

New Testament and Early Christian Writings (640:142:01): Spring 2010

Instructor: Dr. Kenneth Atkinson
Office: Baker 154
Office Phone: 273-6990
Office Hours: I maintain an open door policy for your convenience. Feel free to drop by my office whenever my door is open. I am always happy to talk with students.

Dates: MWF
Time: 9:00-10:00 p.m.
Location: Lang Hall 211
E-mail: Kenneth.Atkinson@uni.edu

My policy is to answer your message once I have received it. I try to check my e-mail throughout the day, so if you have not heard back from me please be patient.

Mailbox: Baker 135. I check my mailbox each day in case you want to drop something off for me to read.

Course Web Site:
<http://www.uni.edu/atkinson>

Visit my web site frequently for class updates and links to sites of interest.

Required Text:

1. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, Third Edition, New Revised Standard Version*. Michael D. Coogan, General Editor (Oxford University Press, 2001). **Note: You must use this Bible.**
2. Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. Fourth Edition (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Course Description:

Each day people as varied as lawmakers, journalists, teachers, and members of religious communities invoke the New Testament to sway public opinion or to regulate contemporary life. The problem for those who consider the New Testament a binding authority for today's world is how to interpret it. Because the New Testament reflects an ancient culture that no longer exists, and was written in a language that few know today, it is often a difficult book to understand. This course seeks to help you overcome these problems by introducing you to the history and ideas of the New Testament and other early Christian writings and the methods biblical scholars use to understand them. My goal is to provide you with the skills necessary to interpret the New Testament, and to help you evaluate the ways that people use this text. The methods that you will learn in this class are not only appropriate to religious studies, but are also necessary in order to become a critical thinker and lifelong learner.

In this class you will examine how the books of the New Testament came into being, who produced them, what they mean, and how they came to be collected into a canon of Scripture. You will not only examine the New Testament, but you will also read a variety of other early Christian writings that shed light on the development of Christianity. Classes will also include presentations of recent archaeological and textual discoveries from the instructor's archaeological excavations and research on the Dead Sea Scrolls that help us to understand the world of the New Testament and early Christianity.

Course Objectives:

This course is not only an introduction to the New Testament and early Christian writings, but it is also an examination of academic approaches to these works. The lectures will expose you to the New Testament documents within the historical context of the first two centuries C.E., highlighting their distinctive literary and religious features. Some of the questions we will examine include:

- Does the Book of Revelation predict the end of the world?
- Have archaeologists uncovered the tomb of Jesus?
- Is there ancient historical testimony that Jesus existed?
- Do the Dead Sea Scrolls undermine Christianity?
- Do we have the original text of the New Testament?
- Who decided which books should be included in the New Testament?
- What was the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene?

In this class you will also read lost gospels hidden in the Egyptian desert (the Nag Hammadi texts); learn about archaeological evidence of crucifixion; discover what happens during an archaeological excavation; and learn about women bishops in the first century C.E. By examining the New Testament in light of its historical and cultural background, you will not only learn how Christianity developed, but you will also gain an understanding of why people disagree, and have fought for centuries, over how the New Testament should be interpreted. My goals in this class are:

- To provide you with a basic understanding of the foundational beliefs, practices, and diversity of ancient Christianity.
- To help you understand how the text of the New Testament has been transmitted and reconstructed.
- To introduce you to the world in which the New Testament's authors lived.
- To introduce you to the tools scholars use to understand the New Testament. This course is not only an introduction to the New Testament and early Christian writings, but it is also an examination of academic approaches to these works. The lectures will expose you to the New Testament documents within the historical context of the first two centuries C.E., highlighting their distinctive literary and religious features. Some of the questions we will examine include:

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Course Requirements:

1. Attendance/Class Participation (approximately 20% of grade). This course requires your active participation. Because you have chosen to take this class, I assume that you want to learn as much as possible about the New Testament and the academic study of religion. If so, then please be certain to arrive on time ready to share your ideas and thoughts on the assigned readings. Please be respectful of other students regardless of whether or not you agree with their opinions. I expect you to remain open to new ideas throughout this course, which is the first requirement of the academic study of religion. Because attendance is critical to understand the material and texts that we will study, I will deduct a few points for more than three unexcused absences when I determine your final grade. I assume that you will miss a few classes due to illnesses, university activities, or other life issues. Only unexcused absences will be penalized, so if you have a good reason for missing class I will not count your absence. If you are sick you do not need to obtain a note from a doctor or nurse to prove your illness. I will trust you, so just let me know that you were ill, and I will not count your absence. Whether your absence is excused or not, you are required to keep up with the readings and lectures. If you miss a class, I suggest that you obtain copies of the notes from a fellow student. I am always happy to sit down with you and go over any material at any time. I am pleased to have you in my class if you are involved in any university program (sports, ROTC, student government, etc.) that may occasionally prevent you from attending this course. Please provide me with a letter by January 22 about your activity or program, the name and phone number of a contact person, and the projected number of absences

2.Quizzes(4 total; approximately 40% of grade). There are four quizzes. Each quiz covers the assigned readings and the lectures. All quizzes are worth 50 points. There are no make-up quizzes. The quizzes will cover major events, people, places, and vocabulary from the assigned readings and material presented in class. Because we have much material to cover in this class, I may not discuss each reading in depth. I like to include a few questions on material that I did not explain in class in order to reward you for reading the assigned texts

4. Exams (4 exams; approximately 40% of grade). There are four (4) exams in this class. Each exam includes identifications of events, terms, names, quotations, multiple-choice, and sentences for you to complete with the appropriate word. You must be present for the exams: no make-up exams will be given unless you have an excused absence in advance or some legitimate emergency! The exams are not cumulative

General Comments: I am required by the university to provide you with the following information.

•**Grading:** When I calculate your final grade I will look at how you have improved during the class. I like to see evidence of intellectual development over the course of the semester. I will reward you for your contributions to the class discussions and your regular attendance. If you simply show up for each class, do the readings, and participate in class discussions, as well as study the assigned materials, you should have no trouble receiving a passing grade for this course.

•**Reading:** In addition to the readings listed on this syllabus, I will periodically send you short readings about

current events by e-mail. These will be sent to your university e-mail account. You must have access to your assigned UNI e-mail address for this class. If you need help with your university e-mail account, please consult the ITS home page for assistance (<http://www.uni.edu/its/us/faqs/email/email14.htm>). Make certain that you periodically delete old messages since these accounts are rather small.

•**Final Exam:** Note the Final Examination Schedule in your Spring 2010 Schedule of Classes (page 17) on the UNI website (<http://www.uni.edu/registrar/reginfo/index.shtml>). Please read this information and keep this chart handy since some exams are scheduled for different dates and times. I am required to adhere to this schedule unless you follow the procedures described in this book.

•**Policy on Late Work:** All assignments must be completed for class on the day listed on the syllabus. Late submissions will not be accepted. No exceptions! If you do not show up for an exam, presentation, or quiz, you will receive zero points for that exam, presentation, or quiz.

•**Disabilities and Assistive Testing Services:** Assistive Testing Services are provided to enrolled students approved by the University of Northern Iowa Office of Disabilities Services for accommodations. Alternative testing formats, as well as auxiliary aids such as readers, scribes, or assistive technology, are available. Tests are to be scheduled in advance with the Department of Academic Services -- Examination Services Office. The test service is provided for University course tests and final examinations (not quizzes) to students enrolled in classes that are unable to provide the approved accommodations (i.e. extended time, large print options, reader/recorder, or computer testing). Course testing accommodations are based on disability documentation as determined by the University of Northern Iowa Disabilities Services. I will make every effort to accommodate disabilities. Please contact me if I can be of assistance in this area. All qualified students with disabilities are protected under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C.A., Section 12101. The ADA states, "no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity." Students requesting instructional accommodations due to disabilities must arrange for such accommodations through Student Disability Services. The Office of Disability Services is located in 103 Student Health Center (319-273-2676 [Voice] or 319-273-3011 [TTY]). E-mail: disabilityservices@uni.edu. See pages 10-11 of your Spring 2010 Schedule of Classes for more information or consult the Office of Disability Services website (<http://www.uni.edu/disability/>).

•**Discrimination:** It is the policy of the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal and/or state law. Further details concerning UNI's policies may be found in your Spring 2010 Schedule of Classes (pages 12-13). For additional information, visit: <http://www.uni.edu/equity>.

•**Plagiarism:** Any attempt to present someone else's work as your own is plagiarism, and may result in an "F" for the course. The University of Northern Iowa has a very specific policy statement related to the issue of plagiarism. This policy statement can be found in several places on the UNI website, but it is most prominent in the UNI Student Handbook in Section 3.01 "Academic Ethics/Discipline" (<http://www.uni.edu/pres/policies/301.shtml>). You should become familiar with the Academic Ethics Policies found at this website or in the University Catalog. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about this topic.

•**Weather Policy:** My policy is to conduct class as long as the university is open. In case of bad weather please check the UNI homepage for information. I do not expect you to risk your life to attend this class. If you feel that it is not safe for you to attend class, then please stay home. I will trust your judgment and allow you to make up any assignments you have missed without penalty. Just let me know that you could not attend class due to the weather and I will not count your absence. For UNI's weather policy, see:

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

DATE	CLASS TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
Week 1—Introduction to the Course/New Testament Background		
January 11	Class Introduction	
January 13	The World of the New Testament: Geography	
January 15	The World of the New Testament: Religions	Ehrman, Chapters 1-3, 30
Week 2—The Gospel of Mark: Part One		
January 18	No Class: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday	
January 20	Jesus' Early Ministry	Ehrman Chapters 4-5, 14 Bible: Mark 1-5 (including the introduction on pages 56-57) Bible: Leviticus 13-14 on pages 158-163 in the Old Testament and the notes on these pages. This material from the Old Testament is to be read as background to Mark 1:40-45. Bible: Mark 6-10
January 22	Jesus and Messianism	
Week 3—The Gospel of Mark: Part Two		
January 25	Jesus and Messianism	Bible: Mark 11-16 (including the notes to chapter 16 on pages 90-91)
January 27	Jesus and Messianism, continued	
January 29	TJesus' Teachings	Ehrman, Chapter 7
Quiz # 1		
Week 4—The Gospel of Mark: Part Three		
February 1	Jesus' Teachings, continued	
January 3	Jesus' Trial	
February 5	Jesus' Death	
Week 5—The Gospel of Matthew		
February 8	Matthew's Interpretation of Mark	Ehrman, Chapters 7 & 8 Bible: Matthew 1-7

February 10 Jesus' Teachings Matthew 8-20
February 12 Jesus in Jerusalem Matthew 21-28

Week 6—The Gospel of Luke

February 15 Jesus' Birth and Ministry Ehrman, Chapter 9 Bible:
Luke 1-12
February 17 Jesus' Last Days Bible: Luke 13-24
February 19 **Exam One** B

Week 7—The Gospel of John

February 22 John's Cosmic Jesus Ehrman, Chapter 11 Bible:
John 1-6
February 24 Jesus' Ministry Bible: John 7-17 (including
the notes to chapters 7-8 on
pages 159-64)
February 26 Jesus' Crucifixion Bible: John 18-21 Quiz # 2

Week 8—The Quest for the Historical Jesus

March 1 The Historical Jesus Ehrman, Chapters, 13-14
March 3 The Development of Jesus Traditions Ehrman, Chapters 15-18
March 5 Women in the Early Church: Junia the Bible: Romans 16 (read all
Apostle the notes to this chapter)

Week 9—The Book of Acts

March 8 The Development of the Early Church in Ehrman, Chapter 10
Jerusalem Bible: Acts 1-8
March 10 The Spread of the Christian Faith: Paul Bible: Acts 9-15
and Peter
March 12 **Exam Two**

Week 10—Spring Break

March 15-19 **No Class** Read your Bible over break.

Week 11—The Book of Acts and Other Histories of the Early Church

March 22 Paul's Journeys: Part I Bible: Acts 16-27
March 24 Paul's Journeys: Part II
March 26 Paul's Teachings Ehrman, Chapter 19
Bible: Galatians

Week 12—Doctrinal Disputes

March 29 Problems in the Churches Ehrman, Chapter 21
Bible: Philemon;

March 31	The Corinthian Church: Part I	Philippians
April 2	The Corinthian Church: Part II	Bible: 1 Corinthians
		Bible: 2 Corinthians

Quiz # 3

Week 13—Paul’s Teachings and His Legacy

April 5	Paul’s Apostolic Mission	Ehrman, Chapter 19
		Bible: 1 Thessalonians; 2 Thessalonians
April 7	The Pastoral Epistles	Ehrman, Chapter 24
		Bible: 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus
April 9	Exam Three	

Week 14—Christians, Jews, and the Debate over Order in Early Christianity

April 14	Church Order	Bible: Ephesians
April 16	Christians and Jews	Ehrman, Chapter 26
		Bible: Hebrews
April 18	Romans	Ehrman, Chapter 25 Bible: Romans

Week 15—Early Views of Jesus and the Christian Church

April 19	Johannine Traditions	Ehrman, Chapter 12
		Bible: 1 John; 2 John; 3 John
April 21	The Church of James: Part I	Ehrman, Chapters 23 & 28
		Bible: James
April 23	The Church of James: Part II	Quiz # 4

Week 16—John’s Apocalypse

April 26	Revelation: The Letters to the Seven Churches	Ehrman, Chapter 29
		Bible: Revelation 1-3
April 38	Revelation and Apocalyptic Literature	Bible: Revelation 4-22
April 30	Revelation and the Dead Sea Scrolls	

Week 17—Final Exam Week

Monday	Exam Four (Wednesday)	10-11:50 p.m.
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May 5