

Winthrop University
Honors Program
HONR 232X: Apocryphal Gospels: Texts You Won't Find in the New Testament
Spring 2011

Tuesday & Thursday 5:00-6:15 p.m.
3 credit hours – prerequisite WRIT 101
Kinard Hall 312

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Open office Hours: TR 2-5 p.m.; WF 11a.m. -12 noon. You are free to drop in whenever I am in my office, but you may want to make an appointment outside regular office hours. I do my best to observe those hours consistently, but occasional meetings and other duties (particularly as chair of the department) necessitate (partial) cancellation of office hours. It's best to check with a quick call to make sure I'm in.

Description and Objectives

Students will be guided in reading, examining, and discussing the texts of selected apocryphal gospels from the Early Christian period, including, but not limited to the Gospels of Peter, Thomas, Mary Magdalene, and Judas. The method is essentially historical-critical. Discussion will include the cultural, social, and religious background of these texts; their physical production and remains; and their reception and opposition. These early-Christian documents have been popularized, sensationalized, and at times misrepresented by popular culture and the press. What can they really teach us about early Christian struggles over faith and the acceptance of writings as scripture?

Our main objective will be to read these texts carefully, discuss them in a rather open-ended fashion, exploring all the questions and possibilities that might arise from our reading. As an outcome, students should demonstrate their ability to describe these writings in their context, to explain how they were treated, even condemned and prohibited, by early Christian authorities, and how they came to be known in our own day and what relevance they might have.

The goals and expected outcomes of our course are in line with several of Winthrop's goals for General Education (cf. the Touchstone Program)

Goal One: To communicate clearly and effectively in standard English.

This goal will be realized by students' success at discussing the material articulately in class and by written work that will assess not only their knowledge of content but their ability to write in clear, precise, concise, grammatically correct, and well-punctuated English.

Goal Three: To use critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a variety of research methods.

This is met in students' inquisitive and critical discussion of the texts involved and the challenges they present and in their successful writing of research essays in which they use several standard tools for biblical study and do their own critical analysis of texts or issues behind or raised by them.

Goal Four: To recognize and appreciate human diversity (both past and present) as well as the diversity of ideas, institutions, philosophies, moral codes, and ethical principles.

This goal is met by students successfully articulate their appreciation of both the differences and the similarities between their own world and that of Early Christianity as well as the continuity and the development of the thought and commitment of both individuals and institutions. They should also be able to understand and navigate the crossroads where their own worlds and values intersect or even collide with those of fellow students.

Goal Seven: To examine values, attitudes, beliefs, and habits which define the nature and quality of life.

This goal will be realized as students find in the texts examined some of the fundamental questions, concerns, challenges, attitudes, successes, short-comings and beliefs that are part of the constant human search for identity and value.

Students' learning will be assessed through **two written research essays** that will examine some aspects of these gospels with a particular focus agreed upon between the student and the professor. Essays can potentially be discreet topics or build toward one very large research paper, depending on the approach.

These research papers should demonstrate significant research using reliable scholarly sources (at least 6 in addition to the texts themselves). They consist of about 7-10 pages of text (excluding title page and bibliography) and should follow a standard format for citing borrowed information and listing works used and cited. The first paper will be due during the first week in March; the second will be due at the end of the term.

Success of the course will depend heavily on all being prepared to discuss the readings with probing intelligence and good questions. If it becomes apparent that students are unprepared, quizzes will become necessary.

Required Texts

Paul Foster, ed., *The Non-Canonical Gospels*, London: T & T Clark, 2008. (abbrev. = Foster)

Marvin Meyer, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, The International Edition, New York: HarperOne, 2007. (abbrev. = NHS)

Not required but useful

An edition of the Bible (Old and New Testament) for academic use.

J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, now reprinted in paperback, 2009 – on reserve in Dacus Library.

Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Apocryphal Gospels. An Introduction*, trans. B. McNeil, London: T & T Clark, 2003 (German original, 2002).

Bentley Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987.

Karen L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala. Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*, Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2003.

The texts are also available online – best accessed through the following link:

<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/>

Other relevant material will be found at these sites, either as part of the site itself or a link provided to other sites.

<http://guides.theology.library.emory.edu/content.php?pid=42607&sid=608305>

www.ntgateway.com

www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel

Attendance – You are allowed 4 absences without excuse. If you exceed that number, you will receive an N for the course IF you withdraw before the university drop date; after that date you will receive an F. Excused absences require official documentation or prior approval from the professor. If you have a documented or approved excuse, you may make up a test or adjust a deadline. Otherwise, there are no make-up dates for tests and papers will not be accepted after the due date and time.

Grading – Student work will be graded by use of a writing rubric that will be distributed separately as projects are determined. The +/- scale will be used (A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; etc.).

Academic Success Center

Winthrop's Academic Success Center is a free resource for all undergraduate students seeking to perform their best academically. The ASC offers a variety of personalized and structured resources that help students achieve academic excellence, such as tutoring, academic skill development (test taking strategies, time management counseling, and study techniques), group and individual study spaces, and academic coaching. The ASC is located on the first floor of Dinkins, Suite 106. Please contact the ASC at 803-323-3929 or success@winthrop.edu. For more information on ASC services, please visit www.winthrop.edu/success.

Note that these services are not just remedial or for students who are failing. Good students become even better by becoming more focused on what makes them successful.

Students with Disabilities

Winthrop University is dedicated to providing access to education. If you have a disability and require specific accommodations to complete this course, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 323-3290. Once you have your official notice of accommodations from Services for Students with Disabilities, please inform me as early as possible in the semester.

Student code of conduct

As noted in the Student Conduct Code: "Responsibility for good conduct rests with students as adult individuals." The policy on student academic misconduct is outlined in the "Student Conduct Code Academic Misconduct Policy" in the online *Student Handbook* which can be accessed at <http://www2.winthrop.edu/studentaffairs/handbook/StudentHandbook.pdf>.

Dishonesty is a serious offense in all its forms, whether lying about reasons for an absence or missed assignment or cheating on a test or misrepresenting borrowed material as your own. It can result in a failing grade on a test, assignment, or the course, or even dismissal from the university.

Use of Handheld and Wireless Technology

Be sure to turn off or mute your cell phone, pager, or other electronic devices. Use of these during class (for example, texting or checking messages or email) could be quite detrimental to your grade: 1st offense = a reminder; after that, each offense = 5 points off your final grade. If this becomes a problem, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom with an absence counted against you.

Laptops may be used for taking notes but you must disable the wireless function and close all applications not relevant to course work. The same penalties for abuse apply here as for cell phones and I may forbid you to use a laptop in class.

See the full policy on this technology in the classroom for the College of Arts & Sciences at <http://www2.winthrop.edu/artscience/AppropriateUseApprovedPolicyMar2010.pdf>

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

(subject to change in accordance with pace and other conditions such as weather)

#	Day – Date	Topic and Reading Assignments
1	T Jan 11	Introductions; syllabus; materials; requirements
2	R Jan 13	Introduction to the Christian Gospel and the Gospels
3	T Jan 18	Early Christianity and Christian writings: canonical & non-canonical texts
4	R Jan 20	Non-Canonical Gospels & NT Apocrypha (Elliott, in Foster, 1-12). Gnosticism and the classic Gnostic myth (cf. Layton, 5-22)
5	T Jan 25	The Gospel of Thomas – NHS 133-156; Elliot 123-147; Layton 376-399; Ehrman 19-28; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/
6	R Jan 27	GTh
7	T Feb 1	DeConick in Foster, 13-29
8	R Feb 3	The Gospel of Peter - Elliot 150-158; Ehrman 31-34; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/
9	T Feb 8	Foster in Foster, 30-42
10	R Feb 10	The Gospel of Mary – NHS 737-747; Ehrman 35-37; King 13-18; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/
11	T Feb 15	GMary
12	R Feb 17	Tuckett in Foster, 43-53
13	T Feb 22	The Gospel of Philip – NHS 157-186; Ehrman 38-44; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/
14	R Feb 24	GPhilip
15	T Mar 1	Foster in Foster, 68-83
16	R Mar 3	The Gospel of Judas – NHS 755-770; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ ; www.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel
17	T Mar 8	Gathercole in Foster, 84-95
18	R Mar 10	DeConick in Foster, 96-109
	T/R Mar 15/17	Spring Break – no classes
19	T Mar 22	The Protoevangelium of James – Elliott 48-67; Ehrman 63-72; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/
20	R Mar 24	No class today – Oratory Day with the Book of Revelation (9 a.m. -4 p.m.)
21	T Mar 29	Foster in Foster, 110-125
22	R Mar 31	The Infancy Gospel of Thomas – Elliott 68-83; Ehrman 57-62; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/
23	T April 5	Chartrand-Burke in Foster, 126-138
24	R April 7	Papyrus Edgerton 2 – Elliott 37-40; Ehrman 29-30; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ & Niklas in Foster, 139-149
25	T April 12	The Fayum Gospel Fragment – Elliott 43-44; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ & Kraus in Foster, 150-156
26	R April 14	Papyrus Oxyrynchus 840 – Elliott 31-33; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ & Kruger in Foster, 157-170
27	T April 19	The Secret Gospel of Mark – Elliott 148-149; Ehrman 87-89; http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/ & Foster in Foster, 171-182
28	R April 21	Conclusions
	Sat April 30	3:00 p.m. Final Examination