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 New Testament. These writings will be examined critically with respect to their social-historical origin, religious content, and place within the development of ancient Christianities. 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 New Testament. 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 Thurs., Feb. 25, worth 20% of your grade.
4. An in-class exam on Thurs., Apr. 7, worth 20% of your grade.
5. An essay (6 pp.) due in class on Thurs., Apr. 21 worth 25% of your grade.
6. A final (Registrar-scheduled) exam on Thurs., May 12, 9:00-12:00, worth 35% of your grade.

Fair Warnings
1. Laptops and other electronic devices are very distracting and must be used judiciously.
2. You are responsible for knowing and adhering to the University’s Honor Code.

Required Textbooks

Required Course Reading Packet (online as three .pdf files)
SYLLABUS

1. Jan. 21  INTRODUCING THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

2. Jan. 26  CLASHING CULTURES: ANCIENT ISRAEL, GREECE, AND ROME
*Old Testament Apocrypha: Sirach 24; 44-50

3. Jan. 28  INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS IN THE BIBLICAL WORLD
*Wills, *Not God’s People*, vii-viii, 1-51
*Hebrew Bible: Leviticus 11-12; 15; 18-20; Deuteronomy 7

4. Feb. 2  TEACHINGS FROM THE JESUS SCHOOLS
*The Gospel of Thomas (in Cameron, *The Other Gospels*, 23-37)

5. Feb. 4  LOCATING THE “CHRIST CULT” AND THE APOSTLE PAUL
*New Testament: Romans 3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 15; Philippians 2:5-11; Philemon
*Old Testament Apocrypha: 2 Maccabees 6-7

6. Feb. 9  PAUL AND HIS “GOSPEL”
*New Testament: 1 Thessalonians; Galatians

7. Feb. 11  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

8. Feb. 16  PAUL’S LETTER TO THE ROMANS
*New Testament: Romans

9. Feb. 18  PAUL AMONG JEWS AND GENTILES
*Wills, *Not God’s People*, 167-93
*New Testament: Romans 9-11
10. Feb. 23  PAUL’S RELIGIOUS PROGRAM AND ITS RECEPTION
*Gager, Reinventing Paul, 77-99, 173-77
*New Testament: Galatians; 1 Corinthians 8-12; 15; 2 Corinthians 10-12; Romans 4; 9-11

11. Feb. 25  *First In-Class Exam, with a Take-Home Component*

12. Mar. 1  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK
*New Testament: Gospel of Mark

13. Mar. 3  THE PASSION NARRATIVE IN MARK’S GOSPEL
*Hebrew Bible: Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Daniel 3; 6
*New Testament: Gospel of Mark 11-16

*Spring Break*

14. Mar. 22  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW
*New Testament: Gospel of Matthew

15. Mar. 24  TORAH AND ETHICS IN MATTHEW’S GOSPEL
*Wills, Not God’s People, 101-32
*New Testament: Gospel of Matthew

16. Mar. 29  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

17. Mar. 31  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN
*New Testament: Gospel of John

18. Apr. 5  JOHANNINE SECTARIANISM
*Wills, Not God’s People, 133-65
*New Testament: Gospel of John; 1 John

19. Apr. 7  *Second In-Class Exam*

20. Apr. 12  THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
21. Apr. 14  THE ADVENTURES OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
    *Wills, Not God’s People, 195-216

22. Apr. 19  THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN
    *New Testament: Revelation to John

23. Apr. 21  COMPARING THE GOSPELS AND THE BOOK OF ACTS
    *An essay (6 pp.) due in class today*

    *New Testament: 2 Thessalonians; Ephesians; Colossians; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus

25. Apr. 28  CLAIMING ISRAEL’S EPIC
    *The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr (in Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, 242-89)

26. May 3  CREATING THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

    *Final (Registrar-Scheduled) Exam on Thurs., May 12, 9:00-12:00*