

PHIL 1696 Introduction to the New Testament Spring 2007

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Office hours: before and after class and by appointment
Class place and time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-4:45 in Brewster D-wing Room 309.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce you through reading, writing, films, and class discussion to that collection of documents called the New Testament. The focus will be on the distinct nature of each document, especially the way that each one sets out the purpose of Jesus and his followers. We will see that various social contexts and historical events have an impact on the formation and central issues of these texts. For comparative purposes, we will also examine a number of “voices from the margins.” My hope is that you will develop an awareness of how this book and our culture inform each other. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Learning Objectives: Content

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate Biblical literacy
 - Identify structural features of the New Testament (e.g., Gospels, Letters);
 - Outline the metanarrative of the New Testament, identifying key figures, places, and events.
 - Find resources that will help you to extend your study of the New Testament.
2. Identify factors that influence Biblical interpretation (methodology)
 - Describe the complex cultural, religious, and historical milieu in which the New Testament was written and canonized;
 - Answer basic questions concerning date, authorship, genre, place of writing, destination, composition, and purpose of the New Testament texts;
 - Compare the distinct presentation of Jesus and/or his followers in the various New Testament texts;
 - Identify several themes of ancient “voices from the margins,” such as *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* and extra-canonical gospels, as well as more modern voices, such as liberation theologians;
 - Outline the main agenda and results of the modern quest for the Historical Jesus;
 - Describe how and why the New Testament became an influential book (canonization);
 - Identify factors that influence reading strategies of the New Testament.

Learning Objectives: Transferable Skills

In this course, you will have an opportunity to develop the following transferable skills:

1. Write an effective short argument using only primary sources (“learning cell papers”);
2. Write an effective short argument integrating research from secondary sources;
3. Develop oral presentation skills;
4. Engage in professional and respectful discussion and behavior;
5. Reflect on your own development as a student.

Assessment:

1. Attendance and Participation (10%).

- Attendance will be taken and participation noted.
- In order to participate, you must be prepared. Before class, complete the reading assignments and the quizzes on the Ehrman web site and be ready to discuss the material.
- Count on about six hours of homework a week.
- **Self Reflection:** You will submit a participation reflection on the last day of classes. See form on Blackboard.

2. Midterm and Final Exams (worth 25% each)

The reading assignments from the textbook (Ehrman's *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*) and the New Testament are meant to form the foundation of the learning process.

- To encourage you to develop long term memory and the integration of information, there will be only two summative assessments: a midterm and final. They consist of multiple choice and comprehensive essay questions drawn from the course objectives;
 - Set aside a page or two in your notebooks for each of the content objectives and add ideas as they occur to you throughout the course;
 - See Blackboard for a description of the exam, study guides, sample questions and advice on writing essay answers on exams.
- Formative assessments are your responsibility. For on-line quizzes on content, check out: <http://www.us.oup.com/us/companion.websites/0195161238/studentresources/?view=usa>
- Form a study group.

3. Four Learning Cells (8 + 10 + 10 + 12 = 40% total) See class outline for dates.

The purpose of these assignments is two-fold: to develop your ability to write short arguments and give oral presentations, and to identify methods within the discipline of biblical studies. Learning cell papers are written on two different levels. You will write 2 A-levels and 2 B-levels. The ascending grade point scale encourages improvement. Unexcused absence on learning cell days is a double-cut. *See Blackboard document folder "Learning Cells" for sample, rubric, etc.*

A-Level:

A-Level Learning Cells are based only on the New Testament reading assignment (primary sources). Do NOT consult secondary sources.

1) *Gather evidence:* Read the entire assigned biblical passages carefully. Keep a list of key words or themes as you read, noting chapter and verse references. Do not assume that you know what the text says; **make sure it is really there!** A concordance might be helpful to identify repetition.

2) *Analyze the evidence:* What themes seem to be the most important and well-developed? Pick two and write a paragraph on each. Include both trends and counter-trends. Structure your paragraphs this way: introduce your theme with a topic sentence, give **at least** three pieces of properly-cited evidence to support the theme, and conclude (restate topic sentence and lead to the next paragraph).

3) *Evaluate the evidence within its context:* In one sentence, state the connection between your two paragraphs outlined above; this is your thesis statement. Write an introduction for your paper that states your thesis and how you will prove it (preview your topic sentences). Write a conclusion that reviews your topic sentences and restates your thesis. Possible questions to

consider: How does this text present Jesus? Is one aspect emphasized over another (e.g., divinity, humanity, sacrifice, priest)? What main image or language is used to describe God? How are the people presented? Are specific people or groups valued over others (e.g., priests, kings, Christians, Jews, Greeks, Gentiles, males, females, apostles/disciples)? What type of punishment or salvation is described? How is salvation achieved? Use concept maps to clarify relationships. (I will demonstrate this.)

4) *Extend your thesis to a new context:* Briefly compare your thesis from this reading with other New Testament texts we have studied so far. Consider any one of the following questions: How does this text fit into or advance the metanarrative? Why does the author tell this story or present this material in this particular way (genre)? What historical situation or event might have provoked this kind of message or understanding of Jesus? [Hint: consider the bias of the author rather than the perspective of Jesus or other characters.] Write your question and a possible solution (no more than one sentence) and insert it into your introduction and conclusion, framing the rest of your paper.

5) Write no more than one page. Edit your papers carefully, using the samples to guide your form. *Do not just re-tell the story!* Before class, submit your paper to turnitin.com. Also, complete the LC rubric, attach it to a paper copy of your LC, and bring it to class the day it is due. The LC will form the basis of class discussion.

B-Level:

Now that you have developed the skill of writing short arguments based on the New Testament alone (primary sources), you will have the opportunity to develop a more sophisticated writing style and argument by including information from secondary sources.

1) *Begin with an examination of the primary source:* Prepare a paper based on #1-4 above. ***

2) *Include research:* Research the question that you identified in #4 above. Consult at least five secondary sources dated after 1975, including your textbook (Ehrman) and the introductions in the *HarperCollins Study Bible*. Include at least one Bible commentary specific to your text (E.g., *Commentary of 1 Corinthians*). See “Research for B-Level Learning Cells” on Blackboard. Do **not** use internet sources. Use proper bibliography format (see samples). Integrate this research into your paper wherever appropriate.

3) These learning cell papers may be up to two pages in length. Before class, submit your paper to turnitin.com. Also, complete the LC rubric, attach it to a paper copy of your LC, and bring it to class the day it is due. The LC will form the basis of class discussion.

A Word about assignments:

- **Late learning cells will not be accepted.**
- See Blackboard for sample learning cells and rubric, and an article on “Plagiarism and Paraphrasing.” Feel free to discuss your concerns with the instructor.
- Submit all written assignments to www.turnitin.com before the due date in order to receive a grade. You need to create a new student profile when you first log in. The course ID number is 1761523 and the course password is ecunt. (Remember: also submit *paper* copies to the instructor on their due date).
- You **MAY** discuss your learning cells with other students. Your written assignments, on the other hand, **must** be your own work. Dependence of one student on another will result in a grade of zero for all parties.

4. Optional Show and Tell (Bonus Points up to 2%) See class outline for dates

The purpose of this assignment is to help you to identify some of the New Testament narratives, archetypes, and images that shape our culture. 3-5 minutes max.

- Locate either a piece of art in a local public secular place (not an art gallery, museum, church, worship space) or a secular film that refers to a biblical narrative or idea. Present it to the class, read or summarize the relevant biblical text, and explain the use of the biblical text in this cultural medium.
- OR, find a political speech since 2005 that refers to a biblical narrative or idea. Present it to the class: read an excerpt from the speech, read or summarize the relevant biblical text, and explain the use of the biblical text in this speech.

Grading

Your course letter grade will be assigned on the basis of the following point system: A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, F=0-59. Fractions will be rounded off to the next highest number. There will be no extra credit, except as mentioned above.

Study Skills

I encourage you to use the resources of the Counseling Center (316 Wright; phone 328 6661) which provides, among many other services, study skills training. Such training programs address time management, note taking, test preparation, test taking, test anxiety, and other issues that make an impact on course performance.

Disability Support Services

ECU seeks to fully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a covered disability must go to the Department for Disability Support Services, located in Brewster A-114, to verify the disability before any accommodations can occur. The telephone number is 252-328-6799.

Required Texts:

- Access to the ECU internet and email is required. There are a number of documents on Blackboard that you will want to print out: <http://ecu.blackboard.com>.
- You will need a modern English translation of the New Testament, preferably the *New Revised Standard Version*. I recommend you obtain *Harper Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books*, Wayne Meeks, general editor.
- The required textbook is Bart D. Ehrman, *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Oxford, 2004). There is a website connected to this text: <http://www.us.oup.com/us/companion.websites/0195161238/studentresources/?view=usa>
- Use Concordances, and Bible Dictionaries, such as *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* or *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, found in the reference section of the Library to answer questions that you may still have.
- For Bible maps, see <http://www.painsley.org.uk/re/Atlas/default.htm>.
- An on-line concordance will help you locate all places where a particular word may be found. See www.gospelcom.net or Bible gateway.



Course Outline (BE= Bart Ehrman's textbook)

- 1/9 Introduction to the course, the general contours of the New Testament.
- 1/11 Intro to the First Century Greco-Roman and Jewish Worlds. Read BE 1-63. Last add date.
- 1/16 The beginning of the New Testament Metanarrative. Before class, read the entire Gospel of Mark, preferably in one sitting. Take a page of notes on the general structure of the book.
- 1/18 Bring to class the study guide for *The Gospel according to Matthew* (93 min) from Bb. Read BE 64-80.
- 1/23 The Gospel of Matthew. Read Mt 1-7, 10, 17:24-20:16; 22:1-23:39; 28; BE 81-98.
- 1/25 The Gospel of Luke. Read Lk 1-4, 6:17-49; 7:36-8:3; 9:51-56; 10:25-42; 15:11-32; 21:1-34; 24, BE 99-115.
- 1/30 The synoptic problem.
- 2/1 The Gospel of John. **A-Level Learning Cell #1: Gospel of John.** Note: Do not focus on the differences between the gospel accounts. (BE 133-157).
- 2/6 Historical Jesus, BE 158-194 **Bonus date.**
- 2/8 Historical Jesus, continued. Read the Extracanonical Gospels on Bb.
- 2/13 Stories of the Early Church: **A-Level Learning Cell #2: Acts 1-12** (BE 116-132). Last day to drop is Feb 14.
- 2/15 Skim Acts 13-28. FILM: *Paul, The Emissary* (54 min). Study Guide on Bb.
- 2/20 The Life of Paul according to Acts. Bring completed study guide. Read Galatians; BE 195-211.
- 2/22 The Letters of Paul: Read Philemon, BE 212-226.
- 2/27 Midterm review. **Bonus date.**
- 3/1 **Midterm exam**
- 3/6 Written by Paul: Read 1 Corinthians: BE 227-260.
- 3/8 Pauline theology and themes. Read Romans; BE 261-274.
- 3/13-15 March break – no class
- 3/20 Written in Paul's name: **B-Level Learning Cell #3: Read Ephesians** (BE 275-286).
- 3/22 The Deutero-Pauline Letters. **Bonus date.**
- 3/27 Written in Paul's name: Read 1 Timothy and Titus, BE 287-306
- 3/29 Counter-voices: Read *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* (on Bb).
- 4/3 Other letters: **B-Level Learning Cell #4: Read Hebrews** (BE 307-329).

- 4/5 Summary of the letters. **Bonus date.**
- 4/10 Apocalypse: Read Revelation, BE 337-351.
- 4/12 Canonization. Re-read BE 1-13.
- 4/17 Conclusions: Bring to class the completed participation reflections (form on Bb).
What have you learned?
- 4/19 Review for exam: Come prepared with several essay questions you think might be
on the exam.
- 5/1 **Exam 2:00-4:30 p.m.**

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