

REL 217: The New Testament

Fall 2012

Wendy DeBoer

MW 2:15-3:35 in Hall of Languages 105

Course Description: This course will examine the texts that comprise the New Testament in their historical, cultural and literary contexts. Attention will also be given to the ways in which these texts were composed, assembled and transmitted over the centuries. While inquiry into historical interpretations of the texts will be part of the course, it is not intended that this course be an exhaustive study of the history New Testament interpretations.

Course Objectives: It is my hope that by the end of the course students are able to explain the historical and cultural contexts out of which the various books of the New Testament were composed, students are able to articulate the reasons these texts have been interpreted in a variety of ways over the centuries and students are able to identify the themes and emphases of many of the books of the New Testament. By the end of the course, I also hope students have strengthened their understandings of “scripture” as a concept and become more familiar with some of the ritual and iconic uses of the New Testament as “scripture.”

Instructor:

Wendy DeBoer

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-2 and by appointment.

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Assigned Texts:

Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th Edition, New York: Oxford University Press 2011.

The New Testament in modern translation (The NRSV, NIV and are good translations; no King James or Good News versions.)

Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard from time to time.

Course Requirements: The course consists of class discussions, lectures, student projects, quizzes and readings. Students' completion of all reading assignments is essential for their success. Assignments, discussions, lectures and tests all presuppose that students have read

carefully, and on schedule, the assigned readings. Students are expected to bring the assigned readings with them to class on the day for which the reading is assigned.

Evaluation: Students are evaluated on the basis of their performance on quizzes (10% total), two exams (20% each), several reflection papers (40% total), and class participation (including attendance) (10%). Incidents of plagiarism or cheating result in no credit (0) for the test or assignment and may result in further disciplinary action (see academic integrity statement below).

Disability-Related Accommodations:

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>.

Academic Integrity:

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. In this course, students found cheating on a test or assignment will receive zero (0) credit for that test or assignment. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Religious Observances:

SU's religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

Topics and Readings Schedule:

For the following reading schedule, items from Blackboard can be found under Course Content in the readings folders. All items marked simply "Chapter 1, 2, 3, etc." are referring to Ehrman's text. I reserve the right to change reading dates or revise the readings. If I make significant changes to the readings schedule, I will give you a revised schedule and post it on Blackboard.

August

- 27 Introduction to the Course
- 29 Historical Context and Canonization (Readings: Chapter 1 (also available on Blackboard)) **Reflection 1 Due**

September

- 5 Textual Criticism (Readings: Chapter 2)
- 10 Historical Context (Readings: Chapters 3-4)
- 12 Introduction to the Gospels (Readings Chapters 5-6) **Part 1 of Reflection 2 Due**
- 17 Mark (Readings: Read the Gospel of Mark in one sitting; Chapter 7)
- 19 Matthew (Readings: Chapters 8-9; Matthew 1:18-3:17; 5:17-48; 8:1-13; 9:18-26; 13: 1-23; 16: 21-28; 27:32-56)
- 24 Luke/Acts (Readings: Chapter 10, Luke 1:1-3:22; 5:12-26; 5:27-39; 8:4-18; 8:40-56; 9:44-50; 10:25-37; 15:1-32; 22:1-30; 23:26-49)
- 26 Luke/Acts (Readings: Chapter 11, Acts 2:1-36; Browse the rest of the book of Acts) **Part 2 of Reflection 2 Due**

October

- 1 John (Readings: Chapters 12; John 1:1-1:34; 3:1-21; 4:46-53;6:22-59; 11:1-27; 15:1-16:15; 19:16-37)
- 3 John (Readings: Chapters 13)
- 8 Non-canonical Gospels (Readings: Chapter 14-15; Selections from the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene and the Gospel of Judas (on Blackboard))

10 Review Case Study: the Resurrection Stories of the 4 canonical gospels (Readings: Chapter 17; Matt 28:1-20, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24: 1-53 , John 20:1-24)

15 **Mid Term Examination**

17 Introduction to Paul (Readings Chapter 19-20)

22 Philemon, 1 Thessalonians (Readings Chapter 21 and All of 1 Thessalonians)

24 1 and 2 Corinthians (Readings pages 339-354) **Part 1 of Reflection 3 Due**

29 Galatians and Philippians (Readings pages 354-370; All of Galatians)

31 Romans (Readings Chapter 23; Romans 1:1-3:31)

November

5 Romans (Readings: TBA) **Part 2 of Reflection 3 Due**

7 The Pauline Tradition (Readings: Chapter 24)

12 Deutero-Paul (Readings: Chapter 25)

14 Deutero-Paul and Pastoral Letters (Readings: TBA)

26 1 Peter, James, 2 Peter (Readings: Chapters 28 and 29) **Reflection 4 Due**

28 Revelation (Readings Chapter 30, Rev 4:1-17:18)

December

3 Revelation (Readings TBA on Blackboard)

5 Wrap up, evaluations, review for final. **Reflection 5 Due**

December 14th from 5:15-7:15 PM is the final examination

Summary of Assignments:

I reserve the right to modify due dates and even the content of these assignments to fit the needs, abilities and interests of the students who compose the class.

Exams: (20% of Grade each)

There will be 2 exams. The midterm is scheduled for class time on October 15th and the final exam period is **December 14th from 5:15-7:15 PM**. The final will be cumulative, but emphasis will be placed on the material from the second half of the course. I will provide some review materials before each exam.

Quizzes: (10% of Grade total)

Quizzes will be a mixture of announced and surprise quizzes. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped in calculating your quiz average, but you cannot make quizzes up.

Reflection Papers: (40% of grade total)

There will be a total of 5 reflection papers throughout the semester. These papers will vary in length and are outlined below along with their various weights in your grade. More specific descriptions will be given when the papers are assigned.

Reflection 1: New Testament Impressions (2 pages) Due August 29 (10% of reflection grade) You will be answering questions about your understanding of the New Testament prior to the course.

Reflection 2: Life Stories (5+ pages total in 2 parts; 1st part due September 12th (3-5 pages); 2nd Part due September 26th (2-3 pages))(20 % of Reflection Grade). You will be writing a life story, reflecting on the process of doing so and comparing to ancient writers' processes.

Reflection 3: Paul's Interpreters (4+ pages total in 2 parts; 1st part due October 24th (2 pages) 2nd Part due November 5th (2-4 pages)) (40% of Reflection Grade). You will be researching ways in which a Pauline passage of your choices has been interpreted, summarizing at least three different interpretations and explaining why the interpretations are different.

Reflection 4: **The New Testament and Ritual** (2-4 pages) Due November 26th (20% of Reflection Grade) You will visit a Christian community's service to observe the ways in which the New Testament is used ritually today and reflect upon your observations **OR** you will visit a museum or library or other source to observe the ways in which the text of the New Testament has been used as an object of art (and/or as an iconic object) over the centuries and reflecting on those observations.

Reflection 5: **Final Reflections** (3-4 pages) Due December 5th (10% of Reflection Grade) You will be reflecting on your understanding of the New Testament at the end of the course.

Participation: (10% of grade total)

Participation grades will be given for active class discussion and prepared attendance in class. Regular, thoughtful participation in class discussions will get an A in class participation. Three or more unexcused absences will lower your participation grade two letter grades. Five absences will result in a zero for your class participation grade. Sleeping in class, using non-class materials on your computer or phone or being disrespectful of other students will also critically affect this grade.

