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RELS 107.01: Introduction to New Testament Studies

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The University Of Montana

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Fall 2000

Religious Studies 107: Introduction to New Testament Studies

This course serves as an introduction to the New Testament--the founding document of Christianity--and to the modern methods that scholars have used to interpret this text as part of an ongoing effort to discover what they can about the lives of the first Christians.

Who was Jesus? Why was he executed by the Romans? Who were his first followers? What did they believe? How did they live? How, with what they understood as the guidance of a man now dead, did these people start a movement that would, for better or worse, change the course of history?

The course will explore these questions, among others, using as its guide two recent books in New Testament scholarship. In addition to reading substantial portions of these books, we will, of course, read most, though not all, of the New Testament itself.

Required texts:

The New Oxford Annotated Bible (or an equivalent modern translation)
John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*
Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*

Assignments and grades:

Readings will be assigned weekly. The reading will be generally heavy (50-100pages per week).

There will be two exams--a midterm and a comprehensive final. The midterm will be given about half way through the semester (perhaps on October 24?). The final will be on Tuesday, December 19, from 5:30 to 7:30. The midterm will count for 25% of your grade and the final for 50%. The other 25% of your grade will rest on a 1,500-2,000 word paper on a topic of your choice but approved by me.

The course will be a mix of lecture and discussion, which is also to say that it will not follow any fixed program or schedule. This fact, combined with the fact that each class will cover a week's worth of material, makes it imperative that students attend all the classes. It will be extremely difficult to recover the material of any given three-hour session.

I will not give make-up exams, accept late papers, or grant incompletes (making exceptions, of course, for extraordinary circumstances).

Cheating or plagiarism will result in an F for the course.