

Introduction to the New Testament

Syllabus

Spring 2020

REL 2240/3938/5297

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Office Hours: M/W/F 2:55–3:55 p.m. or by appointment

Time: M/W/F 10:40–11:30 a.m.

Classroom: FLI 0119

Course Description

This course offers an academic introduction to the study of the New Testament, which will serve to provide an overall framework for the structure of the course. After preliminary classes introducing the New Testament and its study in the academy, the course will move through the New Testament writings in sequence starting with the Gospels and Acts, followed by the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Epistles, the General Epistles, and Revelation. Special topics and issues will be integrated into the course along the way, including: early Christian Gospels outside the New Testament, the historical Jesus, early Jewish and Christian apocalypticism, archaeology and material culture, iconography, ritual, gender and sexuality, race, (post)colonialism, ethics, early Christian antisemitism, canonization, etc.

The course's primary focus will be on the texts and contents of the New Testament, seeking to understand the New Testament writings from a historical perspective. Attention will be given to such issues as ancient authorship, date and history of composition, social-historical setting, audience, literary shape, narrative techniques, major themes and ideas, theological and religious perspective, political ideology, archaeology, epigraphic materials, iconographic evidence, comparative ancient Mediterranean data, etc. One important goal of the course is to learn how to read/interpret each New Testament text as its own distinctive composition within its ancient social-historical context, independent of its later canonical context(s), with which it may or may not necessarily agree in various ways.

Additionally, this course will treat the interpretive contexts that (have) shape(d) the modern study of the New Testament. Although the New Testament is an ancient collection of texts that stems from a world far removed from ours chronologically, geographically, and culturally, the New Testament continues to influence contemporary communities, particularly those religious communities that view its texts as, in some sense, sacred and religiously authoritative. Moreover, the modern academic study of the New Testament has its own distinctive intellectual history. Thus, any attempt to understand the New Testament writings in their ancient social and historical settings also must take account of the modern social, historical, and cultural contexts in which the study of the New Testament has developed and continues to take place. This course therefore will explore the history, methods, theories, and discoveries of modern New Testament scholarship, intersecting both traditional historical-critical approaches (e.g., source criticism, redaction criticism, textual criticism, tradition-historical criticism, form criticism, etc.) and contemporary hermeneutical and ideological criticisms (e.g., feminist criticism, queer theory, postcolonial biblical interpretation, critical race theory, etc.).

No prior background in the subject matter or academic study of the New Testament is required or presupposed, nor is there a language requirement.

Disclaimer: Because the New Testament continues to play an important role in the religious and spiritual lives of many people today, some may initially find the academic study of the New Testament—which, in theory and methodology, attempts to analyze the biblical writings as human cultural artifacts from a position of religious neutrality—difficult in various ways. However, by approaching the biblical writings from a non-confessional standpoint, all persons—regardless of their personal religious commitments (or lack thereof)—may participate in the course on an equal footing. Moreover, a non-confessional, “critical” approach should not be confused with one that is inherently anti-religious. In adopting a critical stance toward the New Testament, the term “critical” does not mean attempting to tear down the New Testament or undermine faith-based commitment to it; rather, “critical” refers to judicious analysis using well-defined theoretical perspectives and methodologies, rational argumentation, logic, and publicly available evidence. In short, this course does not seek to advocate for or against religious faith in the New Testament.

Additionally, while I explicitly welcome all to express their views during class discussions, any viewpoint that is expressed in class also may be questioned by the class. I strive to make the classroom a charitable and respectful environment where we as a class together look for the strongest points of every position or argument. However, part of respecting a position also means thinking through its possible weaknesses. Thus, one should not construe constructive criticism in negative terms as hostile or confrontational, but as a sign of deep care and intellectual respect.

Course Objectives

In addition to acquiring a critical density of knowledge regarding course content, this course aims to develop intellectual and professional skills of broader application that transcend the particular academic study of the New Testament, such as:

- The intellectual skill of reading texts closely and thoughtfully
- Historical reasoning skills
- Analytical skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Reading and writing at an advanced level appropriate to a college or university setting
- The ability to participate in respectful and thoughtful dialogue
- The ability to reflect self-critically about one’s own culture and historical situatedness
- The ability to empathize with others and to be sensitive to differing perspectives
- The capacity to work collaboratively
- The theoretical knowledge and vocabulary needed to critically question and examine other bodies of knowledge

Course Textbooks

Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 6th ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Coogan, Michael D., Marc Z. Brettler, Carol A. Newsom, and Pheme Perkins, eds. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

I also will provide electronic copies/scans of other required primary and secondary sources on Canvas (full bibliographical information is provided in the syllabus). These materials will be made available before the classes for which they are assigned, and students are expected to prepare each reading in advance of class. The course website may be accessed through <http://elearning.ufl.edu>.

Note: You must bring your *New Oxford Annotated Bible* to class every day.

Course Assignments and Grading

In order to achieve the goals listed in the Course Objectives section, students are to prepare for each class by thoughtfully reading and analyzing assigned readings. Students are expected to prepare primary/ancient and secondary/scholarly readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Besides lecture, a significant component of each class session includes student discussion based on the primary and secondary readings. Participation in class discussions is one crucial element of a student's grade.

(1) A **Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade** worth 20% of the final grade will be assigned based on each student's individual preparation, attendance, and personal participation in class. In assessing the Preparation/Attendance/Participation component of a student's overall grade, I will consider such factors as: class attendance and absences, preparation of assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, tardiness, quantity and quality of participation in class discussion, and student focus and engagement (e.g., cell phones are not to be used in class, side discussions among students are not appropriate, frequently leaving and reentering the classroom should be avoided, etc.).

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of every class. If a student misses more than half the class, either because of arriving late or leaving early, the student will be counted as absent. I will automatically deduct three points per absence from the student's Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade, and one point for every time the student is tardy. If you expect to be absent from class for a pre-scheduled or University approved reason, please contact me beforehand as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to obtain notes or handouts from any classes s/he/they miss. For further information on UF's attendance policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

Note: If you are taking this course as REL 3938, the Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade will be worth 10% of the final grade.

(2) This class will have two exams, one **Midterm Exam** and one **Final Exam**, each worth 20% of the final grade (i.e., 40% total). For both the Midterm Exam and the Final Exam, students will be asked to respond to any two essay questions from a choice of four or five possible essay questions. The exams will cover material from the primary readings, scholarly readings, and class lectures and discussions. One week before each exam, I will provide online an extensive study guide with questions similar to the types of questions one should expect to find on the exams. Exams will cover material up to and including the last class before the exam. The Final Exam will cover only the second half of the semester.

The Midterm Exam will be taken in class on Wednesday, February 26, and the Final Exam will be taken during the Final Exam Period on Wednesday, April 29 from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. I will provide free Blue Books to students for the Midterm and Final Exams. You are responsible for bringing your own pen or pencil and writing legibly.

Note: If you are taking this course as REL 3938, the Midterm and Final Exams will each be worth 15% of the final grade (i.e., 30% total).

(3) Together, four **Quizzes** will comprise 40% of the final grade (i.e., each quiz is worth 10% of your final overall grade). Quizzes will consist of short answer, matching, true and false, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. Quiz 1 will take place in class on Wednesday, January 22, Quiz 2 on Monday, February 10, Quiz 3 on Wednesday, March 18, and Quiz 4 on Friday, April 3.

(4) For those taking this course as REL 3938, the **Final Paper** will be a six-page, thesis-driven research paper that accounts for the final 20% of your grade (note: if you are taking this course as REL 5297, the Final Paper must be 12-15 pages). This research paper will focus on one specific issue or topic in the modern academic study of the New Testament not addressed in class readings or discussion (or, if addressed in class readings and discussion, your Final Paper must go significantly beyond the readings and class discussion for that particular topic).

Topic: The topic of the Final Paper will be of the student's choosing, but it must be cleared with me (see Final Paper Deadlines on pp. 7–8 below). The topic must be sufficiently focused. You cannot write on a general category or broad area of study. For example, you may not write your paper on "Paul's Christology." However, you might write about the significance(s) and development of Paul's use the term/title "son of God" in reference to Jesus within his genuine letters. The Final Paper must have a focused base of primary/ancient evidence (textual, archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, etc.), including some material from the New Testament, and it also must properly use—and appropriately cite—at least three vetted, peer-reviewed scholarly sources relevant to the issue at hand (internet sources do not count!). The Final Paper must offer a coherent, sustained argument regarding a specific approved topic, analyzing the relevant primary evidence, discussing the interpretive issues at stake, addressing the main controversies in the scholarly secondary literature, etc. Note: The Final Paper is not a summary of the scholarly literature and/or the primary sources. Do not simply summarize what the scholarly secondary sources have to say; rather, use the scholarly literature to advance your overall argument and analysis of the primary sources.

I will make myself available to help students find an appropriate research topic of interest, and I also will help to answer questions regarding research strategies and the choosing of primary and secondary materials.

Assessment: In assessing your Final Paper, I will consider such qualitative factors as: (1) demonstration of careful reading and observation of the primary evidence, noting small details and connecting them to larger questions raised by the project; (2) proposal of insightful conclusions supported both by specific evidence from the texts and analytical reasoning (remember to cite your evidence!); (3) accounting for all relevant evidence in your conclusions, i.e., that you leave no major gaps in evidence; (4) clarity of writing on both the macro and micro levels; and (5) the proper use and citation of at least three relevant scholarly sources.

The Final Paper is due at the beginning of the last day of class, Wednesday, April 22. If you have any problems meeting this deadline, please talk with me as soon as possible. Any paper turned in late will be lowered by a third of a grade for every day that it is late (e.g., a B+ paper will be downgraded to a B- if it is two days late).

Writing Guidelines: The Final Paper must be typed, double spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font. Final Papers are to be submitted electronically via email as a Word document attachment (no Google docs). Margins are to be one inch. You must use page numbers. You do not need a front/title page (a title page will not count toward the total number of pages required for an assignment)—simply put your name and the title of your paper at the top of the first page. Sources always are to be cited using a standard citation style (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, APA, MLA, etc.). Whatever citation style you choose, be consistent. Use quotation marks when quoting a source verbatim, whether ancient or modern. Avoid long citations of ancient texts or modern scholars. Do not make assertions that you cannot support without direct evidence. Aim for a polished writing style (idiomatic, yet semi-formal): avoid contractions, slang or informal expressions, run-on sentences, switching between past and present tenses in the same sentence, passive voice, common verbs (try to use more descriptive, precise verbs), and the pronouns “you,” “we,” and “us.” Write clearly and concisely. Avoid unnecessarily long, complex sentences with numerous subordinate clauses. Clear written expression is one goal of this course. Remember to proofread and use your word processor’s grammar and spellcheck!

Helpful Reference Works:

Turabian, Kate, et. al. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 9th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

How to Cite the Bible:

- Matthew 1:1 = Matthew, chapter 1, verse 1.
- Matthew 1–3 = Matthew, chapters 1 through 3.
- Matthew 1:1–2:23 = Matthew chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse twenty-three.
- Matthew 1:1–2:23; 3:1–6 = Matthew chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse twenty-three; AND chapter 3, verse 1 through verse 6.

Additionally, scholars commonly abbreviate New Testament books (e.g., Matthew = Matt; Rom = Romans; etc.). You can find a list of abbreviations in the front matter of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (p. xxi).

(5) **Bonus Point:** After assessing a student's overall grade based on the Midterm and Final Exams, Quizzes, and the Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade, I will add one point to each student's final overall grade. There will be no curve in the class, and I will not add more than one point to each student's final grade. Because of the addition of one point to each student's final overall grade, grades will not be rounded up or down (e.g., if you get an $88.9 + 1 = 89.9$, you will receive a B+ in the course; your grade will not be rounded up to a 90, i.e., an A-).

REL 2240 Assignment Weight:

	Assignment	Weight
1.	Midterm Exam	20%
2.	Four Quizzes	40%
3.	Final Exam	20%
5.	Preparation/Attendance/Participation	20%

REL 3938 Assignment Weight:

	Assignment	Weight
1.	Midterm Exam	15%
2.	Four Quizzes	40%
3.	Final Exam	15%
4.	Final Paper	20%
5.	Preparation/Attendance/Participation	10%

Grading Scale:

A	93–100	B+	87–89.9	C+	77–79.9	D+	67–69.9	F	0–59
A-	90–92.9	B	83–86.9	C	73–76.9	D	63–66.9		
		B-	80–82.9	C-	70–72.9	D-	60–62.9		

Course Policies and Services

Classroom Etiquette:

Active participation is expected and required for success in this course. Students are expected to pay attention and be respectful of others. Apart from laptops, which may be used for the sole purpose of taking notes (gaming or watching videos is not acceptable), please turn off all electronic devices, including cell phones. Texting during class is not permitted. Failure to adhere to classroom etiquette will negatively affect one's Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade.

Gender-Inclusive Language:

Students should always use non-sexist, gender-inclusive language that respects and affirms the gender identities of all other participants in the course, including honoring others' names and pronouns. Additionally, one's written and oral communications should be as inclusive and expansive as possible with respect to sex, gender, race, ethnicity, age, and disability (e.g., "humanity" not "man"/"mankind," etc.).

Academic Integrity:

You are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. Any violation of the academic integrity expected of you will result in a minimum academic sanction of a zero on the assignment. Any alleged violations of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>.

Academic Accommodations:

UF offers support and reasonable accommodations for students who have a diagnosed disability through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible if you have a learning disability and are in need of help. I am happy to work with you, the Dean of Students Office, and the DRC to arrange for appropriate accommodations to assist you in achieving academic success.

For additional information, please see: <https://disability.ufl.edu/>.

UF's Writing Studio:

I especially encourage you to take advantage of UF's Writing Studio. For more information about UF's Writing Studio, located at 2215 Turlington Hall, or to book an appointment, please call (352) 846-1138 or visit <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Graded Work:

1. Quiz 1: Wednesday, January 22.
2. Quiz 2: Monday, February 10.
3. Midterm Exam: Wednesday, February 26.
4. Quiz 3: Wednesday, March 18.
5. Quiz 4: Friday, April 3.
6. Final Paper: Wednesday, April 22.
7. Final Exam: Thursday, April 30 from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Final Paper Deadlines:

1. Final Paper topic approval deadline: Friday, March 13.
2. Final Paper sources and bibliography submission: Friday, March 27.
3. Final Paper thesis statement review: Friday, April 10.
4. Final Paper due: Wednesday, April 22.

Class Cancellations: The Center for Jewish Studies officially requests that all classes on days that are *yôm tôv* during the major Jewish holidays be canceled (see the Course Schedule below for specific dates). Additionally, class will be canceled on Monday, January 27, and Wednesday, January 29.

Course Schedule

Unit 1—The New Testament and Its Study

Week 1

Monday, January 6: What is the New Testament?

- Syllabus.
- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 1–18.

Wednesday, January 8: The New Testament in Its Greco-Roman Context

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 41–59.

Friday, January 10: The Jewish Matrix of the New Testament

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 61–80.
- 1–2 Maccabees.

Week 2

Monday, January 13: Jesus Traditions in Their Greco-Roman Context

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 82–94.

Unit 2—Early Christian Gospels and the Historical Jesus

Wednesday, January 15: Christian Gospels

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 96–102.

Friday, January 17: Mark's Jesus (Part I): The Suffering Son of God

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 103–119.
- Mark 1–10.

Week 3

Monday, January 20: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, No Class

Wednesday, January 22: Mark's Jesus (Part II): The Secret Messiah

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 103–119.
- Mark 11–16.

Quiz 1 in class.

Friday, January 24: The Synoptic Problem

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 120–127.

Week 4

Monday, January 27: No Class

Wednesday, January 29: No Class

Friday, January 31: Matthew's Jesus (Part I): The Jewish Messiah

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 129–148.
- Matthew 1–16.

Week 5

Monday, February 3: Matthew's Jesus (Part II): Redaction Criticism

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 129–148.
- Matthew 17–28.

Wednesday, February 5: Luke's Jesus (Part I): The Savior of the World

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 149–168.
- Luke 1–12.

Friday, February 7: Luke's Jesus (Part II): Comparative Method

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 149–168.
- Luke 13–24.

Week 6

Monday, February 10: Luke's Second Act(s)

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 312–332.
- The Book of Acts.

Quiz 2 in class.

Wednesday, February 12: John's Jesus (Part I): The Divine Word

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 169–191.
- The Gospel of John.

Friday, February 14: John's Jesus (Part II): Social-Historical Criticism

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 169–191.
- The Gospel of John.

Week 7

Monday, February 17: The Johannine Community

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 195–212.

- 1–3 John.

Wednesday, February 19: Early Christian Gospels Outside the New Testament

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 214–233.
- “The Gospel of Peter,” “The Gospel according to Thomas,” and “The Infancy Gospel of Thomas” in Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Pleše, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 371–387, 303–349, and 3–23.

Friday, February 21: The Historical Jesus (Part I)

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 235–279.
- [Non-Christian Greco-Roman and early rabbinic sources on Jesus.](#)

Week 8

Monday, February 24: The Historical Jesus (Part II)

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 280–310.
- Matthew 5–7; 13; Mark 12–16.

Wednesday, February 26: Midterm Exam

Midterm Exam in class.

Unit 3—Paul and His Legacy

Friday, February 28: Paul and the Pauline Corpus

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 334–351, 415–432.

Week 9

Monday, March 2: Spring Break, No Class

Wednesday, March 4: Spring Break, No Class

Friday, March 5: Spring Break, No Class

Week 10

Monday, March 9: Paul’s Apostolic Mission

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 353–367.
- 1 Thessalonians.

Wednesday, March 11: Paul’s Churches (Part I)

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 368–379.
- 1 Corinthians.

Friday, March 13: Paul’s Churches (Part II)

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 379–383, 392–400.
- 2 Corinthians; Philippians; Philemon.

Final Paper topics must be approved by this date.

Week 11

Monday, March 16: Paul's Gospel

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 383–392, 401–414.
- Romans; Galatians.

Wednesday, March 18 The Deutero-Pauline Letters

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 434–448.
- Colossians; Ephesians; 2 Thessalonians.

Quiz 3 in class.

Friday, March 20: The Pastoral Epistles

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 449–458.
- 1–2 Timothy; Titus.

Unit 4—The General Writings

Week 12

Monday, March 23: The General Epistles

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 514–516, 523–24.
- James; Jude.

Wednesday, March 25: Christians and Jews

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 474–491.
- Hebrews.
- Skim “The Letter of Barnabas” in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: Vol. II* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3–83.

Friday, March 27: Christians and Empire

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 192 + 493–512.
- 1 Peter.
- Skim “The Letters of Ignatius to the Ephesians, the Trallians, and the Romans,” and “The Martyrdom of Polycarp” in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers: Vol. I* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 203–241, 257–269, 269–283, and 357–401.

Primary and secondary sources for the Final Paper must be submitted for vetting by this date.

Week 13

Monday, March 30: Early Christian “Heresy”

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 513–527.

- 2 Peter.
- Skim “1 Clement,” “The Letters of Ignatius to the Magnesians, the Philadelphians, and the Smyrneans,” and “The Didache” in Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers: Vol. I*, 18–151, 241–255, 283–295, 295–309, and 405–443.

Wednesday, April 1: Early Jewish Apocalypses

- John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2d ed.; The Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 1–42 (skip the footnotes).
- Daniel 7–12; *1 Enoch* 1–36.

Friday, April 3: Early Christian Apocalypses

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 529–546.
- Revelation.
- Skim “The Shepherd of Hermas” in Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers: Vol. I*, 161–473, and “**The Apocalypse of Peter**” in XXX, XXX.

Unit 5—Special Topics

Quiz 4 in class.

Week 14

Monday, April 6: The New Testament and Gender/Sexuality

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 192 + 460–472.
- Skim “**The Acts of Paul and Thecla**” in XXX, XXX.

Wednesday, April 8: Race and Early Christian Ethnic Reasoning

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 192.
- Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1–32.

Friday, April 10: Pesach, No Class

The thesis for your Final Paper must be submitted for review by this date.

Week 15

Monday, April 13: Early Christian Diversity

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 6–11.
- Joseph H. Lynch, *Early Christianity: A Brief History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 37–61.

Wednesday, April 15: Pesach, No Class

Friday, April 17: New Testament Textual Criticism

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 20–40.

Week 16

Monday, April 20: The New Testament Canon

- Ehrman, *New Testament*, 11–15.
- Harry Y. Gamble, “Canon: New Testament,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman; 6 vols.; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 1:852–861 (pdf pp. 1267–1288).

Course Evaluations: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

Wednesday, April 22: Review for the Final Exam

- Bring your questions to class!

Final Paper due.

Friday, April 24: No Class or Office Hours, Official University Reading Day

Week 17

Wednesday, April 29: Final Exam

Final Exam from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.