

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT: A Course Outline

Professor: Dr. Bruce Worthington

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Teaching Assistant: TBA **Office Hours:** By Appointment

Location: FYB UG01 **Time:** Thursday 9:30am to 12:15pm

Course Code: THEO1212/5312 **Chinese Title:** N/A

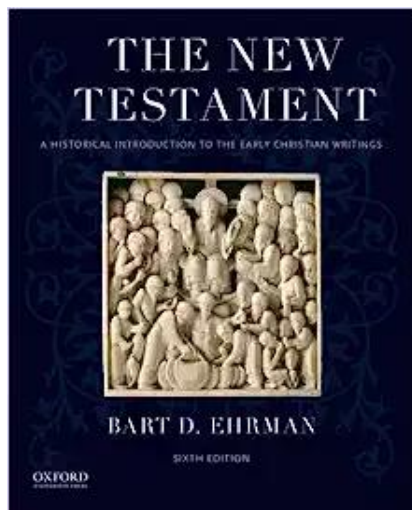
Course Description: Since the rise of historical critical methods in the modern period, Christians have been challenged to revise, or renew interest in the academic study of the bible. The desire to study the history of the New Testament is, of course, an honest one, insofar as Christianity maintains its origins are tied to historical events, peoples, and places. In order to reconstruct a realistic portrayal of Christian origins, it may, at times, be necessary to deconstruct some of our false presuppositions about the biblical text and its world. In light of this need, the aim of the course is to introduce students to the historical conditions of the ancient world, specifically the Roman Empire and the Second Temple Jewish milieu. With this historical background in mind, the course will survey the books of the New Testament (and related ancient books) to better understand their meaning, both in the ancient world and its contemporary application in academic and pastoral settings. While the course accepts the historical critical method as its primary method, it encourages interaction with this method from other critical methodologies, including feminist, LGBTQ, and decolonial perspectives.

Course Outcomes:

- 1) Reflect critically on the relationship between early Christianity and its historical conditions, particularly the Roman Empire and Second Temple Judaism. Students should be able to properly contextualize biblical material within this historical sequence.
- 2) Introduce the historical critical method, including modern approaches to the bible such as: source criticism, form criticism, and the study of the historical Jesus.
- 3) Analyse the intersections of wealth, poverty, patriarchy, sexuality, and violence as they are addressed and, at times, propagated throughout the biblical texts. Evaluate ways in which the New Testament represents and/or challenges the values and practices of the Roman world.
- 4) Introduce students to basic structures of genre in ancient writing (Greek letter writing, ancient biography, Jewish apocalypse etc.) in order for students to compare New Testament documents with their contemporaries in the Roman world.

Course Textbook:

Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. Sixth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

**Course Syllabus (Weekly Mandatory Reading Schedule):**

Week One (September 7th): Introduction—what is, and isn't, biblical studies?

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 4-40.

Week Two (September 14th): The Greco-Roman World

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 41-60.

Week Three (September 21st): Judaism of Jesus' time

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 61-81.

(First Reflection Paper due)

Week Four (September 28th): The Gospel of Mark and the Historical Jesus

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 103-119; 235-256

Week Five (October 5th): The Gospel of Matthew

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 120-148.

Week Six (October 12th): The Gospel of Luke and the Synoptic Problem

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 120-128; 149-168

(Second Reflection Paper Due)

Week Seven (October 19th): The Gospel of John and other Gospels

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 169-194; 214-233.

Week Eight (October 26th): The Book of Acts

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 312-333.

Week Nine (November 2nd): Paul's Letters

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, 335-352; 401-422

(Third Reflection Paper due)

Week Ten (November 9th): Paul's Letters

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, 369-399; 434-459

Week Eleven (November 16th): No Class (at Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting)

Week Twelve (November 23rd): The General/Catholic Epistles

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, 474-528

(Fourth Reflection Paper due)

Week Thirteen (November 30th): Revelation

Ehrman, Bart. *The New Testament*, pp. 529-546

Course Components: Lecture, interactive quizzes, guest lecture, tutorial discussions.

Blackboard Course Address:

Will be posted when available.

Assignments and Course Assessment

- 1. Class Attendance (10% of Final Grade):** Students are expected to come to class and arrive on time. Students will use the Ureply app to log attendance at the beginning of class. Students may miss class due to medical or personal reasons but must consult with

the instructor ahead of time. Given that there are 12 weeks of instructions, students may miss up to two (2) class and still receive at full 10% grade on attendance.

2. **Weekly Quizzes (20% of Final Grade):** Beginning in Week Two of the class, students will take short, simple quizzes on the reading material assigned for that day. The quizzes will be 10 questions, multiple choice, and accessed via Ureply on a smartphone. Quizzes will address specifically the terms that are mentioned under “Key Terms” in the course textbook, at the end of each chapter of the assigned readings. If you have read the material you will have no problem with succeeding in this exercise.

3. **Personal Reflection Papers (40% of Final Grade, 10 x 4 reflections, 500 words each in length):** Students will submit personal reflections on four of the key themes of the course. The reflections are not meant to be academic style papers, but instead a personal interaction with the topic, with particular interest paid to how the student has changed, or grown from learning on the topic, either from an academic perspective and/or a theological one. The four themes for reflection papers include:
 - 3.1 What is the Context for the Gospel?
 - 3.2 The Historical Jesus and Christ of Faith—is there a Difference
 - 3.3 Paul’s Letters
 - 3.4 Summative thoughts—what have you learned?

4. **Academic Essay (30% of Final Grade):** Students will be required to submit a 2500–3000-word essay on a topic of their choice, related to one of the topics listed below. Proper footnoting and bibliography are required according to the Chicago Manual of Style (17th Edition). Deadline will be negotiated at the beginning of the semester. Topics include:
 - 4.1 Jesus and the Roman Empire
 - 4.2 Criteria for the Historical Jesus
 - 4.3 Historical elements of the Gospel of John
 - 4.4 The Synoptic Problem
 - 4.5 Jesus and Wealth in the Synoptic Gospels
 - 4.6 Book of Acts as History?
 - 4.7 Paul and Pseudepigrapha
 - 4.8 Paul and Ancient Letter Writing
 - 4.9 Did Paul seek the manumission of Onesimus?
 - 4.10 Paul and Apocalypticism, or not
 - 4.11 Non-canonical Christian writings
 - 4.12 Revelation as a Jewish Apocalypse

Structure of the Class: the first 10 minutes of the class will be devoted to short multiple-choice quizzes, which can be accessed via cell phones on Ureply. The next 2 hours are devoted to formal lecture, with Powerpoint notes and interaction via Ureply using word clouds generated

from student feedback. There will be a 15-minute break between the two lecture hours. The final 20 minutes of class reserved for student feedback, discussion, and assignment questions.

The course readings will generally be given on the Blackboard site, along with courses grades, Professor feedback, and written submission guidelines.

Academic honesty and plagiarism: Attention is drawn to University's policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic_honesty/. With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed declaration that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines, and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration. For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Grading: The grading follows the general grading policy of the CUHK outlined below (in short form):

Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on all or almost all learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B / Good: Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C / Fair: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes. Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade D / Pass: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. Addresses the task inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. Fails to address the task and likely does not understand the assignment, perhaps completely misses the point.

Excellent

Good

Needs Improvement

Unacceptable

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| Thesis | A clear statement of what is being proposed or argued in the paper. | The thesis is easily detectable after reading the paper, but it is not presented in a single and clear statement. | The thesis is present, but a reader must work hard to reconstruct from the entire paper. | There is no thesis or central argument/proposal to tie the paper together, or the thesis is unclear. |
| Arguments | Each reason, support, or argument to follow the thesis is made clear, thorough, relevant and convincing. Proper references are consistently made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid. | Arguments made to support the thesis are clear, but less thorough, relevant, and/or convincing. References are often made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid, but this is done not as consistently. | Arguments made to support the thesis are acceptable but sketchy or their relevance unclear. Some references are made to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid. | Arguments to support the thesis are missing, irrelevant, or not convincing. The paper makes lots of claims or assertions that are not substantiated. There are few or no references to the text in question (biblical and/or a textbook) to show why the proposed thesis is valid. |
| Counter-Arguments | The paper acknowledges, anticipates, and accounts for conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions, even ones that are not obvious or not yet been made in writings of others. | The paper acknowledges and accounts for obvious conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, and/or opposing positions. | The paper acknowledges and accounts for a few obvious conflicting evidence, counter-examples, and counter-arguments, but miss other obvious opposing positions. Or the paper acknowledges counter-arguments without accounting for them. | No awareness or acknowledgment of conflicting evidence, counter-examples, counter-arguments, or opposing positions. |

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| Organization | The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is consistently sensible, logical, and always with clear transitions. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is easy to follow and coherent. | The paper's flow, from one paragraph to another, is largely sensible and logical. Transitions are mostly appropriate. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is distinguishable if not easy to follow. | There are signs of sensible and logical organization, but these are mixed with abrupt or illogical shifts and ineffective flow of ideas. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is not clearly distinguishable. | The paper does not flow well in terms of organization or for the argument of the thesis. Transitions from paragraph to paragraph or from one idea to the next are missing. The movement from introduction to the body and then the conclusion is non-existent. |
| Style | The paper is written in complete and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is precise; definitions are provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains no errors. | The paper is written in complete sentence and grammatically correct sentences. Word choice is understandable, definitions are generally (though not always) provided if and when needed. Paper has been spell-checked, proofread, and contains only a few errors. | The paper contains some incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is imprecise, at times not understandable, and/or not defined when needed. Not clear if the paper has been spell-checked and proofread because of the number of errors present. | The paper is written with many incomplete or grammatically incorrect sentences. Word choice is not understandable and definition of particular terms or words is not given even when needed. The paper has clearly not been spell-checked or proofread, and hence contains an excessive number of errors. |
| Documentation | Notes to indicate sources of information are given whenever they are needed. Both notes and bibliography use consistent and academically acceptable format. | Notes to indicate sources of information are generally given when they are needed. Notes and bibliography are generally but not always consistent or conform to required academic standard. | Sources of information are not consistently documented. If they are, format is inconsistent or does not conform to required academic standard. | Source materials are used without documentation. |

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