

Introduction to Christian Scriptures
RE 144
Spring 2009
MW 2:30 - 3:45

Instructor: Carleen Mandolfo
Office: Lovejoy 346
Phone: x. 4645
email: mandolfo@colby.edu
Off. hours: M 4:00-5:15
 W 1:00-2:15

(make every effort to see me during these times,
but if you cannot, we can make an appt. Please
note that Fridays I rarely come into the office
in order to do my own research and writing)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Intended as a sequel to Religion 143 (though not dependent on it); this is an introduction to the specifically Christian scriptures. An exploration of the literature that reflects the background and earliest stages of the Christian movement will be explored. Attention is given to the historical and cultural context of the literature and to the development of early Christian theology and its significance for the contemporary world. How the New Testament texts have influenced our culture through art and film will round out the course.

COURSE GOALS

To become acquainted with the basic New Testament stories and their historical context. In terms of skills, you will practice becoming closer and more critical readers of all kinds of texts – an invaluable and enriching life skill.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Access Bible (AB)
The New Testament by Bart Ehrman (NT)
John the Baptist by Catherine Murphy (JB)

REQUIREMENTS

First and foremost students are expected to come to class, having read the assignments and having prepared study questions when they are assigned. Students are welcomed and expected to ask questions whenever they don't understand the material being covered in class or readings. This can be accomplished by raising your hand in class (even if I'm in the middle of a passionate oratory) or by calling me or sending me email during non-class time. The best way to do well in a class which covers the large amount of material we will be covering is by simply keeping up with the readings, and by clearing up confusions **as** they arise. This is **not** a conceptually difficult course, but there is a lot of material.

grading:

One midterm - 25%

One short reflection papers - 15% (choose one)

Film review - 20%

Art report - 10%

Final exam - 30%

Contributing to class discussions does count. I won't penalize those students who are uncomfortable speaking publicly, but those who make an effort to do so may see the results reflected in their final grades.

*You will have the opportunity to rewrite the one short paper (doesn't include film or art paper), but it **must** be turned back in two weeks from the date I handed it back to you. In order to receive a new grade, you also **must** come see me and then have someone in the Writers Center edit your draft before you turn it in to me.

*Note that the **film review** must be based on "The Passion of the Christ" or "Jesus Christ Superstar", and is due April 8, but you can turn it in before that, but after March 16.

The paper should only be about 3 pages long.

Focus your paper as follows:

Pretend that whichever film you watch is another gospel and that the "author" had the synoptic gospels as a source. Using your redaction-critical skills, what conclusions can you draw about this film, especially in terms of audience, context, and the christological portrayal of christ it is trying to present. Focus your paper with a good thesis and then argue concisely. I suggest that you make a visit to the Writers Center unless you have strong evidence to suggest you are a skilled writer (although it's always a good idea to have someone read your work).

*Turning in late papers, unless otherwise cleared with me first, will result in an automatic 1/2 grade reduction for that assignment.

**I take instances of academic dishonesty seriously; please consult with me or your student handbook if you have questions. It is advisable to avoid using websites as sources for your papers unless you check with me first.

CLASS SCHEDULE (*Read the introductory material in AB for each book as assigned)

- Feb. 4 Intro to course; syllabus; intro to Access Bible
- Feb. 9 Intro to canon and context
Assgn: NT chs. 1-2, 4
- Feb. 11 Video: "From Jesus to Christ" pt. 1
Assgn: consider beginning to read the Gospel of Mark
- Feb. 16 Mark: Gospel as apocalyptic drama
Assgn: Mk. 1-8; NT pp. 67-77
- Feb. 18 Mark, cont.
Assgn: Mk. 9-16; NT pp. 78-82; **reflection paper #1:**
Assess the claim made by the early church that Jesus is divine based on the evidence in the gospel of Mark. Make specific allusions to the gospel (don't do a lot of quoting, but do provide the chapter and verse you are alluding to) as well as to the textbook, where useful.
2-3 pages (only, so be very concise!), typed.
- Feb. 23 A methodological excursus: John the Baptist
Assgn: JB chs 1-2
- Feb. 25 Jbap, con.t
Assgn: JB chs. 3-4
- March 2 Jbap, cont.
Assgn: JB chs. 5-6

- March 4 Matthew: Gospel as new Torah
 Assgn: Mt. 1-7; NT pp. 92-104
- March 9 Matt., cont.
 Assgn: Mt. 8-10, 13, 15, 17, 19-21, 23-24, 26-28; NT
 pp. 104-10; "Revelation" by F. O'Connor (on reserve)
- March 11 Luke: Gospel as sacred history
 Assgn: Lk. 1-6; NT 112-21
- March 13 ***Reflection paper #2 due by noon, in the box outside my office:
 Compare and contrast the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5-6) with the
 "Sermon on the Plain" (Luke 6). 2-3 pages, typed.***
- March 16 Lk, cont.
 Assgn: Lk. 7:36-8:3; 10, 12, 15, 16:19-31, 17:20-37, 23-24; NT pp. 122-
 130
- March 18 MIDTERM
- March 23, 25 SPRING BREAK
- March 30 John: The "spiritual" gospel
 Assgn: Jn. 1-5, 8, 11-13; NT pp. 154-63
- April 1 John, cont.
 Assgn: Jn. 18-21, 24; NT pp. 163-75
- April 6 Without Jesus: The Acts of the Apostles
 Assgn: Acts 1-2, 4-5, 7-8:3, 10, 12; NT ch. 9
- April 8 NO CLASS -- ***Film assgn due (outside my office door by 12:00
 noon)***
- April 13 The gospels that didn't make the cut
 Assgn: NT ch. 12
- April 15 Paul: The New Testament's first author
 Assgn: NT ch. 18
- April 20 "From Jesus to Christ": Paul
- April 22 NO CLASS -- ***Art reports due outside my office door by 12:00 noon***

April 27 Corinthians and Galatians: Crises in the Church
Assgn: I Cor. 1-8; Galatians; NT pp. 316-40

April 29 Romans: Paul's Christology
Assgn: Romans; NT ch. 21

May 4 Women in the early church
Assgn: NT ch. 24

May 6 The End": The Book of Revelation and apocalypticism (War Scroll)
Assgn: Rev. 1-7, 13, 17, 21; NT ch. 28