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| **REL 121g**  **The World of the New Testament**  **Room: THH 121**  **Class hours: TWTh 2.00-4.50** | **Instructor: Professor Sheila Briggs**  **Office: ACB 232**  **Tel: 213-740-0267**  **Office Hours: T 12.50-1.50**  **or by appointment**  **e-mail: sbriggs@usc.edu** |

**Course Description**

This course is an historical investigation of the original context in which the writings of the New Testament arose. The world of the New Testament is both influential on and remote from our own. It was a diverse world in which many different cultural streams, Jewish as well as Pagan, encountered and transformed each other within Greco-Roman society and the political framework of the Roman Empire. This diversity is reflected in the writings of the New Testament and we will be looking at how these writings emerged from the activities of different early Christian groups and individuals.

**Learning Objectives**

Students in this course learn:

* about how texts are related to the contexts in which they are produced
* how historical texts reflect the historical conditions (social, political, economic and cultural) in which they were produced
* how texts convey the values, interests and concerns of those who produce them
* to understand the *original* intent of the author(s) and the *original*  meanings that the first audience attached to a historical text
* to understand and distinguish between the different layers and webs of meaning that surround historical texts, i.e., to understand that texts exist in a complicated history of interpretation that links them to other texts and communities beyond those of their original context

**Required Reading**

Dale B. Martin, *New Testament History and Literature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

The New Testament in the **New Revised Standard Version**

**Important**: You must use the New Revised Standard Version in this course because it is the standard translation of the New Testament for academic study. You can obtain this is many formats. There are print editions of the Bible and some have extensive notes and essays on the individual writings as well as other material about the New Testament and its world (e.g. the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* and the *HarperCollins Study Bible*). You can, however, also have online access to the NRSV and this is free-of-charge. Just type New Revised Standard Version or NRSV in Google and you will see a range of options. You can read it online at a site such as *oremus* or even download it as a PDF.

**Schedule of Class Sessions**

May 16 Introduction to course.

May 17 Martin: Introduction: Why Study the New Testament, pp. 1-12; The Development of the Canon, pp. 15-33.

May 22 Martin: The Greco- Roman World, pp. 34-54.

May 23 Martin: Ancient Judaism, pp. 55-66. The New Testament as a Historical Source: A Comparison of Acts and Paul’s Letters, pp. 67-79.

May 24 Martin: The Gospel of Mark, pp. 79-92. New Testament Reading: Mark.

May 29 Martin: The Gospel of Matthew, pp. 93-107; The Gospel of Thomas, pp. 108-121 New Testament Readings: Matthew.

May 30 Martin: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Part 1: Structure and Themes pp. 125 -136; New Testament Reading: Luke.

May 31 Martin: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Part 2: Editing the Beginnings of Christianity pp. 137-151, New Testament Reading: Acts of the Apostles.

June 5 Martin: The Gospel of John, pp. 152-167; The Letters of John and the Spread

of Christianity pp. 168-178. New Testament Reading: John, 1,2, and 3 John.

**June 6 Mid-term Examination**

June 6 Martin: The Historical Jesus, pp. 179-195.

June 7 Martin: Paul as Missionary: 1Thessalonians pp. 199-212; Paul as Pastor: Philemon and 1 and 2 Corinthians pp. 213-230. New Testament Reading: 1Thessalonians, Philemon, 1 and 2 Corinthians

June 12 Martin: Paul as Jewish Theologian: Galatians and Romans, pp. 231-246. New Testament Reading: Galatians, Romans.

June 13 Martin: Colossians and Ephesians pp. 247-260; Differing Christians: Christology, Faith, and Works, pp. 261-273. New Testament Reading: Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, James.

June 14 Martin: The Pro-household Paul: The Pastoral Epistles pp. 277-291; The Anti-household Paul: The Acts of Paul and Thecla, pp.292- 305. New Testament Reading: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus.

June 19 Martin: Hebrews and Biblical Interpretation, pp. 309-321. New Testament Reading: Hebrews.

June 20 Martin: Apocalypticism as Resistance, pp. 341-359. New Testament Reading: Revelations.

June 21 Martin: Apocalypticism as Accommodation, pp. 360-375. New Testament Reading: 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude

**June 21 Research Paper Due**

**June 26 Final Examination**

**Course Requirements**

Students should have completed the required reading by the session that it is listed in the schedule of class sessions.

Course attendance and participation make up 10% of the grade. Students are allowed **three** excused absences. After that, except in exceptional circumstances, students will lose a course point (1% of the course grade) for each absence from class.

The other requirements are:

One **mid-term** examination (1hr 20mins) on June 6 (20% of grade)

One **final** examination on June 26 (40% of grade)

One **research paper** of 7-8 pages due on June 21 (30% of grade)

The examinations take place in class and their format is short essays. The examinations are open-book and you can bring to the examination the Martin textbook, paper versions of the NRSV New Testament and your notes.

*Grading Scale*

Grades in the course final will be determined using the following scale

A 95-100

A- 90-94

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D+ 67-69

D 63-66

D- 60-62

F 59 and below

**Course Policies and Resources for Students**

**No electronic devices** (laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.) can be used in the classroom. They are a distraction not only for the user but for those around them.

**Don't cut class**. You are expected to attend every session. If you miss class, then you are left to your own resources to make up the lost work. In such cases, you can try borrowing a fellow student's notes or doing extra reading on the session's topic, but you will have missed the class discussion.

**Hand in your paper punctually**. Papers handed in late may lose points or not be graded at all! If you are having difficulties completing the paper, contact the instructor as soon as possible, before or by the time the paper is due. It is always easier to accommodate student requests for time extensions on a paper, when these are presented *before* it is due. It is also important that students note the date and time and attend the final examination. The instructor must submit the final course grade soon after the final examination. The final course grade is precisely that. The instructor cannot alter it, and even students with compelling reasons for not completing the work on time have to undergo a long petition process, which is often unsuccessful.

**Use Blackboard and check your USC e-mail account for course information.** Instructions on assignments, course materials and announcements will be posted on Blackboard. I may also contact students through their USC e-mail accounts.

The **Writing Center** is there to help you. To use it, all you need to do is make an appointment by 'phone or in person a few days in advance. You can also try just walking in, but then you are not guaranteed an appointment, and the center at times will be very busy. Writing Center consultants will help you develop ideas and arguments and revise rough drafts of your paper. The Writing Center is in Taper Hall (THH 216), phone: 213-740-3691.

All students are expected to know and follow USC's rules on **academic integrity**. Students must acknowledge all sources (books, journals, videos, web-based and electronic materials, etc.) used in their paper, whether these are directly quoted, paraphrased or their main ideas summarized. Students should retain notes and any other material that can substantiate that they produced their work consistent with the rules on academic integrity.

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a **disability** is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.