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RLST 205L.01: Introduction to New Testament

Nathaniel B. Levtow

University of Montana - Missoula, nathaniel.levtow@umontana.edu

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Dr. Nathaniel B. Levtow
Office: LA 156
Office Tel: 243-2845
Email: nathaniel.levtow@umontana.edu

Office Hours:
Tu 1:00 – 2:00 pm,
Th 1:00 – 3:00 pm,
& by appointment

RLST 205 L: Introduction to New Testament Studies

38665 Spring Semester 2018
T R 11:00 am – 12:20 pm; LA 207

Course description

This course offers an introduction to the New Testament and to the ancient world of its authors. In the first weeks we survey the New Testament's cultural contexts: the Hebrew Bible (= Old Testament), ancient Judaism, and Greco-Roman history and religion. We then focus on New Testament writings including the four canonical gospels, the letters of Paul, and other ancient documents within and outside of the Bible. Our goal is to understand earliest Christian literature, history, religion and society through a focus on New Testament texts and contexts. Students will be introduced to the diverse cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world and to the study of the Bible in the modern university.

Required Textbooks

The Harper Collins Study Bible (or any printed NRSV translation of the Bible)
Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (6th edition; Oxford, 2016). Note: the 4th or 5th editions are acceptable; this syllabus follows the 6th (2016) edition's pagination and chapter sequence.
E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (Penguin, 1993)
John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Princeton, 2000)

* Digital documents noted in the syllabus may be downloaded and printed out on Moodle.

Course Requirements

Regular attendance is essential and required. Reading assignments are to be completed *before* the lecture for which they are assigned. It is recommended that you bring your Bibles to class with you.

Quizzes: Three brief quizzes will be given at the start of class on Jan. 30, Feb 13, and April 19.

Midterm exam: To be taken in class on Tuesday March 13.

One paper: On a topic to be provided by the instructor. Approximately 5 pages in length, double-spaced, stapled, with one-inch margins, in 12 point font.

Final exam: The final exam (May 10) will focus on material in the second half of the course.

Grading:

Attendance and participation	15%
Quizzes	15%
Midterm examination	20%
Paper	25%
Final examination	25%

Course policies and classroom expectations:

- 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 one cut without penalty. Each additional cut (including early departures from class) will reduce the attendance and participation grade by 10% (=1.5% of 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 biblical texts as ancient documents open to questioning, examination, criticism, and interpretation. An interest in exploring new ideas and new methods of examining the Bible are essential. This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.
- 4) Students may not use any electronic communication devices in the classroom. Students using phones, tablets or computers to text or go online during class will be asked to leave the classroom and return after they have finished their electronic communications.
- 5) 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.
- 6) Disability accommodations: Students with disabilities may develop a course accommodation plan with the assistance of Disability Services. The instructor will assist in facilitating all disability accommodations.

Course Schedule

**Note: this schedule may change as our course progresses. Regular attendance will ensure that students are informed of any changes.*

I. Introduction to the course: methods and topics

Week 1

Tu 1/23

Introduction: The New Testament in the modern university

Th 1/25

Approaching the New Testament as an ancient literary and historical document

Reading: Ehrman, chs. 1 and 2

II. New Testament Contexts

Week 2

Tu 1/30 ***Map Quiz***

The Hellenistic Mediterranean world

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 3
Sanders, pp. vii-xii, 1-14
e-reserve: "Savior Gods in the Mediterranean World"

Th 2/1

The Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 4 (and review ch. 1 p. 7 (Box 1.2)
Sanders, pp. 15-32

Week 3

Tu 2/6

Ancient Judaism

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 16
Sanders, pp. 33-48

Th 2/8

Greco-Roman religion

Reading: Sanders, pp. 49-56
e-reserve: Roman Cult (Cult Scenes, Cult Groups, Imperial Cult)
e-reserve: Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 11

Week 4

Tu 2/13 *Quiz: New Testament contexts*

From Jesus to Christ (1)

Reading: Sanders, pp. 57-76

III. The Gospels and the Jesus Movement

Th 2/15

Encountering the Gospels

Reading: Ehrman, chs. 5 and 6
Gospel of Mark 1-7
Review Sanders, pp. 57-76

Week 5

Tu 2/20

The Synoptic Problem

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 8
Gospel of Matthew 1-14

Th 2/22

Mark

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 7
Gospel of Mark 1-7 (read it again), 8-16

Week 6

Tu 2/27

Matthew

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 9
Gospel of Matthew 1-14 (read it again), 15-28

Th 3/1

Luke

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 10
Gospel of Luke
Philemon 24; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11
Acts 1:1-2:21
Ehrman Ch. 19 (skim)

Week 7

Tu 3/6

John

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 11
Gospel of John
1 John
2 John

Th 3/8 Review and catch-up

From Jesus to Christ (2)

Reading: Sanders, 78-131

Week 8

Tu 3/13 ***Midterm exam***

IV. The Historical Jesus

Th 3/15

The Historical Jesus (1)

Reading: Ehrman, chs. 14 and 15
Sanders, 132-68

Week 9

Tu 3/20

The Historical Jesus (2)

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 16 and review ch.17
Sanders, 169-204

Th 3/22

From Jesus to Christ (3)

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 18
Sanders, 205-81

Week 10

Tu 3/27 - Th 3/29 Spring Break →

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

Week 11

Tu 4/3

Paul of Tarsus: life, mission, and writings

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 20 and begin ch. 21
Galatians, 1:11 - 2:14
Acts 9:1-31; 13:1 - 22:21; 23:6; 26:4-5,17
Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 11:22
Ehrman Ch. 19 (skim)

Th 4/5

Paul and the life of his communities

Reading: Ehrman, ch. 21 (finish) and ch. 22
Gager, pp. 3-19
Acts 18:1-18
1 Thessalonians
1 Corinthians

Week 12

Tu 4/10

Paul and the Apocalypse

Reading: Gager, pp. 21-42
Ehrman, ch. 23
1 Corinthians 15
1 Thessalonians 1:10; 4:1- 5:11
Romans 9-11, 13:11-14

Th 4/12

Paul: Pharisee and apostle to the Gentiles

Reading: Gager, pp. 43-99
Galatians

Week 13

Tu 4/17

Pauline thought: Jews, Gentiles and the Law

Reading: Gager, 101-152
Ehrman, pp. 435-38, 449-52
Romans

Th 4/19 ***Quiz: Paul***

Reading: *Gager, 3-152 (review)*

Ehrman, *chs. 20-23 (review)*, ch. 24
Galatians, Corinthians, Romans (review)

VI. Apocalyptic Literature

Week 14

Tu 4/24

The Book of Revelation

Reading: Ehrman, Ch. 30
Revelation

VII. Community and Controversy: Heresy and Canonization

Th 4/26

Sex, gender and the early Christian household

Reading: Ehrman Chs. 25 and 26
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 5/1 ***Paper Due in Class***

Non-Canonical Gospels, Esoteric Teachings of Jesus

Reading: Ehrman Chs. 12 and 13
1 John (review)
e-reserve: Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Truth

Th 5/3

The Second Century: The Emergence of the Christian Bible

Reading: *e-reserve*: Iranaeus, *Against Heresies*
Early New Testament Canon Lists
Tertullian, *Prescription of the Heretics* (recommended)

Final examination: In class on Thursday May 10, 8:00 – 10:00 am