

## Religious Studies 225: The New Testament



**Prof. Mary Suydam Spring 2008**

**Class: Tues-Thurs. 2: 40 - 4**

**Phone PBX 5067**

**Ascension 309**

**Office Hours: MWF 12 - 2**

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### Links

[Resources on Just War Theory](#)

[New Testament Gateway](#)

[From Jesus to Christ \(PBS\)](#)

[Online Greek Bible](#)

[Hyperhistory Online](#)

[Jesus Seminar](#)

[A Synoptic Gospel Primer](#)

[E-Res and Course Reserve \(LBIS\)](#)

[Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary](#)

### Selected Handouts

[Glossary of Terms](#)

[Ten Commandments of Essay Writing](#)

[Film Viewing Guidelines](#)

[The Academic Study of Religion](#)

[Twenty Rules Not to Follow](#)

[Comparison of Mark and Paul](#)

[Timeline of Jewish Biblical History](#)

[Passion Timeline: Mark, Matthew, John](#)

[Formation of the Jesus/Christ Myth](#)

**Goals of the Course:** This course is an introduction to the New Testament, focusing primarily on the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and some of the letters of Paul. We will also analyze books such as Acts, Hebrews, and the book of Revelations. We will learn how these books came to be written, who wrote them, and their intended audiences. We will study how the New Testament slowly assumed its final form. We will learn about some of the methodologies (source, form, and redaction criticism) that scholars use to study the New Testament. The New Testament is critical to understanding the origins of Christianity. We will study the many (and sometimes competing) approaches to Christianity within the ancient world. We will particularly focus upon differing New Testament views of Jesus and his message. We will also study other writings from the ancient world, such as other gospels, testaments, and books of Acts.



## **Required Texts:**

*Harper Collins Study Bible.*

*Gospel Parallels.* B. Throckmorton (Nelson Press), 5th edition.

*From Jesus to Christ.* Paula Fredriksen (Harper-Collins Press).

*Lost Christianities.* Bart Ehrman.. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

**Suggested Texts (we will be reading portions of these texts):**

*Who Wrote the New Testament?* Burton Mack. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995).

*Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet.* Bart Ehrman. (New York: Oxford University Press,).

There will also be E-res and Course Reserve Readings.

**Class Format:** This class is organized as a collaborative exploration with the professor as guide. There will be occasional presentations by the teacher. Classes will focus on serious discussion of the readings. You should come to class each day prepared to discuss the reading for that day. You should also bring the relevant reading materials. Plan especially on bringing the Bible and *Gospel Parallels* every day. Some classes will begin with a problem-solving or analytical exercise related to the topic to be discussed in class. Then we will discuss our theories and strategies. There will also be weekly written assignments (see below).

## **Course Requirements:**

1. **Attendance and Participation: 20%.** Regular attendance is a requirement of this course. This course is structured as a collaborative exchange of information between students and professor. The format of the class is a combination of lecture and discussion, with emphasis on discussion and exploration of texts together. Active discussion of the topics is a critical component of this class. If you are present for every class but never say a word, that is a C. Missing more than two unexcused classes will lower your final grade by one full point (B becomes C, for example). You will be given written feedback on your participation midway through the course.

2. **Weekly writing assignments: 20%** There will be weekly writing assignments each week to aid in

preparing for discussions of the texts. These assignments will focus on the methodology for reading the texts and your discoveries as you apply these critical tools.

**3. Exegesis Paper: 20%.** This will be a critical examination of a portion of New Testament text. For detailed instructions on this assignment, click [Exegesis Paper Instructions](#). Exegesis papers are due March 18.

**4. Group Project: 20%.** This project will allow you to apply what you have learned in the course to a specific topic related to contemporary debates about the New Testament. The reason there are debates is because there is conflicting evidence on these issues within the New Testament texts. As a group you will have to analyze the relevant texts for your topic, study some competing views about these texts, come to an informed decision about them, and present your findings to the rest of the class. For a list of topics and detailed instruction on this assignment, click [Group Project Instructions](#). Class presentations will occupy the last week of class. For important dates click [here](#). The information presented will be part of the material on the final exam. See also [List of Group Members](#).

For grade criteria click [here](#).

**5. Final Exam: 20%.** The final exam will test your ability to think critically about the texts you have studied, including aspects of the class presentations. It will be an open book exam.

## Topics and Reading Assignments

### Week 1: The New Testament World

**Jan. 15:** Introduction to the class; a short walk through the Roman world

#### [A bit of the beatitudes](#)

*Assignment:* gospel beginnings: compare the actual beginnings of each gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) with your original ideas about how they begin or ought to begin. Write a 1-2 page paper about your reactions to this comparison: surprises, questions, issues you would like to know more about.

**Jan. 17:** The story of Israel; Gospel beginnings

#### [The Story of Israel](#)

*Readings:* *From Jesus to Christ*, chapters 2, 5

Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, Introduction

*Harper Collins Study Bible*, xxxix - xliii: "Strategies for Reading Scripture"

**Who was Jesus?** Images of Jesus in the 19th and 20th centuries

**Film:** *From Jesus to Christ*, part I

#### [Gospel Beginnings](#)

### Week 2: Composition of the New Testament: Gospels

**Jan. 22: Discovering the gospels; the triple tradition**

*Readings: From Jesus to Christ, chapter 1*

*E-res: Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet (Bart Ehrman)*

*Schweitzer, The Quest for the Historical Jesus (Handout)*

[When were the gospels written?](#)

**Jan. 24: Understanding the triple tradition; the double tradition and Q**

*Assignment: [The triple tradition](#): Gospel Parallels #52, pages 42-43*

**Who was Jesus? What was his historical context?**

[What's in the Triple Tradition?](#)

**Week 3: Q**

**Jan. 29: Working with Q**

*Readings: The Lost Gospel of Q, chapter 5 (E-Res)*

*Gospel Parallels, #167, 2, 18, 19*

*Ehrman, Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet, chapter 3, 41-53 (Course Reserve)*

[Triple Tradition Insights](#)

[The Double Tradition](#)

**Jan. 31: Form criticism**

*Readings: Ehrman, Lost Christianities, chapter 3*

[Gospel of Thomas sayings](#)

*Assignment: [The double tradition](#): Gospel Parallels #35 and 38.*

**Week 4: Paul**

**Feb. 5: Who was Paul?**

[Double tradition Insights](#)

*Readings: Galatians 4:1-8; Galatians 5:16-26; I Thessalonians 5: 9-26;*

*Burton Mack, Who Wrote the New Testament, chapter 4 (Course Reserve)*

*Film: From Jesus to Christ, part 2*

## [Paul's Kerygma](#)

**Feb. 7: Paul and other Christians; responses to the resurrection**

*Readings: Ehrman, [Lost Christianities](#), chapter 2*

*Readings: [From Jesus to Christ](#), chapter 8*

## [Early Christian Dilemmas](#)

### **Week 5: Paul and Mark**

**Feb. 12: Understanding Paul's context**

*Readings: Burton Mack, [Who Wrote the New Testament](#), chapter 5 (Course Reserve)*

*From Jesus to Christ*, chapter 3, pp. 52-61

## [Pauline concepts](#)

### [Paul's Letter to the Romans](#)

*Assignment: [Pauline terminology](#)*

## [Scriptural Quotations](#)

**Feb. 14: Understanding Mark's context: the Jewish war and the destruction of the Temple**

*Readings: [From Jesus to Christ](#), chapter 9, 177-185*

*Gospel Parallels, #91, 93, 95*

### **Week 6: The Gospel of Mark**

**Feb. 19: The Secret Messiah**

*Readings: [From Jesus to Christ](#), chapter 3, pages 44-52*

## [Pauline Terminology Insights](#)

*Gospel of Mark*, chapters 1-6

## [The Structure of Mark](#)

### [Features of Mark's Gospel](#)

**Feb. 21: Miracle and controversy stories**

*Readings: [Gospel of Mark](#), chapters 7-12*

*Ehrman, [Lost Christianities](#), chapter 4*

[A Review of Stephen Carlson's \*The Gospel Hoax\*](#)

[Morton Smith: One Assessment](#)

[Morton Smith and the Secret Gospel of Mark](#)

[The "James" Ossuary Controversy](#)

**Week 7: Mark Continued: the Passion Narrative**

**Feb. 26:**

[Signups to Discuss Exegesis Paper](#)

*Reading: Gospel of Mark, chapters 13-16*

*Assignment: [Mark's Passion Narrative](#)*

**Feb. 28: Passion Narrative continued**

[Mark's Passion Narrative: Class insights](#)

**Film: *From Jesus to Christ*, part 3**

-----**SPRING BREAK**-----

**Week 8: Matthew**

**March 18:**

*Readings: From Jesus to Christ, 36-43*

**Matthew, chapters 1-7; 20: 1-16**

*Gospel Parallels, #59, 60, 63, 68*

**Exegesis Papers due Tuesday, Mar. 18**

**Choose Topics for Group Presentation.**

[The Gospel of Matthew: Background and Motifs](#)

**March 20:**

*Readings: From Jesus to Christ, chapter 9, 185-191*

**Matthew, chapters 24-28 (and corresponding *Gospel Parallels* 227-231)**

*Lost Christianities, chapter 5*

[Adding New Stories: Truth or Lie?](#)

**Week 9: Luke**

**March 25:**

*Readings: From Jesus to Christ, chapter 9, 191-198*

Luke, chapters 1-2; *Gospel Parallels E-L*

Luke, chapters 10-16; *Gospel Parallels 139-141, 143-144, 173-174, 177*

[Factors contributing to the diversity of Christian groups](#)

[Luke: the book and the author](#)

[Unique features of Luke](#)

**March 27:**

*Readings: From Jesus to Christ, 185-191, 36-44*

Luke, chapters 21-22; *Gospel Parallels 214, 238-240, 244-246, 249-250, 253, CC, DD, EE*

*From Jesus to Christ, 191-198, 27-36*

Ehrman, *Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet*, chapters 8-10 (Course Reserve)

*Assignment for Thursday: [Themes in Luke](#)*

**Week 10 and 11: John**

**April 1: The cosmic Christ**

[Stoicism](#)

*Readings: From Jesus to Christ, 198-204, 19-26*

John, chapters 1-4

[Structure and Features of the Fourth Gospel](#)

[The Logos in Jewish and Hellenistic philosophy](#)

[The Logos in John](#)

[Differing Christologies](#)

**April 3: Seeing is believing**

*Readings: John, chapters 4-9*

Robert Kysar, [John, the Maverick Gospel](#), chapter 3 (Online through Netlibrary)

*Study Assignment: [Themes in John](#)*

[Signs in John](#)



## [Testimony](#)

## [Seeing, Hearing, Knowing](#)

**April 8: John and Qumran**

**Readings: John, chapters 10-16**

## [John and "the World"](#)

## [The Fourth Gospel and Qumran apocalyptic](#)

**Robert Kysar, [John, the Maverick Gospel, chapter 2](#) (Online through Netlibrary)**

**Study Assignment : [Johannine Dualism](#)**

**April 10: The farewell discourse**

**Readings: John, chapters 13-17**

**Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, chapter 6**

## [A Gnostic Cosmic Myth](#)

## [Gnostic Codes](#)

## [Hymn of the Pearl](#)

## [The Gospel of Truth](#)

**Study Assignment for Thursday: [John's Passion Narrative](#)**

**Meet with instructor to go over data for group presentations.**

## **Week 12: The New Testament in context: Acts**

**April 15 and 17**

**Study Assignment for Tuesday: Read the first four chapters of the Book of Acts. Jot down three major themes that are established.**

**Read also: E-res: Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, chapter 9: "Inventing Apostolic Traditions"**

**Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, chapter 7**

## [Acts of the Apostles: Sequence of Events](#)

## [Acts of the Apostles: Myth, Fiction, Tradition](#)

## [Letter of Clement \(ca. 96\)](#)



## [The Apostles' Creed](#)

## [The Martyrdom of Perpetua](#)

**April 17: Dress Rehearsal: Groups 1 and 2 (outside class)**

**Study Assignment for Thursday: Read the book of Acts, chapters 9-15.**

**Readings: *Lost Christianities*, chapter 8**

*From Jesus to Christ*, chapter 10

## [Orthodoxy and heresy](#)

## [Features of the Proto-Orthodox churches](#)

## [Assumptions of the Historical Critical Method](#)

## **Week 13: Early Christian Communities**

**Class presentations will take place Weeks 13 and 14: April 22, 24 and April 29 and May1 .**

**April 22 and 24**

**April 22: Dress Rehearsal: Groups 3 and 4 (outside class)**

**Readings: Colossians, chapters 1-4; Hebrews, chapters 5-10**

**Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament*, chapter 7, pages 183-193 (Course Reserve)**

*Lost Christianities*, chapter 11

## [Assignment 6](#)

## [Forming the Canon](#)

**April 24: The Pastoral Epistles**

## [Colossians-Hebrews Insights](#)

**Readings:**

**I and II Timothy; Titus; James**

*E-Res: Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*, "The Controversy over Christ's Resurrection"*

## [The Pastoral Epistles and James](#)

## [Arguments over Authority in the Second Century](#)

## **Week 14: Revelations**

**April 29**

*Readings: Excerpts from The Da Vinci Code (E-Res)*

[Assignment: Spot the Whoppers](#)

[About Apocalypses](#)

**May 1**

**Revelations 1-7, 17-22**

*Lost Christianities*, chapter 1 and chapter 12

[Battle hymn of the republic \(performance\)](#)

[Battle hymn of the republic \(lyrics\)](#)

**Class Presentations:**

**April 22: The New Testament and Anti Semitism**

**April 24: The New Testament and Women**

**April 29 : [The New Testament and "Family Values"](#)**

**May 1: The New Testament: Peace or War?**