Wesleyan University (Spring 2017)

Professor Ron Cameron
Department of Religion 208 (171 Church Street)
Office Hours: Mon. 4:30-5:30; Tues. 1:30-2:30; Wed. 4:30-5:30; and by appointment
E-mail: rcameron@wesleyan.edu (office); roncameron02138@gmail.com (home)
Office Telephone: 860-685-2299

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., Mar. 2, worth 25% of your grade.
4. An essay (6-7 pp. in length) due in class on Tues., Apr. 25, worth 35% of your grade.
5. A final (Registrar-scheduled) exam on Thurs., May 18, 2:00-5:00, worth 40% 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
   9781598150124.
5. Lawrence M. Wills, Not God’s People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World (Rowman

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

1. Jan. 26  INTRODUCING THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

2. Jan. 31  CLASHING CULTURES: ANCIENT ISRAEL, GREECE, AND ROME
*Old Testament Apocrypha: Sirach 24; 44-50

3. Feb. 2   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. 7   TEACHINGS FROM THE JESUS SCHOOLS
*The Sayings Gospel Q (.pdf in Kloppenborg et al., Q-Thomas Reader, 31-74)

5. Feb. 9   LOCATING THE “CHRIST CULT” AND THE APOSTLE PAUL
*Gager, Reinventing Paul, vii-42, 153-64
*New Testament: Romans 3-4; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 15; Philippians 2:5-11; Philemon
*Old Testament Apocrypha: 2 Maccabees 6-7; 4 Maccabees 17:7-18:5

6. Feb. 14  PAUL AND HIS “GOSPEL”
*Gager, Reinventing Paul, 43-75, 164-73
*New Testament: 1 Thessalonians; Galatians

7. Feb. 16  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. 21  PAUL’S LETTER TO THE ROMANS
*Gager, Reinventing Paul, 101-43, 178-87
*New Testament: Romans

9. Feb. 23  PAUL AMONG JEWS AND GENTILES
*Wills, Not God’s People, 167-93
*Gager, Reinventing Paul, 145-52, 187
*New Testament: Romans 9-11
10. Feb. 28  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; Philippians  

11. Mar. 2  ASSESSING PAUL AND HIS LEGACY  
*First In-Class Exam, with a Take-Home Component*  

12. Mar. 7  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK  
*New Testament: Gospel of Mark  

13. Mar. 9  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. 28  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW  
*New Testament: Gospel of Matthew  

15. Mar. 30  TORAH AND ETHICS IN MATTHEW’S GOSPEL  
*Wills, *Not God’s People*, 101-32  
*New Testament: Gospel of Matthew  

16. Apr. 4  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN  
*New Testament: Gospel of John  

17. Apr. 6  JOHANNINE SECTARIANISM  
*Wills, *Not God’s People*, 133-65  
*New Testament: Gospel of John; 1 John  

18. Apr. 11  THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE  

19. Apr. 13  THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES  
*Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts*, 1-37  
20. Apr. 18 THE ADVENTURES OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY
*Wills, *Not God's People*, 195-216

21. Apr. 20 NEGOTIATING THE ROMAN EMPIRE
*Pervo, *The Mystery of Acts*, 115-72

22. Apr. 25 COMPARING THE CANONICAL GOSPELS AND THE BOOK OF ACTS
*An Essay (6-7 pp. in length) due in class today*

23. Apr. 27 THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN
*New Testament: Revelation to John

24. May 2 WRITINGS IN THE NAME OF THE APOSTLE PAUL
*New Testament: 2 Thessalonians; Ephesians; Colossians; 1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus

25. May 4 CLAIMING ISRAEL'S EPIC
*The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr (pdf in Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 242-89)

26. May 9 CREATING THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

*Final (Registrar-Scheduled) Exam on Thurs., May 18, 2:00-5:00*