

**RELG 311 Formation of the New Testament**

**School of Religious Studies  
McGill University  
Fall 2020**

**3 Sept, 2020 - Tuesday, 1 Dec, 2020**

**Instructor: Professor Ian Henderson**

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**Office hours:** Professor Henderson will be available **Wednesdays 09h35-10h25**, by telephone or e-mail; or e-mail to make an appointment for another time.

**Contact with instructor:** In general an e-mail to [ian.henderson@mcgill.ca](mailto:ian.henderson@mcgill.ca) is the easiest way to contact me outside class times.

**A note about Remote Delivery:**

This course was designed as a live classroom experience. This is a lecture/seminar class being delivered remotely, not a course designed for on-line delivery: it will be what it will be.

This term it is going to be a special challenge to learn together; it may be difficult and strange for us to connect with one another.

On the other hand, this course in particular is all about reading, and especially about reading texts which were designed to create a virtual space for an emerging “Christian” diaspora identity.

Please be aware of these [Student-specific Guidelines for Remote Teaching and Learning](#) and of the suggestions for learning tactics at [Remote Learning Resources](#).

### Description and Goals of this Course:

"An introduction to the formation and interpretation of the New Testament, excluding the Gospels."

### Three quotations to think with:

"The »New Testament« occurred first in form of various collections of writings – gospels, letters of Paul, Acts, and the »Catholic epistles« – and not as a book. This is corroborated by the manuscript evidence. In the second and third century the idea of a New Testament was not that of a »book,« but of a new perspective on the God of Israel and his revelation through Jesus Christ, documented in narratives about Jesus, letters to communities and individuals, theological tractates, a history of the early Christian movement, and so forth."

From the "Introduction," Tobias Nicklas and Jens Schröter (edd.), *Authoritative Writings in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Their Origin, Collection, and Meaning*. (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2020) p. 2

"The tension between Gospel and Scripture is the indispensable presupposition of all theological interpretation and the inner meaning of those problems of Scripture of which historical criticism takes account. Whatever motive may have caused the taking over of historical criticism into the exegetical sphere, any retreat from this criticism in the present must necessarily make the problems of Scripture more obscure, reduce the diverse utterances of Scripture to a single level, remove the tension of Gospel and Scripture and endanger the proper historical character of revelation. ...In [historical criticism's] attainment of independence this connection has been forgotten, the servant function has become the final objective of exegesis... The validity of this process must be questioned."

Ernst Käsemann. *New Testament Questions of Today*. [German: 1957, 1962] London: S.C.M., 1969. 9-10.

"...it is clear that *sōma* [approximately "body"] is not a something that outwardly clings to a person's real self (to my soul, for instance), but belongs to its very essence, so that we can say a person does not have *sōma*; I am *sōma*, for in not a few cases *sōma* can be translated simply "I" (or whatever personal pronoun fits the context); thus, I Cor. 13:3; 9:27; 7:4..., or Phil. 1:20 KJ "...Christ shall be magnified in my body (= me) whether by life, or by death." The same is thoroughly clear in ...Rom. 12:1: "Present your bodies (= your selves, or: yourselves) as a living sacrifice, etc." Rom. 6:12f. is also instructive: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal *sōma*... Do not yield your limbs to sin as tools of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God... and your limbs to God as tools of righteousness." Here "your limbs," which is a synonymous variation of "your body," stands parallel to "yourselves"; and in the following verses, both within v. 13 and in vv. 16 and 19, "yield yourselves" and "yield your limbs" are used synonymously. Likewise, I Cor. 6:15, "Do you not know that your bodies [*sōmata*] are limbs of Christ?" and I Cor. 12:27, "Now you are the body [*sōma*] of Christ and individually his limbs," correspond to each other. In the former case, the subject of "being the limbs of Christ" is "your bodies"; in the latter case it is "you" without difference in meaning. In this usage, the word "limbs" denotes the individual faculties of human existence which are comprised in the *sōma* as the whole, just as,

correspondingly, the individual person, provided s/he is baptized, belongs to Christ's *sōma* as a limb.

Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1948-1953) volume I (1948) 195 [English transl, *Theology of the New Testament*. (New York: Scribner, 1951) modified].

**The goals of this course are:**

to read all of the texts of the New Testament canon, with respectful attention to the particularity of each component voice, text, genre, or collection;

to inform participants about basic issues, problems and possibilities in reading the collection we know as the New Testament;

to equip us to read and judge scholarly essays on the subject;

to be aware of differences between the world(s) in which the New Testament was formed and the world(s) in which we are trying to read it.

By the end of the course (the Final Exam!!) students will be able:

to evaluate and explain the relevance of key primary sources or understanding Jesus historically;

to recognize and critique key genres, themes, topics, arguments and styles in each of the New Testament writings;

to accept greater responsibility for their own interpretive decisions about the tension between the cultural, historical, and literary aspects of the texts and their enduring claim to meaning.

## **Prior Knowledge? Who should take this course?**

No particular prior academic knowledge is assumed, and in fact students' backgrounds always vary widely. Sometimes the instructor forgets just how diverse students' academic and personal **backgrounds are; I may need to be reminded with a question or two.**

**No particular religious background or identity is assumed.** Jews, Christians and Muslims of various kinds have a lot at stake in understanding the New Testament. Bear in mind that some people find Historical Jesus Research risky: let's take care of each other.

Little prior knowledge is assumed, but the course does make heavy demands on students' openness to think for themselves without ignoring others. Students are expected to bring some skills in critical thinking and formal writing in English or French. A sincere willingness to deal with uncomfortable issues and to grapple with hard texts is expected. In addition, the class requires a willingness to discuss one's own beliefs and those of others with **honesty and respect.**

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD**

**Lectures:** I will post to **myCourses** a sequence of **Camtasia video/audio recordings** of short lectures. Once each lecture is posted, students will be free to view and review it on their own time. These are my main offerings to you: be sure to use them.

**Readings:** You need to keep up with reading the "books" of the new Testament at roughly the rate I generate lectures about them. You should use the introductions that come in your Study Bible to alert you to features of the texts you are reading (but don't believe everything the intros and notes say). I will try to indicate passages in Sanders (2001) and Maier (2019) in relation to particular topics and with particular exercises, but I urge you to read each of Sanders and Maier as whole books early in the term: they are both quite easy to read and valuable. They also have indexes that allow you to look for references to particular NT passages.

**Zoom discussions:** I will try to set up Zoom discussions for days after you submit exercises, especially to give some chance for you to ask questions and give feedback. Zoom meetings will always be scheduled during the scheduled class hours (11h35-12h55 on a Tuesday or Thursday).

The **Zoom meetings** are not mandatory and will be recorded and available on **myCourses**. On the other hand, participation in Zoom sessions is your best opportunity to engage interactively.

**This means that students will need to have internet connections that are at least reliable enough to allow access to myCourses. Students will need to be able to submit Reading Assignments on time through myCourses. You will need to be able to access Camtasia and Zoom recordings through myCourses, in your own flexible time.**

You are expected to check your McGill e-mail and myCourses every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I will do likewise.

If you want to be able to take part in the Zoom sessions in real time, you will need appropriate connection, but you do not absolutely need to take part in Zoom sessions live: they will be

recorded and available on myCourses. I will not police whether or not you take part in Zoom sessions (I may penalize assignments that are not submitted on time on myCourses).

If you join a Zoom session, you do not have to “speak” or even show your face. You do have to use your legal name or McGill preferred name and you do have to consent to your name being used and disclosed during the session and therefore on the recording. By remaining in classes that are being recorded, you accept that personal information of this kind may be disclosed to others, whether during the lecture or in viewing the recording. If you are not comfortable being in a class that is recorded, you may decide to not take part by logging off Zoom.

*You and I are both responsible to ensure that class recordings, the Final Examination, and associated copyrighted material and personal information (e.g. about other students) are not misused, reproduced, or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use class materials and class discussions for your educational (and research) purposes, but you cannot allow others to use it, by putting it up on the Internet or by giving it or selling it to others who may also copy it and make it available. Please refer to McGill's Guidelines for Instructors and Students on Remote Teaching and Learning for further information. Thank you very much for your help with this.*

## **TEXTBOOKS**

### **Strongly Recommended:**

**THE NEW OXFORD ANNOTATED BIBLE WITH APOCRYPHA: NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION (ed.) Michael Coogan (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018) LIST PRICE: \$38.50**

You will certainly need access to at least one Study Bible like this (a modern translation, with scholarly notes and introductory material); if you are not sure, ask me – and/or get this one! Many translations can be consulted online at <https://www.biblegateway.com>, but they are not accompanied with the scholarly notes and introductions.

An interesting Study edition, based on the same NRSV translation, but with different introductory material and notes, is: *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version* (Oxford UP, 2011)

### **Required:**

**HARRY O. MAIER, NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY IN THE ROMAN WORLD (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018) LIST PRICE: \$27.50**

**E. P. SANDERS, PAUL (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2001) LIST PRICE: \$11.95**

**ALL THREE TEXTS ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE MCGILL BOOKSTORE**

## REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

“In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.”

<b>Grading:</b>	exercises*	9 x 5% = 45%
	exegetical paper**	25%
	final take-home examination***	30%

**LATE SUBMISSIONS AND PENALTIES FOR LATENESS: each Exercise and the Exegetical Paper are due on myCourses by 11h35 on the date specified here. I will accept and grade late submissions submitted on or before 3 Dec, 2020. Assignments handed in after 11h35 on the due date will, however, be penalized 0.5/5 on an Exercise and 1/25 on the Exegetical paper.**

**If you require emergency/special arrangements**, let me know, if possible, by an e-mail to [ian.henderson@mcgill.ca](mailto:ian.henderson@mcgill.ca) before missing a deadline; in any case, be sure to provide written documentation for the emergency/special situation as soon as possible.

**\*The EXERCISES** will be available under Assignments on myCourses; **full instructions** are available in the “Guide to Exercises and Exegetical Paper” document on myCourses. The first Exercise will be a “Bibliography Exercise” due to be handed in on myCourses on Thurs 17 Sept. The remaining eight Exercises are each due on a Thursday and will all follow more or less the following pattern: Step 1: carefully read a group of assigned readings; Step 2: identify as clearly as you can two aspects of the readings that you find hard to understand; Step 3: formulate and justify an important question about the implications of the readings for understanding a text or an aspect of the New Testament.

### **\*\*The EXEGETICAL PAPER**

**The Exegetical Paper** is intended to give the student an opportunity to work more closely with a particular passage from the NT, which the student may choose. Choose a passage from the New Testament, at least 100 words long in the NRSV translation. Using at least the resources indicated in the “Guide to Exercises and Exegetical Paper” (one-volume commentaries, *Hermeneia* commentaries on particular books, articles in journals). I will expect you to use at least two of the one-volume commentaries, and at least two articles from journals listed in the “Guide to Exercises and Exegetical Paper” or one such article and a commentary (such as a *Hermeneia* commentary) on the book in which “your” passage occurs.

You should write a maximum of 1200 words (excluding Bibliography) identifying the most important problems and insights arising from your passage, first in its immediate literary context and then in its wider relationships to other related NT texts. Are there other related (or strongly contrasting) passages in the same letter/text, by the same author, elsewhere in the NT? Do NOT use this paper to write an inspiring personal response to the assigned text: that is not the task here. The purpose of an Exegetical Paper is to do the preparatory homework that should be necessary

**before** readers approach deciding what the text should “mean” to them. I am not looking for major research papers, but for evidence of serious initial investigation and reflection about the assigned texts.

What kind of text is the assigned reading? what is the text ostensibly/really about? what interesting secondary topics does it touch? what problems does the reader (ancient or modern?) have with it? what other texts does it use/resemble/contrast with (Gospel texts, in particular should be thought of in their Synoptic relationships)? what theological, sociological, literary, philosophical, etc. topics are associated with the text?

The Exegetical Paper is due to be handed in on myCourses by 11h35 on Tuesday, 24 November.

**Some of my general expectations as an evaluator:** In a course like this one, on a controversial topic, opinions will differ greatly; the goal of the course is not that you come to the right conclusions, but that you demonstrate the knowledge and argumentative skills required for an informed discussion about the New Testament texts. I will therefore try to mark for carefulness of **observation (does a reading really say/imply what I think it says/implies?)**, quality of **presentation** and clarity, organization, completeness and relevance of **argument**; this course in particular is about thinking your way past what you are given, to exercise your own critical judgement and imagination. The higher grades therefore do tend to reward signs of disciplined craftsmanship and creativity without losing track of the required assignment!

### **\*\*\* The FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION**

**The Final Take-Home Examination** is scheduled by the University in the Final Examination period, 8-22 Dec 2019. The examination will be **open-book**. Correct citation of any copyrighted materials will be absolutely required.

The Exam will be released on myCourses, 48 hours before it **will be due on the scheduled exam end time, also on myCourses. You will be free to use that time as you see fit, though the examination will be in the same format as previous years' 3-hour exam.** will be based on class lectures, discussions and reading assignments and on issues raised, explicitly or implicitly, in Sanders (2001) and/or Maier (2019).

You will be asked:

(1) to explain briefly a few terms from a choice of keywords used in class and/or in Sanders or Maier (e.g. eschatology, body, gospel) from the point of view of understanding the New Testament and/or its world of origin;

(2) to evaluate and discuss briefly selections ("gobbets") from New Testament texts (other than the gospels) [e.g. Ephesians 1:15-23 might be given [remember the Exam is open-book]]. Your job will be to use the tools you have to identify and define the main topics and problems arising from the assigned text. (It is NOT your job here to write an inspiring personal response to the assigned text.);

(3) to write a short, carefully argued essay on a major question about the New Testament as a whole (e.g. to what extent is the New Testament as a whole a response to Paul?). On the actual examination you will have a choice among several possible topics; each topic will be introduced by a quotation from an important writer on the NT).

I will give you a Final Take-Home Examination Preparation Guide closer to mid-term.

According to Senate regulations, instructors are not permitted to make special arrangements for final exams. Please consult the Calendar, section 4.7.2.1, General University Information and Regulations at [www.mcgill.ca](http://www.mcgill.ca)

McGILL UNIVERSITY VALUES ACADEMIC INTEGRITY. THEREFORE ALL STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND THE MEANING AND CONSEQUENCES OF CHEATING, PLAGIARISM AND OTHER ACADEMIC OFFENCES UNDER THE CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES (see <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/> for more information).

*In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.*

**A Very Tentative Syllabus of Topics and Readings**  
**RELG 311 “The Formation of the New Testament”**

**Fall 2020**

**\*\*Of course, these aren’t lecture dates any more, but rather target dates for me to get recordings onto myCourses and for YOU to do the primary readings! I hope they will help me and you both pace our work.\*\***

**\*\*BEFORE EVERY SET OF DATES/READINGS I EXPECT YOU TO HAVE READ THE ASSOCIATED NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS\*\***

**1) Introduction to the Course and its Goals (Sept 3)**

- Exegesis and Hermeneutics; History and Authority
- Documents of early Christianity or Oracles of God?
- Paul or Marcion?

**2) Why is this course called “Formation of the New Testament” and not just “Intro to the NT”? (Sept 8 and 10)**

-composition; commissioning; production; transmission; preservation; edition; collection; canonisation, etc.

- dating and authenticity
- Paul and/or Marcion?

-genre(s): letter-writing and distance/diaspora; time, space, culture; hymns; apocalypse; Acts

**3) “Community and Eschatology”: I and II Thessalonians (Sept 15, 17) [Read: Sanders (2001) chapter 3 “Missionary strategy...” and chapter 4 “The return of the Lord...”]**

- eschatology
- ekklesia, city, Judaea
- gospel and mission
- pseudepigraphy

**Exercise #1: “Bibliography Exercise” due to be handed in on myCourses on Thurs 17 Sept by 11h35**

**4) “Slaves of Christ”: Philippians and Philemon (Sept 22, 24)**

**Exercise #2: Philippians; Maier (2019), 129-133, 148-149; Kathy Ehrensperger, "The Politeuma in the Heavens and the Construction of Collective Identity in Philippians," *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting* Issue 6 (2019) <http://www.jjmjs.org/>**

- slavery and imprisonment
- pre-Pauline hymns?
- “righteousness” from Torah; “righteousness” through faith
- Paul’s self-understanding; Jewishness and kinship “in Christ”

**5) Sharing “Body” and “Spirit”: I and II Corinthians (Sept 29-Oct 1)**

- Spirit (Pneuma); flesh (sarx); body (soma)
- Wisdom (Sophia)
- community formation/organisation
- eating
- marriage
- resurrection
- allegory/writing
- the collection

**Exercise #3: I Corinthians; Maier (2019), “The Self and Others,” 174-205**

**6) “Blessing and Curse”: Galatians (Oct 6,8)**

**Exercise #4: S. GRINDHEIM, “Apostate Turned Prophet: Paul's Prophetic Self-Understanding and Prophetic Hermeneutic with Special Reference to Galatians 3.10–12.” *New Testament Studies*, 53/4 (2007) 545-565; Sanders (2001) chapter 1 “Paul’s mission” and chapter 6 “Righteousness...Galatians”**

- non-Jews, « judaizing, » circumcision
- Paul’s vocation and gospel
- narrative and argumentation in conflict
- Torah and Bible
- covenantal nomism

**7) “The power of God for salvation”: Romans (Oct 13, 15)**

**Exercise #5: Romans 1-8; Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (3) (1963) 199-215; Sanders (2001) chapter 7 “Righteousness...Romans” and chapter 9 “The law”**

- what is the gospel?
- Torah and the wrath of God revealed
- Abraham and ancestry revisited: covenant
- Adam and sin
- baptism
- akrasia
- Spirit

**Read: Romans 9-16**

- Israel and eschatology
- sacrificial existence pending the eschaton

**8) The Triumph of the Resurrection: Colossians and Ephesians (Oct 20)**

- Der eschatologische Vorbehalt* and “realized eschatology”
- pseudepigraphy and authenticity; channeling Paul
- ekklesia* and household: *Haustefeln*

**Exercise #6: Angela Standhartinger, “Colossians and the Pauline School.” *New Testament Studies* 50/4 (2004): 572–593.**

**9) The “Pastorals”: I and II Timothy, Titus (Oct 22)**

- letters from an individual to individuals?

**10) Salvation-History (*Heilsgeschichte*): Acts of Apostles (Oct 20, 29)**

- Luke-Acts: intended to be Scripture?
- genre: History, Hagiography, Martyrology, ethnography? [compare Eusebius, *Church History*; *Acts of Paul and Thekla*]
- the dispensation of the Spirit and the irony of history
- the Twelve, the Seven and Paul; apostolate and ministry; *Frühkatholizismus*

**Exercise #7: Merrill P. Miller, “Beginning From Jerusalem...’: Re-examining Canon and Consensus.” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 2 (1995) 3-30**

**11) Biblical Theology of the New Covenant: Hebrews (Nov 3, 5)**

- typology, the New and the Old
- the High Priest and the possibility of Christian religion/cultus
- incarnation and exaltation
- failure and perseverance

**12) Representing Voices of Un-Paul: James, I Peter, II Peter and Jude (Nov 10, 12)**

-non-Pauline or anti-Pauline?

**James, I Peter**

-1:1 and 1:1, Dispersion?

**James**

-Jerusalem non-Pauline Christ devotion?

**I Peter**

-baptismal homily?

-priesthood

**II Peter and Jude**

-what's the relationship here?

**13) "Johannine" Christianity?: I, II, III John (Nov 17)**

-proto-Christian plurality?

-the elder, the lady, the children

**Exercise #8: Victor P. Furnish, "Letters in the New Testament,"** in James D. G. Dunn (ed.), *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2003. (accessible online through McGill Library) **Also read: III John; "The Letter of Ammonius to Apollonius"**

**14) the Apocalypse/Revelation (Nov 19, 24)**

**Exercise #9: Maier (2019), 91-94, 177; David Frankfurter, "JEWS OR NOT? RECONSTRUCTING THE "OTHER" IN REV 2:9 AND 3:9." *Harvard Theological Review* 94/4 (2001) 403-425**

-more letters from heaven

-liturgy and revelation

-who are the bad guys?