they would say something like “I probably wouldn’t have thought of that myself!”

Participation: You should come to class prepared. This means you will have read the assignment, thought about it and probably are ready to ask question or answer those posed by myself or other classmates. This does not mean that you have to speak during every session, but should do so with a certain regularity. The idea behind this is for us to cultivate more of an environment of discussion and active learning/thinking than necessarily providing the “right” or “correct” answer (which, at times, may not exist).

General Parameters of a Grade: An “A” indicates work that shows outstanding critical mastery of the subject matter and written presentation. A “B” indicates work that is above average, but does not show the same creativity and general excellence of an “A” paper. “C” work demonstrates basic competency of the material and meets all the minimum requirements for the assignment. A “D” denotes work that does not display basic mastery of the material, usually containing significant errors, but still (if even barely) within the parameters of the acceptable.

#### Grading Scale:

90-100	A	(90-92=A-)
80-89	B	(88-89=B+ / 80-82=B-)
70-79	C	(78-79=C+ / 70-72=C-)
60-69	D	(68-69=D+ / 60-62=D-)
59 and below	F	

#### Attendance Policy

Education is not a product that can be passively consumed. It is not like buying a new phone or tv. Instead, it is a type of relationship that depends heavily on interaction—be it with an author (via a text), fellow classmates, or the instructor—and therefore your presence is important, not just for yourself but also for others.

Yet, it is reasonable to assume that an occasional absence will be necessary. Thus each student may miss three class sessions without penalty. You may use these “skips” however you wish. You may decide to sleep in, when you have a cold, or for some kind of appointment such a doctor’s visit or relating to a campus activity. You do not need to email me about why you missed class.

If a longer term medical problem arises during the semester, please contact me.

Penalty—After your third absence, *two points* (out of a 100 total) from your final grade will be deducted.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating is unacceptable on any assignment. If caught, you will suffer either grade reduction or failing the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for the University's policy on academic integrity for further discussion of this issue.

Course Schedule:

8/27: Introduction

9/1: The Greco-Roman World

Read: L.M. White, From Jesus to Christianity, pp 40-66  
Ehrman, pp 17-35 optional

9/3: First Century Judaism(s) and Apocalypticism

Read: L.M. White, From Jesus to Christianity, pp 67-92  
Daniel, chapters 1, 7-12 (2-6 optional)

9/8: Intro. to Paul / Philemon

Read: Philemon  
Ehrman, pp 291-308, 352-55

9/10: Philippians & Begin 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians

Read: Philippians  
1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians  
Ehrman, pp 348-52

9/15: Finish 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians

Read: 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians  
Ehrman, pp 309-23, 384-86

9/17: 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians & Begin 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians

Read: 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians  
Ehrman, pp 324-34

9/22: Finish 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians & Galatians

Read: Galatians  
Ehrman, pp 334-48

9/24: Romans & Summary of Paul's Career

Read: Romans

Ehrman, pp 356-68

9/29: *Test #1*

10/1: Begin Mark

Read: Mark

Ehrman, pp 56-91

10/6: Finish Mark & Begin Matthew

Read: Matthew

(Finish Ehrman of 10/1 if need be)

10/8: Finish Matthew

Read: Ehrman, pp 92-120

10/13: Luke

Read: Luke

10/15: Luke

Read: Ehrman, pp 121-39

**Assignment:** Paper #1 Due

10/20: Fall Break

10/22: Fall Break

10/27: Synoptic Problems and Solutions

Read: Gospel Parallels #46

L.M. White, From Jesus to Christianity, pp 95-116

10/29: The Historical Jesus

Read: J.P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, pp 167-95

11/3: Acts and Its Relation to Paul

Read: Acts

Ehrman, pp 141-62

11/5: *Test #2*

11/10: Gospel of John

Read: John

Ehrman, pp 163-84

- 11/12: Johannine Letters  
Read: 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> John  
Ehrman, pp 185-203
- 11/17: "Doceestism" and "Gnosticism" in Ancient Christianity  
Read: Coptic Gospel of Thomas  
Gospel of Peter
- 11/19: Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Letters  
Read: Colossians  
Ephesians  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy  
Titus  
Ehrman, pp 386-402 (optional)
- 11/24: 1<sup>st</sup> Peter and Ignatius  
Read: 1<sup>st</sup> Peter  
Ignatius, "Epistle to the Romans"  
Ehrman, pp 435-53  
**Assignment:** Paper #2 Due
- 11/26: Thanksgiving
- 12/1: Jude, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and James  
Read: James  
Romans, chapters 3 & 4  
2<sup>nd</sup> Peter  
Jude  
Ehrman, pp 454-68
- 12/3: Apocalypse of John (Revelation)  
Read: Revelation  
Ehrman, pp 469-86
- 12/8: Hebrews  
Read: Hebrews  
Ehrman, pp 416-26
- 12/10: Canonization of the New Testament  
Read: Muratorian Canon  
Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History (selections)  
Athanasius, "Festal Letter" 39

Final Exam Week

12/17: Final @ 1-4pm

