

**Religion 212: INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
Wesleyan University (Spring 2023)

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Classroom: Fisk 121 (Mon.–Wed. 2:50-4:10)

**Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to those writings of the earliest Christians that came to be included in the Bible. These writings will be examined critically with respect to their social-historical origin, religious content, and place within the development of ancient Christianity. Interpreting early Christian texts constitutes the most important task in the study of the New Testament. We will therefore focus on a close reading of the New Testament in light of historical situations and social contexts in the Greco-Roman world, having as one of the chief aims of the course the acquisition of critical skills in reading and understanding the Bible. In the process we will necessarily engage secondary scholarship and wider theoretical interests, thereby providing students with a general introduction to the academic study of religion.

**Course Requirements**

1. Punctual attendance at every meeting of the class.
2. Careful preparation of the assigned readings prior to their discussion in class.
3. An in-class exam, with a take-home component, on Wed., Mar. 8, worth 25% of your grade.
4. An essay (6-7 pp. in length) due in class on Wed., Apr. 26, worth 35% of your grade.
5. A final (Registrar-scheduled) exam on Fri., May 19 (2:00-5:00), worth 40% of your grade.

**Course Textbooks**

1. Harold W. Attridge, ed., *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (HarperCollins, 2006). ISBN: 9780060786841.
2. Burton L. Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth* (HarperCollins, 1995). ISBN: 0060655186.
3. Lawrence M. Wills, *Not God's People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008). ISBN: 10742562506.

**Seven Course .pdf Readings (on Moodle)**

- .pdf 1: The Sayings Gospel Q (in *Q-Thomas Reader*, 31-74).
- .pdf 2: The Synoptic Problem, the Two Document Hypothesis, and the Sayings Gospel Q.
- .pdf 3: The Gospel of Thomas (in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2-7*, 1:38-93, 126-128).
- .pdf 4: Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," 141-173
- .pdf 5: Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts*, 1-16

- .pdf 6: Pliny, Epistles 10.92-93, 96-97 (in *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, 292-295).  
 .pdf 7: The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr (in *Early Christian Fathers*, 242-289).

## SYLLABUS

1. Mon., Jan. 30       INTRODUCING THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
  
2. Wed., Feb. 1        INTRODUCING THE EPIC OF ISRAEL  
 Hebrew Bible: Genesis 1-3; 6-9; 12:1-13:1; 15:1-6; 16-17; 22:1-19; Exodus 1-3; 12:1-13:10; 19:1-20:21  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 1-16
  
3. Mon., Feb. 6        RETELLING THE EPIC OF ISRAEL  
 Old Testament Apocrypha: Sirach 1; 6:18-37; 14:20-15:10; 24; 38:24-39:11; 44-50; 51:13-30  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 19-41
  
4. Wed., Feb. 8        INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD  
 Hebrew Bible: Leviticus 11-12; 15; 17:8-20:27; Deuteronomy 7  
 Wills, *Not God's People*, vii-viii, 1-51
  
5. Mon., Feb. 13       THE "SYNOPTIC PROBLEM" AND THE SAYINGS GOSPEL Q  
 .pdf 1: The Sayings Gospel Q (in *Q-Thomas Reader*, 31-74)  
 .pdf 2: The Synoptic Problem, the Two Document Hypothesis, and the Sayings Gospel Q  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 43-53, 312-313
  
6. Wed., Feb. 15       TEACHINGS FROM THE JESUS SCHOOLS  
 .pdf 1: The Sayings Gospel Q (in *Q-Thomas Reader*, 31-74)  
 .pdf 3: The Gospel of Thomas (in *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2-7, 1:38-93, 126-128)  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 54-73, 314-316
  
7. Mon., Feb. 20       THE "CHRIST CULT" AND THE APOSTLE PAUL  
 Old Testament Apocrypha: 2 Maccabees 6-7; 4 Maccabees 17:7-18:5  
 New Testament: Romans 3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 15:1-11; Philippians 2:1-11  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 75-96
  
8. Wed., Feb. 22       PAUL AND HIS "GOSPEL"  
 New Testament: 1 Thessalonians; Galatians; Philippians; Philemon  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 99-121, 143-146
  
9. Mon., Feb. 27       PAUL'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE CORINTHIANS  
 New Testament: 1 Corinthians; 2 Corinthians (a) 2:14-6:13; 7:2-4; (b) 10-13; (c) 1:1-2:13; 7:5-16; (d) 8; (e) 9; (f) 6:14-7:1  
 Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 123-137

**10. Wed., Mar. 1** PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

New Testament: Romans

Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 137-143

**11. Mon., Mar. 6** PAUL AMONG JEWS AND GENTILES

New Testament: Romans 9-11

Wills, *Not God's People*, 167-193

**12. Wed., Mar. 8** ASSESSING PAUL'S RELIGIOUS PROGRAM

**\*IN-CLASS EXAM WITH A TAKE-HOME COMPONENT\***

**\*Spring Break\***

**13. Mon., Mar. 27** THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

New Testament: Gospel of Mark

Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 54-60, 64-67, 147-161, 314-316

**14. Wed., Mar. 29** THE PASSION NARRATIVE IN MARK'S GOSPEL

Hebrew Bible: Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Daniel 2-3; 6-7

Old Testament Apocrypha: 2 Esdras (= 4 Ezra) 9:26-10:59

New Testament: Gospel of Mark 11-16

**15. Mon., Apr. 3** THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

New Testament: Gospel of Matthew

Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 161-167

**16. Wed., Apr. 5** TORAH AND ETHICS IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

New Testament: Gospel of Matthew

Wills, *Not God's People*, 101-132

**17. Mon., Apr. 10** THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

New Testament: Gospel of John

Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 175-183

.pdf 4: Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," 141-173

**18. Wed., Apr. 12** JOHANNINE SECTARIANISM

New Testament: Gospel of John; 1 John

Wills, *Not God's People*, 133-165

Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 215-222

**19. Mon., Apr. 17** THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

New Testament: Gospel of Luke

Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 167-173

- 20.** Wed., Apr. 19 THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES  
New Testament: Acts of the Apostles  
.pdf 5: Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts*, 1-16  
Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 225-239
- 21.** Mon., Apr. 24 THE ADVENTURES OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY  
New Testament: Acts of the Apostles  
Wills, *Not God's People*, 195-216
- 22.** Wed., Apr. 26 COMPARING THE GOSPELS AND ACTS  
**\*AN ESSAY (6-7 PP.) DUE IN CLASS TODAY\***
- 23.** Mon., May 1 WRITINGS IN THE NAME OF THE APOSTLES  
New Testament: 2 Thessalonians; Colossians; Ephesians; 1 Timothy; Titus; 2 Timothy; 1 Peter; 2 Peter  
Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 112-113, 183-188, 199-213
- 24.** Wed., May 3 THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN  
New Testament: Revelation to John  
.pdf 6: Pliny, Epistles 10.92-93, 96-97 (in *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, 292-295)  
Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 193-197
- 25.** Mon., May 8 CLAIMING THE EPIC OF ISRAEL  
.pdf 7: The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr (in *Early Christian Fathers*, 242-289)  
Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 251-273
- 26.** Wed., May 10 CREATING THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE  
Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?* 275-310

**\*FINAL (REGISTRAR-SCHEDULED) EXAM ON FRIDAY, MAY 19 (2:00-5:00)\***