

## UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT

REL 105-WB1

Fall 2013

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Day/Time: Online

**CRN:** 2121

**Course Materials:** The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings, 5th edition, Ehrman: Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0199757534. Access to word processing software (if the student does not own Word, Wordperfect, Pages, etc., they can access free software at <http://www.openoffice.org/download/> and <http://www.libreoffice.org/download/>).

**Course Description:** A basic study of the New Testament. Covers its formation, date of writing, authorship, historical background and the general content of each New Testament book. This course includes the life and teachings of Jesus, and the relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament and to modern society. 3 Credits.

**Class Focus:** For the purposes of this class, this is a *historical* study of the compilation and history of the New Testament. As many, if not most, of you are Christian, this course may be a bit of a challenge. We will analyze not only the books of the New Testament themselves but the *writers* of the texts. We will also study texts that didn't quite make it into the final canon. As such, this will not be a *literal* interpretation of the bible. I hope that in the course of your forum posts and outside research for essays, you will tailor this course to your own interests. For each week's readings, find additional sources online that add to your learning on something *you're* interested in. Then share that with the other students in the forums and write about it in your short papers. I want this to be interactive, so if at any time you find a resource you believe would be beneficial for the entire class, please email it to me ([hjl@vt.edu](mailto:hjl@vt.edu)) and I will pass it along to the rest of the class.

### **Learner Outcomes:**

The following list of course objectives will be addressed in the course. These goals are directly related to the performance objectives.

1. Understand the diversity within early Christianity
2. Discuss the process by which a book became a part of the Christian canon.
3. Analyze the influence of the Greco-Roman world on early Christianity.
4. Contrast the Greco-Roman Jewish sects.
5. Define gospels as ancient biographies.
6. Compare and contrast the figure of Jesus in each of the four canonical gospels.
7. Define the difference between synoptic and non-synoptic gospels.
8. Analyze the importance of the Acts of the Apostles in early Christian literature.

9. Summarize the different roles of the non-canonical gospels in our understanding of early Christian tradition.
10. Contrast the Historical Jesus with the Christ.
11. Trace the historicity of the New Testament with other extracanonical sources.
12. Discuss the Apocalyptic Jesus within early New Testament era tradition.
13. Analyze the message of Paul and how it compares and contrasts with the message of Jesus.
14. Explain the difference between Paul and pseudo-Paul.
15. Define "Pauline Christianities."
16. Discuss the status of women in the early church.
17. Analyze the relationship between both the early Christians and Greco-Roman Jews and between early Christian sects.

### **Course Policies:**

#### *Attendance*

Students are expected to keep up with the course materials and to turn things in when they are due. Please contact me *before* an issue would keep you from doing your work on time if at all possible. Constant communication with me is essential for doing well in this course. You will never "bug me" by writing me an email.

#### *Grading:*

Students must complete the readings for the course in the order they appear and on time. Due dates for readings assignments will be posted at the end of this. Assignments and quizzes may *always* be completed early. Students shall at all times turn in *their own work*.

Each week's work is compiled in a folder under "Content." Complete all work in each folder each week.

All assignments must be turned in Microsoft Word or .rtf (Rich Text) format. No other formats will be accepted. *All assignments* must be written following proper spelling and grammar and free of Internet-speak. If a student needs help with spelling and grammar, I will be more than happy to assist them.

Students should strive to complete all work on time. Work that is not handed in on time will lose 10% of their grade on the assignment for every day it is late. Exceptions can be made to this policy if requests are made prior to the scheduled date and time of an assignment, quiz, or test, or if there is a truly mitigating circumstance. All work can be made up, so please contact the professor if a make-up is needed.

Grades for this course are on a point system. At the end of the semester, the student's grade will be given as a percentage, based on the points earned out of all possible points. The types of graded work in this course include:

- Discussion Posts – Students will have a discussion post due each week. Discussion posts will be a reaction to what they have read that week in the text. They can respond from personal experience, in a respectful way, if they feel that appropriate. Or, they can discuss something that surprised or intrigued them about the reading from that week. Though less formal than the short essays, students must remember that these discussion posts are going to be graded as academic writing, so grammar and spelling will still factor into their grade. Please, no Internet-speak on these discussion posts. **Discussion posts should be about 200 words long and are worth 10 points each.** There will be 15 discussion posts this semester, for up to 150 points. Please see the syllabus for due-dates for each post.
- Discussion Responses – In addition to posting discussion posts, students will also respond to a *minimum of two* of their peers' posts each week. Responses can be shorter, around 50 words, but still must follow the same requirements for quality as discussion posts. **Students will be graded for their first two responses, which should be about 50-100 words each and will total 10 points.** There will be 15 discussion responses this semester, for up to 150 points. Please see the syllabus for due-dates for responses.
- Quizzes – Each week, students will have a quiz on the reading done *that week* in class. They will consist of 30 multiple choice and true-false questions. Quizzes will open on Monday and must be completed by Friday at midnight each week. Students will have 30 minutes to complete each quiz once they begin the quiz. **Each quiz is worth 30 points each.** There will be 15 quizzes this semester, for up to 450 points. Please see the syllabus for quiz dates.
- Short Essays – Weekly, students will have to pick a theme within that week's reading that interests them and do some "further research." This might be news articles, encyclopedia entries, blog posts, something from that week's recommended readings, etc. Students will have to show mastery of the portion of the week's reading that they have chosen as well as documentation of all other info found. These essays should be reflective in nature, showing the instructor how you have approached the material and what you have learned. These essays will be turned in as an Exercise under each week's folder in "Content" on Blackboard. **Short essays should be 400-500 words each and are worth 20 points each.** There will be 15 short essays this semester for up to 300 points. Please see the syllabus for due-dates for each essay. Please note: **WIKIPEDIA IS NEVER AN APPROPRIATE SOURCE FOR ACADEMIC WRITING.** If you are concerned that other resources may not be appropriate, please do not hesitate to pass them by me.

Students final grades will be a percentage of points earned out of points available: \_\_\_\_/1050 points. Students in this course will be graded on the following scale: A: 100-90; B: 89-80; C: 79-70; D: 69-60; F: 59-0

### *Behavior*

The study of politics is incredibly personal for many people. As such, I will always require you to treat myself and your classmates with respect. Students will never be required to talk about their personal beliefs in this course. That being said, if a student wishes to share anything in their response posts, they will be treated with dignity.

### *Academic Integrity and Dishonesty*

Academic dishonesty is any practice which gives one student a dishonorable advantage over another student engaged in the same or similar course of study and which, if known by the instructor in such course of study, would be prohibited. This shall include, but is not limited to, the following: securing or giving assistance during examinations or on required work; the improper use of books, notes, or other sources of information; submitting as one's own work or creation of any kind that which is wholly or in part created by another; securing and/or distributing all or any part of examinations or assignments prior to their being submitted to the class as a whole; or the altering of any grade or academic record. If an occurrence of Academic Dishonesty is observed on the part of a student, the case shall be handled in accordance with the procedures identified in the Student Handbook.

### *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Notice*

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, Eastern West Virginia Community & Technical College programs and courses will be accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and you are seeking accommodations for this course or your academic program, you will need to contact Robert Eagle, Dean for Academic & Student Services, with the Office of Disability Services at 304-434-8000, extension 223.

### *Title VII Notice:*

Eastern West Virginia Technical and Community College is dedicated to ensuring a positive classroom environment. Discriminatory comments and actions based on age, race, religion, marital status, and gender are inappropriate classroom behaviors and will not be tolerated. Any further suggestions that would work to maintain such an environment should be directed to the instructor.

**NOTICE:** This syllabus is subject to change as determined by the instructor. **Students will be provided a written notification of any changes in course requirements and assignments.**

## **Course Schedule**

All assignments posts and discussion posts will be made available to students from the beginning of the course and are due by midnight of the date assigned. Students may complete them at any time before they are due. Quizzes will be made available Monday the week they are due; however, quizzes are timed from the moment of entry, so please set aside enough time to complete these before midnight on the date assigned.

**PLEASE NOTE:** I have attempted to give you about 30 pages of reading a week from the Ehrman text, plus whatever New Testament reading you are recommended to skim. Sometimes that will mean 2 chapters of the Ehrman, other times that may mean more. Please pay attention to how much reading you'll have for the upcoming week and plan accordingly, because there is quite a bit of reading for this class.

### **Week One (August 19-23) – Introduction to Online Courses**

- Monday: Syllabus and Online Materials, located on Blackboard. Please visit all parts of the course and read the syllabus carefully.
- Tuesday: Discussion 1 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 1 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 1 (What I Hope to Learn in “Understanding the New Testament”) due by midnight in Content.
- Friday: Quiz 1 over the syllabus due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

### **Week Two (August 26-30) – WHAT IS THE NEW TESTAMENT? THE EARLY CHRISTIANS AND THEIR LITERATURE; DO WE HAVE THE ORIGINAL NEW TESTAMENT?**

- Monday: Ehrman Chapters 1-2
- Tuesday: Discussion 2 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 2 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 2 due by midnight in Content (On Chapters 1-2 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 2 over Chapter 1-2 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

### **Week Three (September 2-6) – THE WORLD OF EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS; THE JEWISH CONTEXT OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS**

- Monday: No Class – Labor Day
- Tuesday: Ehrman, Chapters 3-4; Discussion 3 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 3 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 3 due by midnight in Content (On Chapters 3-4 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 3 over Chapters 3-4 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Four (September 9-13) – THE TRADITIONS OF JESUS IN THEIR GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT; THE CHRISTIAN GOSPELS: A LITERARY AND HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION; JESUS, THE SUFFERING SON OF GOD: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapters 5-7
  - *Recommended:* The Gospel of Mark (see week 4 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 4 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 4 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 4 due by midnight in Content (On Chapters 5-7 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 4 over Chapters 5-7 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Five (September 16-20) – THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR INTERPRETATION; JESUS, THE JEWISH MESSIAH: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 8-9
  - *Recommended:* The Gospel of Matthew (see week 5 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 5 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 5 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 5 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 8-9 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 5 over Chapter 8-9 (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Six (September 23-27) – JESUS, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE; LUKE'S SECOND VOLUME: THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 10-11
  - *Recommended:* The Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles (see Week 6 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 6 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 6 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 6 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 10-11 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 6 over Chapter 10-11 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Seven (September 30-October 4) – JESUS, THE MAN SENT FROM HEAVEN: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN; FROM JOHN'S JESUS TO THE Gnostic CHRIST: THE JOHANNINE EPISTLES AND BEYOND**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapters 12-13
  - *Recommended:* The Gospel of John and 1, 2, and 3 John (see Week 7 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 7 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 7 due by midnight in Forums; Thursday: Response 7 due by midnight in Forums
- Thursday: Short Essay 7 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 12-13 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 7 over Chapters 12-13 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Eight (October 7-11) – JESUS FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES: OTHER GOSPELS IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY; THE HISTORICAL JESUS: SOURCES, PROBLEMS, AND METHODS; EXCURSUS: THE HISTORIAN AND THE PROBLEM OF MIRACLE**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 14-16
  - *Recommended:* The Gospel of Q, The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, The Infancy Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of James (see Week 8 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 8 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 8 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 8 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 14-16 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 8 over Chapter 14-16 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Nine (October 14-18) – JESUS IN CONTEXT; JESUS, THE APOCALYPTIC PROPHET**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 17-18
- Tuesday: Discussion 9 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 9 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 9 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 17-18 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 9 over Chapter 17-18 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Ten (October 21-25) – FROM JESUS TO THE GOSPELS; PAUL THE APOSTLE: THE MAN AND HIS MISSION**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 19-20
  - *Recommended:* The Acts of Paul and Thecla (see Week 10 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 10 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 10 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 10 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 19-20 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 10 over Chapter 19-20 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Eleven (October 28-November 1) – PAUL AND HIS APOSTOLIC MISSION: 1 THESSALONIANS AS A TEST CASE PAUL; THE CRISES OF HIS CHURCHES: 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS, GALATIANS, PHILIPPIANS, AND PHILEMON**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 21-22
  - *Recommended:* 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, and Philemon (see Week 11 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 11 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 11 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 11 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 21-22 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 11 over Chapter 21-22 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Twelve (November 4-8) – THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL: THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS; DOES THE TRADITION MISCARRY? PAUL IN RELATION TO JESUS, JAMES, THECLA, AND THEUDAS**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 23-24
  - *Recommended:* The Epistle to the Romans, The Epistle of James (see Week 12 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 12 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 12 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 12 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 23-24 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 12 over Chapter 23-24 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).



**Week Thirteen (November 11-15) – IN THE WAKE OF THE APOSTLE: THE DEUTERO-PAULINE AND PASTORAL EPISTLES; FROM PAUL'S FEMALE COLLEAGUES TO THE PASTOR'S INTIMIDATED WOMEN: THE OPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 25-26
  - *Recommended:* 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, 3 Corinthians (see Week 13 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 13 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 13 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 13 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 25-26 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 13 over Chapter 25-26 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Fourteen (November 18-22) – CHRISTIANS AND JEWS: HEBREWS, BARNABAS, AND LATER ANTI-JEWISH LITERATURE; CHRISTIANS AND PAGANS: 1 PETER, THE LETTERS OF IGNATIUS, THE *MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP*, AND LATER APOLOGETIC LITERATURE**

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 27-28
  - *Recommended:* Epistle to the Hebrews, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Epistle of 1 Peter, The Martyrdom of Polycarp (See Week 14 folder in Content)
- Tuesday: Discussion 14 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 4 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 14 due by midnight in Content (On Chapter 27-28 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 14 over Chapter 27-28 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).

**Week Fifteen (November 25-29) – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)**

**Week Sixteen (December 2-6) – CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANS: JAMES, THE *DIDACHE*, POLYCARP, 1 CLEMENT, JUDE, AND 2 PETER; CHRISTIANS AND THE COSMOS: THE REVELATION OF JOHN, THE *SHEPHERD OF HERMAS*, AND THE *APOCALYPSE OF PETER***

- Monday: Ehrman, Chapter 29-30
  - *Recommended:* The Didache of the Twelve Apostles, Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians, 1 Clement, The Epistle of Jude, 2 Peter, The Revelation of John, The Shepherd of Hermas, The Apocalypse of Peter
- Tuesday: Discussion 15 due by midnight in Forums.
- Wednesday: Response 15 due by midnight in Forums.
- Thursday: Short Essay 15 due by midnight in Content (on 29-30 with additional resources found by the student).
- Friday: Quiz 15 over Chapter 29-30 due by midnight (can be done at any time this week).