

**RELIGION 210-AU1: NEW TESTAMENT LIFE & LITERATURE**  
**Term 3; Session I, 2008**  
**Wednesday, 6:00 – 9:45 pm**  
**School for Adult Learning**  
**University of Indianapolis**

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### **Course Description:**

The primary goal of this course is to enable students to encounter the documents of the New Testament within their original context in order to discover, as much as this goal is attainable, the meaning intended by the authors. This is not a confessional course; hence, this class is not intended to provide a devotional study of the Scriptures. Neither is the intent a scholarly study that attempts to destroy the individual devotional value each student may bring to this class. The early Christian writings will be examined from an historical-critical perspective in order to encounter and discern the historical and literary importance and value of the texts themselves. In the end, it is the hope of the instructor that such a detailed and critical examination will bear much fruit for each student's personal understanding of the early Christian writings.

The course will follow, largely, the layout of the main text being utilized (Ehrman). In other words, students will examine:

1. The **literary type** of each document.
2. The principal **concerns, themes and/or ideas** of each document.
3. The relation of #2 above to the **historical and cultural background** of the document being studied (and, hence, the author in particular).

### **Student Responsibilities:**

Due to the accelerated format of this course within the School for Adult Learning, it is imperative that students maintain focus and give proper consideration to completing all reading and other assignments prior to each class. A detailed study of the New Testament proves challenging during a fifteen-week course; it will prove even more so within the context of a five-week study. The instructor has given great consideration to the challenges facing those within the School for Adult Learning; however, even given this consideration, the volume of reading, tests and class projects may prove daunting for those who fall behind. Naturally, there are valid reasons for a student to miss part or all of a class session, and the instructor will work with students who face such unplanned circumstances.

Also, and this cannot be stressed highly enough, plagiarism, "cheating" or ethical misconduct will not be tolerated. Each student's reasons for furthering his or her education may differ; however, it makes no sense for a person seeking to better himself or herself to engage in unethical behavior. Any such offenses will be dealt with in accordance with the published rules, regulations and policies set forth in the *Academic Catalog* of the University of Indianapolis governing the 2007-2008 academic year. In every case, where the option is appropriate, it will be the intent of the instructor that the student receive a failing grade for the course.

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

#### University-Wide Learning Goals

The University of Indianapolis is an AQIP accredited university, dedicated to continual quality improvement. As a part of the university, the School for Adult Learning commits to the same learning outcomes and the ongoing assessment of them. The learning outcomes are as follows:

- **Social Responsibility**—In the area of social and personal responsibility, students in the School for Adult Learning are responsible for their own learning, connect the ethical and socially responsible practices presented in the classroom to the worlds in which they live, and understand that their behaviors affect society. Both forms of responsibility involve moral obligation to self and community, and rely upon such virtues as honesty, self-discipline, respect, loyalty, and compassion.
- **Creativity**—In the area of creativity, students in the School for Adult Learning generate, appreciate, and evaluate new possibilities, alternatives, and ideas which enable them to see the world in new ways.
- **Critical Thinking**—In the area of critical thinking, students in the School for Adult Learning intentionally apply higher-order thinking to reach evidence-based conclusions.
- **Performance**—In the area of performance, students in the School for Adult Learning write, speak, compute mathematically, and are technologically literate based upon the standards established by SAL.

Note: Not every learning outcome will be emphasized in each class; however, successful students will have demonstrated all four outcomes upon completion of the SAL curriculum.

At the conclusion of REL 210, the successful student will display critical thinking and creative skills through the submission of a well-planned and prepared perspectival interview assignment (described in detail below). Students must, through application of course material, display either support of a particular long-held belief or the way such a position has been challenged and altered.

#### **Texts:**

Ehrman, Bart D. *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN-10: 0195161238. ISBN-13: 978-0195161236

*The New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. ISBN: 0195283309 [Amazon.com price: \$20.69]

In class, we will use *exclusively* the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Modern English interpretations of the Bible (e.g., NIV, NAB, etc.) and any version of the King James Version will be unacceptable for class use. These are fine devotional Bibles. Unfortunately, they contain grave errors in translation. For example, the original KJV contains more than 1,800 translation errors from the original Greek manuscripts. The NRSV is generally accepted as the best of the English language translations, and it is widely used in academic work. Any quotations in assignments or tests must be from the NRSV.

#### **Tests:**

Two (2) tests will be given in this course: One in week three, and the other will be completed on the final night of the course. The final examination will be comprehensive and may draw on all materials utilized in the course.

#### **Perspectival Interview:**

Students will conduct an interview of a friend, family member or co-worker during which they will ask questions regarding specific New Testament issues. The students will then write a verbatim and theological reflection on this interview. The format for this verbatim will be

provided during the first class, and the verbatim will be due at the beginning of the fourth class session.

### **Quizzes:**

Two (2) quizzes will be given during this course. Quizzes will cover reading material (including scriptural passages). The purpose of these quizzes is to allow students to demonstrate knowledge and familiarity with key topics and concepts found within course reading. Some material may not be covered during class lecture; therefore, students are encouraged to keep up with all reading assignments. Students should be prepared for a quiz on the first evening of class.

### **Participation/Attendance:**

In an attempt to accommodate the challenging schedules of those involved in the medical field, this course session has been modified from the standard format. As such, two projects that typically indicate a student's understanding of key topics have been replaced. It is imperative that students attend each class session and participate to the best of their ability. Full and active class participation will indicate a student's familiarity with course material. Each missed class will deleteriously affect a student's grade.

### **Grading:**

Examination One:	25%
Interview/Verbatim:	20%
Quizzes (2):	20%
Final Examination:	30%
Participation/Attendance:	5%

A	100-95	C	77-74
A-	94-91	C-	73-70
B+	90-88	D+	69-68
B	87-84	D	67-64
B-	83-81	D-	63-60
C+	80-78	F	59 >

## Lecture Topics and Corresponding Reading:

### Week One: May 7<sup>th</sup>

Prior to the first session, read the following:

Ehrman: Chs. 1 – 4 (pp. 1-63)

TOPIC: History, Culture and Setting of the New Testament World

### Week Two: May 14<sup>th</sup>

Prior to the second session, read the following:

Ehrman: Chs. 11, 5, 6, 7 (pp. 185-194 and 64-115)

Read two of the following Gospels: Matthew, Mark or Luke

TOPIC: The Synoptic Gospels and the Historical-Critical Method

### Week Three: May 21<sup>st</sup>

Prior to the third session, read the following:

Ehrman: Chs. 8 - 10 (pp. 116 - 184)

Gospel of John and Acts

TOPIC: Early Christian Communities: The Community of Acts and the Johannine Community.

✠ **Exam #1 taken in class.**

### Week Four: May 28<sup>h</sup>

Prior to the fourth session, read the following:

Ehrman: Chs. 12, 16, 13, 14 and 15 (pp. 195 – 211, 261 – 274 and 212 - 260)

Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians

TOPIC: Paul and His World – The Apostle to the Gentiles.

✠ **Verbatim due at beginning of class.**

### Week Five: June 4<sup>th</sup>

Prior to the fifth session, read the following:

Ehrman: Chs. 17 – 20 (pp. 275 - 351)

One of the Deutero-Pauline letters (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 & 2 Timothy) and all of Revelation

TOPIC: A) Additional Consideration of the Pauline/Deutero-Pauline Corpus  
B) The Apocalypse of John – Hope in the Early Church.

✠ **Final Exam taken at end of class.**

**A Note to Students in the School for Adult Learning:**

I am excited to have the opportunity to work with you in this course. The decision to better oneself through education leads to dynamic discovery, and it requires great sacrifice – especially for those in the School for Adult Learning. As I planned this syllabus, I took great care to create a class that would provide the pertinent information without sacrificing in-depth analysis.

I have attempted to fill in the natural gaps of condensing the course into five weeks. With two weeks to prepare and the five weeks of class, students will average less than 10 pages of reading per day. It is not my intent to overwhelm students with a volume of reading; rather, I wish to provide a comfortable amount of reading that will provide for a solid survey of the subject matter.

**I cannot stress highly enough the need to begin reading the course material today.** Those who do so will find the lectures much more understandable, and you will find yourself with plenty of time to do the assignments. The textbook is an easy read, and I have withdrawn materials that former students indicated were confusing or that they felt did not add to their understanding of the subject matter. In view of this, that which remains in this syllabus should be easy to read, but students must get a jump start.

The key to success in this course comes down to one thing: Discipline. Set aside time each day to read fifteen to twenty pages, and you will find this a smooth and digestible amount of material. If you fail to do this, the reading will snowball and over take you within days.

Finally, it is important to remember one salient point: I am in your corner, and I want to see you succeed. I hope this will be a rewarding and enjoyable class for you.