NEW TESTAMENT AND THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIANITY

Course Description

Through attention to a variety of sources, this course deals with the beginnings of Christianity. Textual sources will include various writings preserved by early Christians, including the anthology now known as the "New Testament." The aims of the course are historical and we will investigate some of the ways in which early Christian discourse about social formation, morality, and the divine compared with popular religious and philosophical views of the time. The course meets twice weekly for lecture, discussion and small-group projects. The course has no prerequisites.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the ancient sources available for an historical reconstruction of the formation of Christianity;
- Compare and critically engage the various theories and methods that historians use to approach the ancient sources;
- Identify current issues and debates among scholars of early Christianity and explain why these issues are significant within the academic study of religion.

Textbooks


Ehrman, Bart D. Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) [listed in class schedule as "Ehrman,""]


Course Requirements

Each of the following components is worth 25% of the final grade [details pending]:

- Participation (quizzes, in-class discussion, in-class group projects)
- Exam #1: Paul & Pauline Traditions
- Critical Book Review
- Exam #2: Gospels, Acts, Apocalypses

Grading Scheme

A = 90-100; B+ = 87-89; B = 80-86; C+ = 77-79; C = 70-76; D+ = 67-69; D= 60-66; F = 59 or less
CLASS SCHEDULE

Week One

August 22  Topic: Introduction to the Course
August 24  Topic: Sources, Theories, and Methods
           Read: Ehrman, 330-342; Ehrman, xxxiii-68 (skim; I will introduce much of this
           material in the first class meeting)

Week Two

August 29  Topic: Letter Writing and Social Formation
           Read: 1 Thessalonians; Ehrman, 306-338
           Prepare: TBD
August 31  Topic: The Corinthian Correspondence
           Read: 1 & 2 Corinthians; Ehrman, 339-354
           Prepare: TBD

Week Three

September 5 Labor Day, NO CLASS
September 7  Topic: Paul's Gospel
           Read: Galatians, Philippians, Philemon; Ehrman, 354-371
           Prepare: TBD

Week Four

September 12 Topic: Letter to the Romans, Part 1
                Read: Romans
                Prepare: TBD
September 14 Topic: Letter to the Romans, Part 2
                Read: Romans (again); Ehrman, 372-385
                Prepare: TBD

Week Five

September 19 Topic: Pauline Traditions
                Read: 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus; 3 Corinthians,
                Paul and Seneca, Laodiceans (in Ehrman, 156-166); Ehrman, 397-420;
                Prepare: TBD
September 21 Topic: Review
                Read: TBD
                Prepare: TBD

Week Six

September 26  * * * Exam #1: Paul & Pauline Traditions  * * *
September 28  Topic: Gospel-Writing & Social Formation
                Read: Mark; Ehrman, 69-104
                Prepare: TBD
Week Seven

October 3  Topic: Gospel of Matthew  
Read: Matthew; Ehrman, 114-133  
Prepare: TBD

October 5  Topic: Gospel of Luke  
Read: Luke; Ehrman, 134-153  
Prepare: TBD

Week Eight

October 10  Topic: Literary Relationship of Synoptics; Synoptic Comparison [bring GP to class]  
Read: Q-source (on Blackboard); Ehrman, 105-113  
Prepare: TBD

October 12  Topic: Synoptic Comparison [bring GP to class]  
Read: TBD  
Prepare: TBD

Week Nine

October 17  Topic: Synoptic Comparison [bring GP to class]  
Read: TBD  
Prepare: TBD

October 19  Topic: Gospel of John  
Read: John; Ehrman, 176-197  
Prepare: TBD

Week Ten

October 24  Topic: Johannine Stuff  
Read: 1, 2, 3 John; Ehrman, 198-216  
Prepare: TBD

October 26  Topic: A Bunch of other Gospels  
Read: Ehrman, 8-89; Ehrman, 217-336  
Prepare: TBD

Week Eleven

October 31  Topic: Acta and Social Formation  
Read: Acts of the Apostles; Ehrman, 154-175  
Prepare: TBD

November 2  Topic: A Bunch of Other Acts  
Read: Ehrman, 91-154  
Prepare: TBD

November 5  Constructing Christianity Conference, USC [details pending]

Week Twelve

November 7  Topic: Boundary & Identity Formation  
Read: Hebrews, Barnabas (in Ehrman, 219-235); Ehrman, 435-453  
Prepare: TBD
November 9  Topic: Boundary & Identity Formation
Read: 1 Peter, Letters of Ignatius (on Blackboard), Martyrdom of Polycarp (on Blackboard); Ehrman, 454-473
Prepare: TBD

Week Thirteen

November 14  Topic: Boundary & Identity Formation
Read: James, 2 Peter, Jude; 1 Clement, Didache (in Ehrman, 167-184, 211-218); Ehrman, 474-489
Prepare: TBD

November 16  Book Reviews and Discussion

Week Fourteen

November 21  SBL/AAR Annual Meeting in San Francisco, NO CLASS
November 23  Thanksgiving Recess, NO CLASS

Week Fifteen

November 28  Topic: Apocalypses
Read: Revelation of John; The Shepherd of Hermas, The Apocalypse of Peter, The Apocalypse of Paul (in Ehrman, 249-296); Ehrman, 490-507
Prepare: TBD

November 30  Review
Read: TBD
Prepare: TBD

December 7  * * * Exam #2: Gospels, Acts, Apocalypses * * *
5:30 pm