

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT (KNB 1501)

Instructor	Prof. B. H. McLean
Lectures	Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Email	bhm.mclean@utoronto.ca

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

An exploration of the content of early Christian writings. Emphasis will be placed upon understanding these writings in their original literary and socio-historical contexts, and on methods of interpretation. s

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES: KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

The outcomes and competencies of this course are all taken from the outcomes and competencies of the Knox's MDiv curriculum. Students, who pass this course, will demonstrate the ability to:

Outcomes

1. Describe the historical time periods in which early Christian writings developed and the broad historical outlines of the early Christian period
2. Discuss the various theologies reflected in individual texts, books and sections of early Christian writings
3. Describe and compare the various research and interpretive methods used in biblical studies to explicate texts.
4. Discuss interactions between the historical contexts and the literature and theology of early Christian writings (especially in seminars)
5. Apply research methods and interpretive methods to explicate and analyze Biblical texts (especially in seminars)
6. Describe the ancient cultural contexts in which early Christian writings developed and the interactions between the ancient cultural contexts and the literature and theology of individual texts (especially in seminars).

3. REQUIRED TEXT (NEW)

- Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. **Sixth** Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, **2016**.

4. EVALUATION SCHEMA

- 30% Weekly quizzes (11 quizzes)
- 30% Early Christian Letter Group Project
- 40% Final Exam

5. OUTLINE OF WEEKLY LECTURE TOPICS & ASSIGNED READINGS

Unit 1 (Jan. 10): The context of the New Testament

- Ehrman, chaps. 1-2

Unit 2 (Jan. 17): Greco-Roman World, Jewish world of Jesus

- Ehrman, chaps. 3-4
- Quiz 1

Unit 3 (Jan. 24): Oral Traditions, Christian Gospels, Gospel of Mark

- Ehrman, chaps. 5-7
- Quiz 2

Unit 4 (Jan. 31): Source Problem, Gospel of Matthew

- Ehrman, chaps. 8-9
- Quiz 3

Unit 5 (Feb. 7): Gospels of Luke and John

- Ehrman, chaps. 10-11
- Quiz 4

Unit 6 (Feb. 14): Johannine epistles, Historical Jesus

- Ehrman, chaps. 12-15
- Quiz 5

[Reading Week]

Unit 7 (Feb. 28): The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith

- Ehrman, chaps. 16-18
- Quiz 6

Unit 8 (March 7): Acts of the Apostles, Paul and his mission

- Ehrman, chaps. 19-20
- Quiz 7

Unit 9 (March 14): Paul's letters

- Ehrman, chaps. 21-23
- Quiz 8
- Beginning working in your group on the Early Christian Letter Project

Unit 10 (March 21): Thekla, Deutero-Pauline letters, Women in the church

- Ehrman, chaps. 24-26
- Quiz 9
- Continuing working in your group on your group's *Early Christian Letter Project*

Unit 11 (March 28): Hebrews, Ep. Barnabas, 1 Peter

- Ehrman, chaps. 27-28
- Quiz 9
- Early Christian Letter project due

Unit 12 (April 4): James, Didache, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Revelation, 2 Peter, Hermas, Apocalypse of Peters

- Ehrman, chaps. 29-30
- Quiz 11

FINAL EXAM: April 11, 6:30 (2 hours)

5. QUIZZES

- Each week (excepting week 1) you will write a quiz (15 minute) *at the beginning of class*. The quizzes are collectively worth 30% of your final mark.
- The quiz will test your knowledge of the *basic facts and definitions* explained in the *assigned readings* for that week.
- Students who miss a quiz, either because they arrived late to class, or through absence, will be given a grade of *zero (0)*, unless *prior* arrangements have been made with the instructor.
- Failed quizzes cannot be written a second time.

6. EARLY CHRISTIAN LETTER PROJECT

- This is a group project. Instructions will be distributed separately.
- Due date: *March 28*
- Length: 12 pages (double-spaced), exclusive of title page and bibliography.

7. FINAL EXAM (April 11)

- The final exam is worth 40% of your final mark. The exam is cumulative. It will cover material in chapters 1-30 of the textbook.
- Two weeks before the final exam, an *exam preparation sheet* will be made available to all students.

8. COURSE POLICIES

Policies for courses are contained in the *TST Basic Degree Handbook* and the *Knox Student Handbook*. In particular, note:

1. *Cell Phones*: Cell phones can be disruptive to the classroom experience. Students, therefore, should turn off or set their phones to silent and refrain from using them while in class. Cell phone use is permitted only for medical professionals who are on call and for students who need to be in constant contact with ill family members or minors. Students who meet either of these requirements should inform the professor prior to class.
2. *Use of Technology*: Laptops and other computing devices may be used in the classroom for note taking purposes only. The use of the internet is not permitted while class is in session unless it is part of a specific class activity. Students wishing to text message, search for images, fact check etc. should do so during the break or outside of class. Much of the learning that goes on in the classroom is founded upon mutual disclosure that takes place between the instructor and the student and between students. Parties outside of that learning community have not committed themselves to this relationship of trust. For this and other reasons, permission to record lectures in audio format is granted for use by registered students only. Video recording is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Recordings and notes of class lectures may not be electronically reproduced, posted or distributed without the written permission of the instructor.
3. *Penalties*: It is the policy of Knox College to assess a penalty for late assignments. Four percentage points will be deducted per week that an assignment is late, with partial deductions for partial weeks.
4. It is a requirement of Knox College, TST, and the broader academic world, to employ inclusive language in academic writing. Please review the college policy.
5. *Completion of Course work*: All course work (including any late work) must be completed by the end of term, the last day of exams. Only in the case of illness (with a note from a doctor), bereavement or other unusual circumstances will an extension be considered and this must be authorized by the Basic Degree Committee and the Faculty.
6. All students must set up and activate a UTOR email address. It is every student's responsibility to check his or her UTOR email regularly. The college takes no responsibility for breaches of security because a student forwards their UTOR email to another account. Delivery failure for email forwarded to another account is not the responsibility of the college.

9. GRADING

Students who have received a final mark between 65-69 (FZ) may petition in writing within 30 days to the instructor in consultation with Knox's Director of Academic Programs (or the Basic Degree Director of the student's college of registration) to do a supplemental. Supplemental work must be finished no later than 6 months after the date on which the original grade was submitted. The student must receive a grade of no less than 70% to pass the supplemental. If the student passes the supplemental, the course grade will be changed to 70 (B-). If a student fails the supplemental, no provision will be made for further supplemental work. In this case, the student will receive a failing grade for the course.