

**RELG 2333**  
**Christian Scriptures**  
**University of Central Arkansas**  
**Spring, 2015**

Professor: Dr. Jim Deitrick  
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<p><u>Office Hours:</u> MWF 10:00am-12:00noon TTH 12:15-1:15pm And by appointment</p>
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**Course Description**

This course examines a variety of early Christian writings, laying primary emphasis on the meanings of these texts for the ancient communities who produced them. The course also examines the historical processes that led to the inclusion of some of these texts in (and the exclusion of others from) the canon of New Testament scripture. Finally, the course engages critically with these texts and the ideas and practices they espouse. [Satisfies the Sacred Art, Ritual, & Literature area requirement or may count as an elective toward the Religious Studies major and minor degrees.]

**Course Goals**

Students who take this course will acquire a sophisticated understanding of early Christian textual traditions, as well as a working knowledge of the various methods scholars use to study them. Students will also interact critically with these traditions, working to articulate their own considered opinions about their relevance for today's world.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to

- † explain the meaning of many early Christian scriptures for the communities who produced them;
- † explain the processes that led to the formation of the New Testament canon; and
- † articulate and defend their own critical opinions about the ideas and ways of life promoted in books of the New Testament and other early Christian writings.

**Activities of the Course**

Students will achieve course objectives through a variety of activities, including studying important primary and secondary texts, participating in in-class discussions, taking exams, and writing essays.

**Assessment of Student Achievement**

Student achievement will be measured in the following ways:

1. Attendance and Participation: Students are required to come prepared to class every day and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions. Students who are not prepared may be counted absent. Ten percentage points will be deducted from students' final attendance grade for each absence (hence, 1 absence = 90; two absences = 80, etc.). Two tardies will count as one absence. Students who miss class more than six times (or the equivalent) may be dropped for non-attendance or receive an "F" for the course. Students may receive extra credit for regular and informed participation. Requests for excused

absences should be submitted to the professor in writing with appropriate documentation.

2. Reading Assignments: The reading load in this course is heavy. Students will read and take notes on primary and secondary works. Questions to guide students' reading are available on the companion website for the textbook. Students are strongly encouraged to review these questions before coming to class.

3. Quizzes: Students will take quizzes over assigned readings in class daily.

4. Essays: Students will write two formal essays on topics assigned by the professor. See the course outline below for topics and due dates.

5. Exams: Students will take three exams.

**Note:** All take-home assignments must be properly formatted, stapled (not paper-clipped or placed in a binder), and submitted at the *beginning of class* on the date due.

Assignments will not be accepted electronically (i.e., via email). Late assignments will not be accepted without prior permission from the professor.

**Grading:**

Attendance/Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Essays	20%
Exams	60%

Final grades will be calculated according to the following schedule:

90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
below 60%	F

**Note:** It is generally accepted in higher academic circles that students must study two to three hours outside of class for every hour spent in class. As this course meets three hours per weeks, students should spend between six and nine hours outside of class per week studying for this course. Students who are unable or unwilling to commit this amount of time to this course should reconsider whether or not it is appropriate for them.

**Statement on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

### **Use of Electronic Devices**

Students may use electronic devices (e.g., laptops, tablets) in class to take notes and access the Internet for appropriate, course-related purposes. These devices may not be used to send text messages, check email, surf the Internet, or do anything else not directly related to the course. The professor reserves the right to prohibit any student from using electronic devices if such use distracts others or otherwise disrupts the class.

### **Use of Recording Devices**

Students may not use audio or video recording devices in class without the professor's permission.

### **Statement on Americans with Disabilities Act**

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

### **Student Handbook Policies**

Students are responsible to familiarize themselves with all policies listed in the Student Handbook. Special attention should be given to the Sexual Harassment and Academic Policies. [Title IX Disclosure: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>.]

### **Building Emergency Plan**

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

### **Required Texts**

*The New Testament*, 5th ed., Bart Ehrman (NTHI)

*The New Testament and Other Christian Writings*, 2d ed., Bart Ehrman

### **Course Outline (Tentative)**

**Jan 8**                    **Course Introduction**

**Jan 13**                  **Early Christians and Their Literature**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 1

**Jan 15**                  **Do We Have the Original New Testament?**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 2

**Jan 20**                  **The World of Early Christianity: Greco-Roman Religion**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 3

**Jan 22**                  **The World of Early Christianity: Judaism in the First Century**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 4

- Jan 27**            **Oral Traditions behind the Gospels**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 5
- Jan 29**            **Introduction to the Gospels**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 6
- Feb 3**             **The Gospel of Mark**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 7; Mark 1-16 (Note: All passages are found in *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings: A Reader*; be sure to read the “Introduction” to each book as well)
- Feb 5**             **The Synoptic Problem**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 8
- Feb 10**            **First Midterm Exam**
- Feb 12**            **Gospel of Matthew**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 9; Matthew 1-16; 23-28
- Feb 17**            **Gospel of Luke**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 10; Luke 1-12; 21-24
- Feb 19**            **Acts of the Apostles**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 11; Acts 1-17
- Feb 24**            **Gospel of John**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 12; John 1-21
- Feb 26**            **Johannine Epistles**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 13; 1, 2, & 3 John
- Mar 3**             **Non-Canonical Gospels**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 14; Gospels of Thomas, Peter, and Infancy Thomas
- Mar 5**             **The Historical Jesus: Sources, Problems, & Methods**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapters 15-16
- Mar 10**            **Jesus the Apocalyptic Prophet**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 17-18; Matthew 5-7 & 13; Mark 12-16  
**First Essay Due:** Compare and contrast John’s Jesus with Jesus in the synoptic gospels.
- Mar 12**            **From Apocalyptic Prophet to Divine Redeemer**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 19
- Mar 17**            **Second Midterm Exam**
- Mar 19**            **No Class**

- Mar 24-26**      **Spring Break**
- Mar 31**            **Paul: The Man, Mission, and Modus Operandi**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 21; 1 Thessalonians 1-5
- Apr 2**             **Pauline Ethics**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 22a (pp. 339-54); 1 Corinthians 1-16
- Apr 7**             **Pauline Ethics, cont.**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 22b (pp. 354-71); 2 Corinthians 1-13; Philippians 1-5; Philemon
- Apr 9**             **Paul's Gospel**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 23; Romans 1-16
- Apr 14**            **Paul Assessed**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 24; James; Acts of Paul & Thecla
- Apr 16**            **Deutero-Pauline and Pastoral Epistles**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 25; 2 Thessalonians; Ephesians; 1 & 2 Timothy
- Apr 21**            **Paul and Women**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 26
- Apr 23**            **Apocalyptic Literature**  
Reading Assignment: NTHI Chapter 30; Revelation 1-22; Apocalypse of Peter
- Apr 30, 11:00 am Final Exam**  
**Second Essay Due:** Support or refute the claim that Jesus and Paul advocated fundamentally different religions (see esp. Chapter 24).