

1-2010

RELS 211.01: Introduction to New Testament Studies

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Recommended Citation

Levtow, Nathaniel B., "RELS 211.01: Introduction to New Testament Studies" (2010). *Syllabi*. 957.
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Office Hours:
Tu Th 4:00-5:30 pm
& by appointment

RELS 211: Introduction to New Testament Studies

Spring Semester 2010
Tu Th 11:10-12:30 pm: SS 344

Course description

This course introduces students to the New Testament and to the ancient Mediterranean world of its authors. We devote the first weeks of our course to the cultural contexts of the New Testament writings: Greco-Roman history and religion, and ancient Judaism. We then investigate the four “canonical gospels,” the letters of Paul, and related ancient documents that were not included in the New Testament, in an effort to understand the New Testament in its historical and literary context. Students will be introduced to the diverse cultures of the Mediterranean world in the first century C.E., and to modern literary and historical methods in the study of ancient religion and literature.

Textbooks

The Harper Collins Study Bible (an NRSV translation of the Bible is required)
Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (4th Edition; Oxford, 2008)
John D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (HarperCollins, 1994)
John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Princeton, 2000)

e-reserve: e-reserve readings noted in the syllabus may be accessed and printed out through the Mansfield Library Course Reserves website (<http://eres.lib.umt.edu/eres/>) using the course password “RELS211”

Course Requirements

Regular attendance is essential and required. Reading assignments are to be done before the lecture for which they are assigned.

Three quizzes: on the dates listed in the course schedule below.

Midterm exam: to be taken during the class period on **Thursday March 25**.

One paper: Due on **Tuesday May 4**, on a topic to be handed out. Approximately 5 pages in length, double-spaced, stapled, with one inch margins, using 12 point font.

Final exam: on **Tuesday May 11, 8:00 – 10:00 AM**. The final will be comprehensive for the semester.

Grading policies are as follows:

Attendance and participation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm examination	25%
Paper	25%
Final examination	25%

Course Policies:

- 1) There will be no make-up quizzes or extensions unless the student has made arrangements at least a week ahead of time. Students who leave the classroom before the end of the class meeting will be counted as absent. If you miss a class meeting, *it is then your responsibility to obtain from a classmate any class notes and other assignment and scheduling information discussed during your absence.*
- 2) Students are allowed three cuts, no penalties or questions asked. Each additional cut (including early departures from class) will reduce the attendance and participation grade by 10% (that is, 1% of your final grade).
- 3) This is a course about religion as an academic subject and the development of the Bible in historical context. This is not a class that teaches religion or religious doctrine from a religious and/or devotional perspective. In this class, we will be examining biblical literature in an academic and secular setting, and treating the biblical text as an ancient document open to questioning, examination, criticism, and interpretation. An interest in exploring new ideas and new methods of examining the biblical text are essential. This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.
- 4) Plagiarism – the presentation of others’ work as your own – is an offense punishable by course failure and/or expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and all references to ideas from books, articles, or other sources must be cited correctly. If you do not know how to properly reference your work, or you are in doubt whether or not you should cite material, refer to the University guidelines, or make an appointment to see the instructor to discuss the problem. Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, falsification or any other form of academic dishonesty will fail this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean.



Course Schedule

I. Introduction to the course: methods and topics

Week 1

Tu 1/26

Introductions: Studying the New Testament in the modern university

Th 1/28

How to read the New Testament as a literary and historical document

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 1 and ch. 30

II. New Testament Contexts

Week 2

Tu 2/2 *Map Quiz*

The Hellenistic Mediterranean world: history and culture

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 2

e-reserve: "Savior Gods in the Mediterranean World"

Th 2/4

The Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 1 p. 4 (Box 1.2) and ch. 3 pp. 36-46

e-reserve: M. Sweeney, "The Religious World of Ancient Israel to 586"

e-reserve: J. Purvis, "Exile and Return" (optional)

Week 3

Tu 2/9

Ancient Judaisms

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 3 pp. 46-54 and ch. 16

e-reserve: S. Cohen, "Roman Domination"

Th 2/11

Greco-Roman religion

e-reserve: Roman Cult (Cult Scenes, Cult Groups, Imperial Cult)

e-reserve: Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11

III. The Gospels and the Jesus Movement

Week 4

Tu 2/16 *Quiz: New Testament contexts*

From Jesus to Christ (1)

Reading: Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, Prologue, Chs. 1-2

Th 2/18

How to read a Gospel

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 4, ch. 5

Mark 1-7

Week 5

Tu 2/23

The Synoptic Problem

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 7

Matthew 1-14

Th 2/25

From Jesus to Christ (2)

Reading: Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, Chs. 3-4

Week 6

Tu 3/2 *No class (academic conference)*

Read Gager, pp. 3-75

Th 3/4 *No class (academic conference)*

Read Gager, pp. 77-152

Week 7

Tu 3/9

Mark

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 6

Mark 1-7 (review it again), 8-16

Th 3/11

Matthew

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 8

Matthew 1-14 (review it again), 15-28

Week 8

Tu 3/16

Luke

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 9

Luke

Philemon 24

Col 4:14

2 Tim 4:11

Acts 1:1-2:21

Cf. Mark 9:1; Thess 1:9-10; Rom 13:11-12

Th 3/18

John

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 11

John

1 John

2 John

Week 9

Tu 3/23

Review

From Jesus to Christ (3)

Reading: Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography, Chs. 5-7

Th 3/25

*** Midterm exam ***

Week 10

Tu 3/29 - Th 4/2: Spring Break →

IV. The Historical Jesus

Week 11

Tu 4/6 ***Paper Due in Class* (for rewrite option)**

The Historical Jesus (1)

Reading: Ehrman, chs. 14, 15

Th 4/8

The Historical Jesus (2)

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 17, 18

V. The earliest evidence: The Life, Letters, Communities, and Thought of Paul

Week 12

Tu 4/13

Paul of Tarsus: life, mission, and writings

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 19

(cf. Gager 3-42)

Galatians, 1:11 - 2:14

Acts 9:1-31; 13:1 - 22:21 (skim); 23:6; 26:4-5,17

Romans 11:1; Philip. 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22

Th 4/15

Paul and the life of his communities

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 20

(cf. Gager 43-75)

1 Thessalonians

1 Corinthians

Week 13

Tu 4/20

Paul and the Apocalypse

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 21

(cf. Gager 77-99)

1 Corinthians 15

1 Thessalonians 4

Romans 9-11, 13:11-14

Th 4/22

Pauline thought: Jews, Gentiles, and the Law

Reading: Ehrman, Ch. 22

(cf. Gager, 101-152)

Galatians 3 - 4

Romans 1-16

Week 14

Tu 4/27 ***Quiz: Paul***

V. Community, Controversy, and Canonization: The Earliest Christian Churches and the Making of the New Testament

Th 4/29

Sex, gender, and the early Christian household

Readings: Ehrman Ch. 25

1 Corinthians 5-7, 11, 14

1 Timothy 2

Romans 1:18-32, 2:12-16

Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9

Colossians 3:18 – 4:1

Titus 2:2-10, 3:1

1 Peter 2:16 – 3:7

Week 15

Tu 5/4 ***Paper Due in Class* (including rewrites)**

Non-Canonical Gospels, Esoteric Teachings of Jesus

Reading: Ehrman Chs. 12 and 13

1 John (review it)

e-reserve: Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Truth

Th 5/6

The Second Century: Heresy and Canonization

e-reserve: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

New Testament Early Canon Lists

Tertullian, *Prescription of the Heretics* (optional)

Final examination: Tuesday May 11, 8:00 – 10:00 AM