

New Testament - Religion 840:202
Rutgers University
Fall 2014

Professor: Matthew Ketchum

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Class Location: Hickman Hall 205

Class Time(s): Mon/Thurs, 10:55AM-12:15PM

Office Location: Loree Building, Room 110

Office Hours: Mon/Thurs, 1:00PM-3:00PM

Course Description

The United State Supreme Court recently granted religious exemptions to the private corporation Hobby Lobby, which allows them to not cover certain kinds of contraception or birth control in their employees' healthcare. This was done to accommodate what Hobby Lobby describes as the "biblical principles" by which the company operates. This case raises numerous questions: What, exactly, are these "biblical principles"? Does a close reading of the Bible actually lead to such consistent "principles"? What role, if any, should the Christian Bible play in U.S. politics and public policy?

This course is designed to lay a foundation for lifelong critical and constructive interpretation of religious texts like the New Testament. Students will become familiar with the books and letters of the New Testament and will develop skills in close reading. Through readings, lectures, class discussions, and writing assignments students will engage biblical scholarship and reflect upon the process of reading the New Testament texts from a variety of perspectives. The course will explore the political and ethical stakes of readings of the New Testament throughout history and today. As the Christian Bible continues to exert an influence in the western world and beyond, the ability to critically assess and engage this text will be a valuable skill.

Course Goals

After completing this course, students should have gained:

- Familiarity with the literary and rhetorical character of the texts of the New Testament, as well as current reconstructions of the historical contexts of the biblical texts
- Skills and tools of interpretation, both through close readings of the New Testament and constructive engagement with contemporary scholarship.
- Awareness of the role that perspective and context play in textual interpretations, and the ability to translate that awareness to discussions and deliberations around such interpretations.
- A critical understanding of the roles that the New Testament has played in shaping various political and ethical movements throughout history.

Instructional Methods

The teaching of this course is done primarily through readings, lectures, class discussions, group work, and a variety of media.

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution

- *Complete all assigned readings.* Students should come to each class having completed all assigned readings (from the textbook or any additional readings from the course website).
- *Attend and participate in class.* Students are expected to come to every class, be attentive to lectures, and actively participate in all group work and discussions. More than 6 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. (25% of Final Grade)
- *Weekly Quizzes.* Every Thursday class period will end with a short quiz that covers information from all assigned readings and lectures. (20% of Final Grade)
- *Two assigned writing projects.* (30% of Final Grade)
- *Final exam.* A sit down final exam during the class's exam period. (25% of Final Grade)

Required Textbooks

- Barr, David L. *New Testament Story: An Introduction*. 4th Edition. Independence, KY: Cengage Advantage Books. 2009. 9780534627485
- *Harper Collins Study Bible – New Revised Standard Edition*. New York: HarperOne. 2006. ISBN 9780060786847

Course Schedule

Thursday, September 4 | Introduction

- READ: N/A

Monday, September 8 | Philemon

- READ:
 - Philemon
 - Barr, 1-25

Thursday, September 11 | Jewish and Greco-Roman History

- READ:
 - Barr, 26-53

Monday, September 15 | 1 Thessalonians

- READ:
 - 1 Thessalonians
 - Barr, 76-53
 - (Online) N.T. Wright, "Farewell to the Rapture"

Thursday, September 18 | 1 Corinthians

- READ:
 - 1 Corinthians
 - Barr, 127-140

- (Online) Antoinette Wire, “Women Prophets in the Corinthian Church.” In *Conflict and Community in the Corinthian Church*. Ed. J. Shannon Clarkson. New York: United Methodist Church Women’s Division, 2000. Pg. 35-52

Monday, September 22 | The New Perspective on Paul

- READ:
 - (Online) John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pg. 43-75

Thursday, September 25 | Galatians

- READ:
 - The Letter to the Galatians
 - Barr, 119-127.
 - (Online) John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul*. Pg. 145-152.

Monday, September 30 | Romans

- Read:
 - The Letter to the Romans
 - Barr, 150-183

Thursday, October 2 | Paul’s Modern Legacy

- READ:
 - (Online) Pamela Eisenbaum, “Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?” *Cross Currents* 50 (2000-2001) 506-524.
 - (Online) Dale B. Martin, “Paul without Passion: On Paul’s Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage.” In *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*, Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 2006, pp. 65-76.

Monday, October 6 | The Gospels

- READ:
 - Barr, 251-278.

Thursday, October 9 | Mark

- READ:
 - The Gospel of Mark (preferably in one sitting)
 - Barr, 279-308
 - (Online) Andrew Wilkes, “Ferguson as Christological Challenge: Rethinking Jesus in an Unjust Society”

Monday, October 13 | Matthew

- READ:
 - The Gospel of Matthew (preferably in one sitting)
 - Barr, 309-346

Thursday, October 16 | The Ethics of Reading the Gospels

- READ:
 - (ONLINE) Gary Philips, “The Killing Fields of Matthew’s Gospel,” in *The Labour of Reading: Desire, Alienation, and Biblical Interpretation*, 249-265

Monday, October 20 | John

- READ:
 - The Gospel of John (preferably in one sitting)
 - Barr, 390-427

Thursday, October 23 | John in Controversy

- READ:
 - (Online) The Gospel of Thomas
 - (Online) Elaine Pagels. “Gospels in Conflict: John and Thomas.” in *Beyond Belief*. pg 30-73.

Monday, October 27 | Luke

- READ:
 - The Gospel of Luke (Preferably in one sitting)
 - Barr, 348-369

Thursday, October 30 | Acts

- READ:
 - The Acts of the Apostles (Preferably in one sitting)
 - Barr, 370-390

Monday, November 3 | Using Memories of Paul

- READ:
 - Colossians
 - 1 Timothy
 - Barr, 184-200.
 - (Online) Clarice J. Martin, “The Haustafeln (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: ‘Free Slaves’ and ‘Subordinate Women.’” In Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, pp. 206-231.

Thursday, November 6 | Using the Memories of Others

- READ:
 - James
 - 1 Peter
 - Barr, 216-226 & 235-250.

Monday, November 10 | Revelation

- READ:
 - Revelation (The Apocalypse of John)
 - Barr, 429-470.

Thursday, November 13 | Re-Reading Revelation

- READ:
 - (Online) Barbara Rossing, “For the Healing of the World: Reading Revelation Ecologically.” In *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*. Ed. David Rhodes. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005. Pp. 165-182.
 - (Online) Susan R. Garrett, “Revelation” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*. Ed. By Carol A. Newsome and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. Pg. 469-474.

Monday, November 17 | The Gospel of Mary

- READ:
 - (Online) The Gospel of Mary
 - (Online) Jane Schaberg and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, “There’s Something About Mary Magdalene”
 - (Online) Karen King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Disciple*, Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003. Pg. 3-12.

Thursday, November 20 | The Acts of (Paul and) Thecla

- READ:
 - (Online) The Acts of Paul and Thecla
 - (Online) Nancy Carter, “The Acts of Paul and Thecla: A Pauline Tradition Lind to Women”

Monday, November 24 | NO CLASS

Thursday, November 27 | THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Monday, December 1 | From Stories to Canon

- READ:
 - (Online) Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005. Pg. 45-69.
 - Barr, 471-495

Thursday, December 4 | REVIEW

Monday, December 8 | REVIEW

FINAL EXAM – Monday, December 22

Policies

Religious Holidays:

It is University policy (University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, 2.47B, formerly 60.14f) to excuse without penalty students who are absent from class because of religious observance, and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. Examinations and special required out-of-class activities shall ordinarily not be scheduled on those days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. Absences for reasons of religious obligation shall not be counted for purposes of reporting. *Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule.*

Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities. If a student has a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact the instructor early in the semester so that she can provide or facilitate in providing necessary accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. The student must register with the Office of Disability Services. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Academic Integrity:

Students will be expected to adhere to the University policy on Academic Integrity (available online here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf), regarding plagiarism, cheating, academic sabotage, etc.