

EMB1501HF: Introduction to the Christian Bible – New Testament I
Draft Syllabus (Last Edited: September 1, 2012)

Fall 2012, Thursdays 2-5 p.m.

EMC 302

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Purpose

This course is the first part of a two-part introductory survey course. It aims to acquaint students with important issues in the study of the Gospels and aid them in the development of a biblical hermeneutic.

Outcomes

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

- describe distinctive features of each New Testament Gospel
- demonstrate understanding of the history of the New Testament textual tradition
- comment on important points of contact and difference between ancient and contemporary cultures
- practice a committed and critical style of theological conversation with the biblical text
- compose essays with a cohesive argument, using both primary and secondary sources

Methods of Instruction

- weekly assigned reading with discussion in class
- weekly lectures by the instructors
- small-group discussion of specific questions
- four written assignments

Student Assessment

- regular attendance with informed participation in class (10%)
- constructive contribution to small group discussions (20%)
- timely and proper completion of all written assignments (70%)

Textbooks

- The Christian Bible (including Apocrypha, preferably New Revised Standard Version)
- Bart D. Ehrman. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 5th edition.
- Raymond E. Brown. *An Introduction to the New Testament*.
- Burton H. Throckmorton. *Gospel Parallels*. 5th edition.

Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, we invite you to approach the instructors and/or the Accessibility Office as soon as soon as possible.

Attendance Policy

Quoted from **Emmanuel College Policies and Procedures:**

“Academic credit for a course requires regular class attendance, unless otherwise indicated in the course syllabus. Attendance means being present in the class for the entire scheduled class meeting, not just part of it. In the event of absence for any reason including sickness, students are responsible for any information or class content missed. Students are expected to inform the professor prior to class. The professor may require additional work to make up for an absence. The professor will be required to inform the Basic Degree Committee if students miss two classes. For students who miss three regular classes, this may result in a lower grade or even a failing grade for the course. If attendance is poor due to extenuating circumstances, students may petition the Basic Degree Committee to drop a course without academic or financial penalty.”

Course Outline

- September 13: Introduction
Ehrman ch. 1; Brown ch. 2
- September 20: Gospel of Mark
Ehrman ch. 6 and 7; Brown ch. 7
- September 27: Textual Criticism
Ehrman ch. 2; Brown ch. 3; Throckmorton x-xxvi
- October 4: Gospel of Matthew
Ehrman ch. 9; Brown ch. 8
First written assignment due
- October 11: Synoptic Problem and Q
Ehrman ch. 8; Brown ch. 6; Throckmorton §30 (pp. 31-32), §46 (pp. 39-40), §53 (p. 44), §113 (p. 91), §124 (pp. 101-102), §195 (pp. 151-52)
- October 18: Second Temple Judaism
Ehrman ch. 4; Brown ch. 5 and appendix II
- October 25: **No Class: Reading Week**
- November 1: Gospel of Luke
Ehrman ch. 10; Brown ch. 9
Second written assignment due
- November 8: Roman Empire and Feminism

Ehrman ch. 3 and 5; Brown ch. 4 and pp. 27-28 (#11)

November 15: **No Class**

November 22: Gospel of John
Ehrman ch. 12; Brown ch. 11
Third written assignment due

November 29: Anti-Judaism
Reading to be assigned

December 6: The Historical Jesus
Ehrman ch. 15; Brown appendix I

December 13: **No Class: Finals week**
Fourth written assignment due

Written Assignments

All papers are to be 3-5 pages long with 12-point, Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and using 1" margins on all sides. Written assignments should synthesize the content of the assigned readings, learning from classroom and small-group discussions, and student response to the weekly lectures. See the relevant handout for further details on expectations for assignments.

1. Discuss one of the ways in which the Jesus of Mark's Gospel surprised you. Be sure to explain why you found this aspect surprising – for example, the basis on which you were expecting something else – and how exactly the surprise is present in the text of Mark. Answering the question of “why” should clarify your exegetical presuppositions. Answering the question of “how” should describe, with specific references to chapter and verse, what exactly in the Gospel of Mark surprised you as well as the manner in which it did. Finally, explain why Mark 16:8 is considered by most scholars to be the “more original” ending of the gospel, and what difference this conclusion makes to your understanding of the work as a whole.
2. How is Jesus in Matthew different from Jesus in Mark? Be sure to refer to specific texts in both gospels. In your comparison, identify ways in which the Gospel of Matthew is a typical Second Temple Jewish text. What, if anything, is distinct in Matthew vis-à-vis other Second Temple Jewish literature? Be sure to explain how the Two-Source Hypothesis figures into your comparison of Matthew and Mark.
3. Discuss the claim of the Gospel of Luke (1:1-4) to be a “better gospel.” What do you think this meant for the evangelist? What does it mean for you? Be sure to discuss at least one episode or aspect of the text which purports to offer “better news” for women, despite being “business as usual” in the context of Roman social values.
4. Discuss the depiction of “the Jews” in the Gospel of John. How is this portrayal caught up in the theological framework of John's Gospel as a whole? Be sure to discuss how this issue has implications for your own posture toward the John's theological program. Briefly consider whether or not the historical Jesus offers a viable theological alternative (or complement) to John's Jesus.