

**BEYOND THE NEW TESTAMENT:  
Secret Gospels, Apocryphal Acts, and Disputed Revelations - W**  
RS353 & CC348 (44425 & 32540)  
Spring 2010 in RAS 310

**Steve Friesen**

Friesen@mail.utexas.edu

Burdine 418

Office hours: Mon. 11-12 at Prufrock's; Wed. 12-2 at my office; or by appt.

**Description**

There are three broad goals for this course: to increase familiarity with the content of several early Christian texts not found in the Bible; to explore the historical and cultural contexts of the religious groups that used these texts; and to learn systematic methods of textual interpretation. We will focus on texts such as the Gospel of Peter, and the Gospel of Judas; the Acts of Paul, the Acts of Thecla, and the Acts of John; the Reality of the Rulers, On the Origin of the World; and the Apocalypse of Peter. Participants will be expected to read the texts carefully and to be prepared to discuss them in class. The course will include a consideration of the reasons these texts were not included in the Christian Bible.

**Texts**

- \* Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that did not make it into the New Testament* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2005). ISBN 978-0195182507.
- \* Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Augsburg, 1991). ISBN 978-0800604738
- \* Other readings available through Blackboard in pdf.

**Assignments**

Pts.	Percent	Assignment
200	40%	Exams (2@20%).
180	36%	Expansion paper: 1st draft; expanded 2nd draft; 2 peer reviews.
50	10%	Short, low-stakes writing (called "provocations").
40	8%	Participation.
30	6%	Attendance.
<b>500</b>		<b>Total points possible</b>

**Grading**

I use plus/minus grading. The grade for the course will be based on the percentage of the total points earned:

B+ = 86.67%-89.99% of total points;

B = 83.34% - 86.669%;

B- = 80% - 83.339%; etc.

The grade categories mean:

A/A- : excellent!

B+/B/B- : good!

C+/C/C- : some problems.

D+/D/D- : serious problems.

Below D-: doesn't meet university standards, not passing.

### **Expansion Paper (2 drafts)**

**Goal.** This assignment gives you the chance to write a paper as a first draft, and then to return to it later and to revise it completely in an expanded form adding new material.

**First draft** (600 words; 70 pts.): due Thurs. Feb. 27 at noon. This draft analyzes one of the ancient texts we have read using one of the concepts we have discussed.

- Possible texts so far: Infancy Gospel of Thomas; Letter from Vienna & Lyons; Acts of Thecla; Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas; Gospel of Peter; or Acts of Thomas.
- Possible concepts include: characterization; plot; setting; violence; gender roles; historicity; etc.

**Peer reviews** (two @ 200 words; 20 pts each): due at noon on Thursday, Mar. 4. You will review two first drafts. Your review should: summarize the main point of the draft; indicate strong points; and suggest ways to strengthen the draft.

**Expanded 2nd draft** (1000 words; 70 pts.): due at noon, Thurs. Apr. 15. This draft will be longer and will either: write on the same ancient text and add a different kind of analysis; or, add another ancient text and use the same concept in the analysis. (For example, you might keep writing on the Infancy Gospel of Thomas but add the concept of “historicity” to your first-draft concept of “characterization;” or alternatively, you might stick with the theme of “characterization” and add the Acts of Thecla to your first draft on the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.) Your expanded draft will reflect feedback from the two peer reviewers and from me.

### **Provocations: low-stakes writing**

There are 10 short assignments that prepare you for class. Each provocation is 100 words and handed in through Blackboard. These are due before class by 3:00 pm.

### **Attendance**

You get a point for each day you attend a full class, arriving on time and staying to the end. In addition, everyone gets two sick days/personal days during the semester. So two absences will not hurt your grade.

### **Participation**

Each day I take note of your participation: great contributions; contributed; said something; or silent. I will post participation grades for the 1st half of the course so that you can see how you are doing. A maximum of 40 pts is possible for participation during the semester.

### **Honesty**

Please pursue rigorous honesty in everything you do, including your work for this class. It will serve you well in life, and in this class as well since I report all cases of academic dishonesty to the dean of students. Dishonesty may result in a failed grade for the assignment or even for the course. For a description of academic dishonesty, see [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint\\_avoid.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_avoid.php)

### **Disability Services**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259. Please let me know about any arrangements that will assist you in your learning.

### **Religious Holiday**

If you will not be able to attend class due to religious services, let me know ahead of time. Your personal days will normally cover this but sometimes there are unusual circumstances that need to be taken into account.

**DRAFT: Beyond the New Testament:  
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LS = *Lost Scriptures* by Bart Ehrman. PDF's available through Blackboard.

Jan. 20 **Opening session:** Pliny's Letter to Trajan

**Innocuous narrative criticism: read it this way and no one gets hurt**

Jan. 25 Infancy Gospel of Thomas (LS 57-62). Powell 1-34 (intro & narration)  
*Provocation (short writing) #1*

Jan. 27 More Infancy Gospel of Thomas. Powell 35-67 (events & characters)

**Religion & violence: someone gets hurt**

Feb. 1 "Letter from Vienna & Lyons" pdf (1-7). Lincoln, "Theses on Violence" pdf (93-95)

*Provocation #2*

Feb. 3 "Passion of the Scillitan Martyrs" pdf. Powell 69-83 (settings)

**Behaving like women, behaving like men**

Feb. 8 Acts of Thecla (LS 113-121). Vander Stichele & Penner "Gender" pdf (4-8, 11-27, 39-40).

*Provocation #3*

Feb. 10 More Acts of Thecla. Klauck "Acts genre" pdf (1-14).

**History isn't what it used to be**

Feb. 15 "Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas" pdf (1-8). Tyson, "Historical" pdf (281-290, 297).

*Provocation #4*

Feb. 17 Gospel of Peter. Žižek "Fantasy" pdf (722-724).

**Fantastic!**

Feb. 23 Acts of Thomas. Bettelheim, "Fairy Tales" pdf (3-11)

*Provocation #5*

Feb. 25 More Acts of Thomas. Klauck "A Look Back" pdf (255-263).

***First paper due Feb. 26 (Thursday) at noon.***

**Mythic narratives**

Mar. 1 "Reality of the Rulers" pdf (it's easier if you read p. 4-5 before p. 1-3).  
Marjanen "Gnosticism" pdf (306-308); Shoemaker "Trends" pdf (533-537).

*Provocation #6*

Mar. 3 On the Origin of the World. Lincoln "Myth" pdf (21-26).

***Peer reviews due Mar. 4 (Thursday) at noon.***

**Taking stock of where we've come**

Mar. 8 "Coptic Apocalypse of Paul" pdf (1-2). Prep for exam

Mar. 10 ***Exam over first half***

### *Spring Break March 13-21*

#### **They found a new gospel!**

- Mar. 22 Gospel of Judas pdf (29-53). Meyer "Introduction" pdf (7-26).  
*Provocation #7*
- Mar. 24 Public lecture by April DeConick on the Gospel of Judas. DeConick "Parody" pdf (96-108).

#### **More on gender**

- Mar. 29 Acts of John 19-86 (LS p. 94-102). Tyson "feminist" pdf (83-93, 119-120).  
*Provocation #8*
- Mar. 31 Thecla revisited. Streete "Perpetua & Thecla" pdf (186-205).

#### **You can't keep a good man down.**

- Apr. 5 Acts & Martyrdom of Paul: "Acts of Paul" pdf (374-379) and LS 109-112.  
*Provocation #9*
- Apr. 7 Acts of Peter. Klauck "APt" pdf (82-84, 111-112).

#### **Feats of strength**

- Apr. 12 Public lecture by Christine Thomas on the Acts of Peter.
- Apr. 14 Acts of Peter  
**Submit expanded paper Apr. 15 (Thurs.) by noon.**

#### **Reward or revenge?**

- Apr. 19 Apocalypse of Peter (LS 288-296). Czachesz "Grotesque Body" pdf (108-126).  
*Provocation #10*
- Apr. 21 More Apocalypse of Peter. Meeks "Goodness" pdf (461-475)

#### **Canon fodder: What are you allowed to read?**

- Apr. 26 Canon of Eusebius & Canon of Athanasius (LS 337-340). Holmes "Formation" pdf (415-421)
- Apr. 28 Review and exam preparation

#### **Wrap up**

- May 3 **Exam over second half**
- May 5 Retrospect: What was that all about?

Tuesday May 18, 2-5 is the scheduled exam day.

T. Jan 19 is first day of semester

Feb. 14: Chinese New Year

Feb. 17: Ash Wed.

March 13-21 spring break

Mar. 20: Equinox

Mar. 30&31: Passover (thru Apr. 6)

April 4: Easter (all Christians!)

May 1-18 final exams

F May 7 is last class day of semester