**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Christianity began as a Jewish movement. Jesus’ followers worshipped the God of Israel and ordered their lives according to the Torah and other sacred texts. As Christians separated from the synagogue, they began composing texts proclaiming the Gospel, the “good news” of Jesus, called “Christ.” This course will engage questions about the origin, development and authority of the Christian canon while reading parts of the New Testament in the historical context of first-century Hellenistic Judaism and the religious context of the canon while frequently considering the implications of these texts in the present day.

The New Testament is not one book but a collection of 27 different books, including 1) the Gospels, which provide narrative accounts of Jesus’ life, teaching, ministry, death, and (in most cases) resurrection, 2) numerous letters and exhortations addressed to the earliest Christian communities, which were founded by or centered on the teachings of the earliest followers of Jesus (i.e. Peter, Paul, James, John), and 3) the Book of Revelation, an apocalyptic text that presents a vision of a “new heaven and a new earth” (Rev 21) ruled by Christ, who at this point and in this community is imagined as the “Lamb of God.”

These texts provide more than spiritual guidance and instruction for those who claim faith in Jesus. They are complex, fascinating, and multifaceted literary works that give us deep insights into what early Christians said and believed about Jesus of Nazareth, who later became known as the “Christ,” “Lord,” and “Messiah,” and about the formation of the early Christian ekklesia, or church. As such, they offer us a unique window into their time(s) and place(s) of origin and into the remarkable man from Nazareth who so many hold to be God and “Son of God.”

To accomplish our goals, we gather, prepared to articulate and critically engage the central issues and key questions in our readings. While most people speak of taking a course, I imagine that we are running together on a course I’ve set up. Imagine that we are at the beginning of a cross-country course, facing terrain both smooth and rough, looking to reach a finish together at the end, sometime in the future. Sometimes it will be exciting; other times we’ll just grind along hoping to get to a ‘good part’ soon. That’s how I envision a “course.” That’s what we’re here to do.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

What do we hope to achieve? By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate what the New Testament is and isn’t, including its history, development, and theological importance;
- Critically discuss the similarities and differences between the Gospels, epistles, and extracanonical texts;
- Engage the scholarly discussion of the New Testament as it pertains to history, Christology, the doctrine of God, literary studies, and other relevant areas of inquiry;
- Think, speak, and write critically about the challenges and possibilities of reading the New Testament in the contemporary context, with regard to gender, sexuality, ecology and science, economics, politics, and more.
EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS (FOR YOU AND FOR ME)

1. **Be Respectful:** We will discuss numerous viewpoints, some or many of which may conflict with your own. While you can and should disagree with one another (and with me!), do so with a spirit of generosity and understanding.

2. **Be Responsible:** There are no excuses for late work, frequent absences, or anything else. Readings must be read; papers and projects must be turned in on the date indicated. In the age of laptops and THE CLOUD, and on a campus with numerous computer labs, computer failure is typically not a valid excuse for an incomplete assignment. Yes, sickness, emergencies, and other bad things happen, and I hope they don’t happen to you! **But if they do, speak to me immediately.** The basic rule doesn’t change: **There are no excuses.** Late assignments will receive no credit.

3. In general, my policy is simple: **If something comes up, speak to me in advance.**

4. **There are three BP’s in my class:**
   a. **Be Prompt:** Arrive on time. Lateness will be noted and may result in penalties.
   b. **Be Present:** Come to class. Be present mentally and physically. Learning is a full-body workout.
   c. **Be Prepared:** Complete all readings and assignments on time. Come with what you need to get to work.

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**REQUIRED TEXTS (AVAILABLE IN THE BOOKSTORE OR FROM AMAZON)**

   **Be sure to get the 6th Edition, which was released last summer.**

   These translations are acceptable for academic work; other translations (i.e. NIV, KJV, New Living Translation) are not acceptable for use in class. The NRSV is available in the bookstore.

3. All other texts will be available on Blackboard ([http://fordham.blackboard.com](http://fordham.blackboard.com))

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**ASSIGMENTS**

1. **Burning Questions:** This course intends to equip you with the skills necessary to be excellent critical readers of texts and traditions. Texts—even Biblical texts—aren’t just stories or sources of information; they’re carefully constructed arguments, with which you might agree or disagree—or find yourself uncertain about. To get the most out of such texts, you must “think with the text” as you go. **To practice this skill, when indicated on the syllabus please write or type out 2-3 questions/comments you have about the indicated text or texts.** These questions might ask for greater clarity or depth on particular passages or discuss ideas that struck you as you read. They should demonstrate your critical engagement with the text.

2. **Study Guides:** Study guides guide your thinking as you read a text. **When indicated on the syllabus, please complete study guides (distributed in class) as a basis for class discussion.** Study guides are due in class.

3. **In-Class Debates:** We will have two in-class debates. Come to class with detailed notes, which you’ll turn in.
   a. **Debate 1 (6/9):** Gospel of John: Is this the same Jesus that we met in the Synoptics?
   b. **Debate 2 (6/22):** Women in Early Christianity: Defend, challenge, or clarify the following claim: “Women had authority in early Christianity.” Use whatever texts you find to be most relevant.

4. **Microthemes:** Over the course of the semester, you will complete four one-page Microthemes.  
   These papers are opportunities to demonstrate critical engagement with the texts we study. They are short essays, with a thesis and supporting examples. Headings should include your name and the assignment number. **There is no need for a title.** The body may be double- or 1.5-line spaced. There isn’t space for introduction in this type of paper, so jump right in with your thesis. Make sure your paper is clear and well-structured and supported by specific examples from the text. Please use parenthetical citations, i.e. (Mk 8:13) or (Ehrman 85) for any sources you use. Papers must be proofread for grammatical and spelling errors prior to submission. The instructor reserves the right to reject papers or penalize students for shoddy work. Please use one-inch margins, Times New Roman, 12-pt. type.
The topics and due dates for the Microthemes are as follows:

1. **Due 6/2:** According to the Gospel of Mark, why did Jesus die? Provide at least two explanations.

2. **Due 6/7:** Read carefully the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5-7). First, compare or contrast Jesus’ teaching style in Matthew with that recorded in Mark. Second, explain what you find to be the most memorable (surprising, provocative, or disturbing) aspect of Jesus’ teaching.

3. **Due 6/15:** Choose one of the community problems that Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians. How does Paul respond to the problem? What are his proposed solution(s)?

4. **Due 6/21:** Many think the letter to the Romans is the best expression of the Christian gospel, the “good news” of Jesus Christ. How would you summarize Paul’s message in this text?

   Using the hermeneutical tools, interpretive theories, and scholarly work studied in class, and anything other scholarly sources you wish to use, undertake the in-depth critical analysis of a short passage from the New Testament (~10-15 lines; ~4-5 verses), noting the passage’s literal meaning, theological meaning, and its function in its textual and sociohistorical context. Your analysis should note significant words and phrases and analyze the passage’s structure, aiming to unpack the full meaning of the passage.

   One-inch margins, Times New Roman, 12-pt, double-spaced. At the instructor’s discretion, essays showing adequate effort but graded at or below a “C” may be revised.

   **Citation Guidelines for Exegesis Paper:**
   1. Material taken verbatim from another source must be enclosed in quotation marks (i.e. “Generally speaking, the Roman Empire had little time to worry over the particularities of the Jewish faith.”) and should be followed by a footnote reference to the source of the material. Cite sources using this format:
   [http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)
   2. Material paraphrased from another source should be introduced as belonging to another author (i.e. Here, Ehrman explains that the Roman Empire was quite tolerant of the Jewish religion, as long as it did not pose a threat to their rule).

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**Technology Policy**

Laptops and other electronic devices may be used when indicated by the instructor.

**Attendance Policies and Procedures**

Attending class is indispensable to 1) learning the subject matter and 2) mastering the critical skills this course intends to cultivate. Students will be allowed two unquestioned, excused absences. Unexcused absences of three or more will result in one whole letter-grade deduction each (i.e. B to C). For unavoidable absences, please speak to me in advance. Accommodations will rarely be made if you speak to me after a class meeting.

**Academic Integrity**

Students must maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty and abide by Fordham University’s policies on academic integrity, as described in the Student Handbook. Infractions of those policies will be subject to the sanctions listed in the Undergraduate Bulletin, including possible suspension from or expulsion from the College. Violations include plagiarism, cheating, outsourcing, and destruction of library or other materials needed for a course. Students found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty will, at the least, receive zero points for the piece of work concerned.
**Grading Scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Participation in discussions, debates, completion of readings;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Burning Questions, Debate notes, and Study Guides</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Papers: 5% per microtheme, 20% exegesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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**Grading Scale**

- **93-100** A: Honors level work.
- **90-92** A-: Excellent work.
- **89-87** B+: Very good work; near excellence, but has minor problems.
- **82-86** B: Good work; solid performance; above average.
- **80-82** B-: Good work, but lacking some completeness, or accuracy.
- **77-79** C+: Acceptable work.
- **72-76** C: Acceptable work, but lacking in completeness, critical thinking or accuracy.
- **69-72** C-: Perfunctory work; may be simply rehashing sources.
- **60-68** D: Unsatisfactory work; shows minimal grasp of concepts or sloppy analysis.
- **0-59** F: Failure.

Essays graded with **letter grades will be translated into a numerical grade** at the instructor's discretion. Letter grades will typically receive the numerical average of the range of any grade. However, **the instructor reserves the right to raise or lower numerical averages** where circumstances dictate.

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**Important ADA Notice**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, coursework, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Rose Hill: O'Hare Hall, Lower Level, x0655 | Lincoln Center: Room 207, x6282).

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Where does the New Testament come from?

What does it mean to say that Jesus is Christ, or God, or the Son of God?

Who is this “God” Jesus is talking about?
And what’s with that Paul guy?

What does the New Testament have to say about…?

Is the Bible “true”? What does that even mean?

To explore these questions and more, stay tuned!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignment(s)</th>
<th>Class Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1: 5/31</strong> Introducing...the NT!</td>
<td>1. <strong>Skim</strong> Syllabus (blackboard); 2. <strong>Skim</strong> Ehrman, xxxi-xxxx; 3. <strong>Read</strong> Ch. 1 (p. 4-18) and Ch. 3-4 (p. 41-80);</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1. Course Introduction &amp; Syllabus 2. What is the New Testament? 3. Understanding Jesus I: The Roman Empire 4. Understanding Jesus II: 1st-century Judaism</td>
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<td><strong>Week 3: 6/14</strong> From Jesus to Paul of Tarsus The NT’s Great Teacher and the First Churches</td>
<td>1. The Letter to Philemon (Philemon) 2. Ehrman, Ch. 20 (p. 334-352) 3. Ehrman, Ch. 22 on Philemon (p. 396-400) 4. <strong>Skim</strong> Ehrman, “The Cities and Roads of Paul” (p. 415-422) 5. The First Letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thess.) 6. Ehrman, Ch. 21 (p. 353-367)</td>
<td>Burning Questions Microtheme #3</td>
<td>1. The Life and Times of S/Paul of Tarsus 2. An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles and Pauline Communities</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4: 6/21</strong>&lt;br&gt;The ‘Gospel’ of Paul:&lt;br&gt;The Epistle to the Romans</td>
<td>1. The Epistle to the Romans (Romans)&lt;br&gt;2. Ehrman, Ch. 23 (p. 401-414)</td>
<td>Burning Questions&lt;br&gt;Microtheme #4</td>
<td>1. Guided Discussion with Burning Questions&lt;br&gt;2. Finding the ‘Root’ of Paul’s Gospel</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4: 6/22</strong>&lt;br&gt;Women &amp; Gender in Early Christianity</td>
<td>1 Tim; Col 3:18-4:1; Eph 5:21-6:9; 1 Peter&lt;br&gt;<strong>Review:</strong> Acts 16:11-15, 40; 18:1-3, 18, 24-26;&lt;br&gt;Rom 16:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-3:8; anything else relevant!&lt;br&gt;Ehrman, Ch. 26 (p. 460-473)&lt;br&gt;Women in the NT Handout (Blackboard)</td>
<td>Debate Notes #2</td>
<td>1. Debate: Women and Authority in the NT&lt;br&gt;2. Discussion: Gender and Sexuality in the NT</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4: 6/23</strong>&lt;br&gt;Early Christian Worship:&lt;br&gt;All Creation Sings; and&lt;br&gt;The Pauline Tradition:&lt;br&gt;The Deutero-Pauline Epistles</td>
<td>1. Philippians&lt;br&gt;2. Ehrman, Ch. 22 on Philippians (p.392-396)&lt;br&gt;3. Colossians&lt;br&gt;4. Ephesians&lt;br&gt;5. Ehrman, Ch. 25 (p. 434-459)</td>
<td>Burning Questions</td>
<td>Guided Discussion/Burning Questions</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5: 6/28</strong>&lt;br&gt;Christ, The High Priest&lt;br&gt;The Epistle to the Hebrews</td>
<td>1. Hebrews&lt;br&gt;2. Ehrman, Ch. 27 (p. 474-492)</td>
<td>Burning Questions</td>
<td>1. Guided Discussion/Burning Questions&lt;br&gt;2. The Problem of Supersessionism in the NT</td>
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<td><strong>Week 5: 6/29</strong>&lt;br&gt;For the Love of God!&lt;br&gt;The Letters of Paul</td>
<td>1. Revelation&lt;br&gt;2. Pliny-Trajan Correspondence&lt;br&gt;3. Ehrman, Ch. 30 (p. 529-546)</td>
<td>Exegesis Paper</td>
<td>Guided Discussion/Burning Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5: 6/30</strong>&lt;br&gt;Review &amp; Final Examination</td>
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<td>&lt;b&gt;Study!&lt;/b&gt;</td>
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