

Early Christianity

RELI 2220 (Fall 2026)

Religion

College of the Humanities

Mon + Wed 1:05-2:25am

Professor Z.A. Crook

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“I would rather have questions that can’t be answered
than answers that can’t be questioned.”

Richard Feynman, Physicist

Course Objective: This course introduces you to some of the historical methods used by academics in the study of Christian origins and the writings of the New Testament. These methods, and their results, will be illustrated by focusing on selected kinds of writing that appear in the New Testament, rather than looking at each and every book. In all, we seek not only to understand the writings of the New Testament, but also to understand what social, historical, cultural, and communal forces shaped them. The approach of this course is entirely historical and never faith-based. The Truth, divine inspiration, or inerrancy of the writings is never considered as a possibility and in no way governs how we approach them; rather the writings are approached the same way one would approach other ancient writings – Homer, Aristotle, the Epic of Gilgamesh. These too were once religious texts for people, but we do not simply accept their truth claims because of that.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able:

- to demonstrate their knowledge of the field of New Testament Studies;
- to show they understand the jargon and categories that New Testament scholars work with;
- to speak in a nuanced manner about religion as a human, that is social, historical, and cultural phenomenon.

Religion Program Learning Objectives

This course contributes towards the Program Learning Objectives for Religion. By the end of a degree in Religion, students who took this course would:

- be able to employ the methods of the academic study of religion, which stresses outsider discourse, methodological atheism, and the ability to differentiate between advocacy and the critical study of religion;
- be able to examine characteristic features and experiences of religious people in a global environment;
- be able to describe the integral role of religion as a category helping to shape cultures, identities, political systems, and public life;
- be able to demonstrate religious literacy, which includes facility in terminology native to religions as well as to the discipline.

Course Evaluation

Class Attendance – 20%

Midterm – 10% (Nov 2)

YouTube Summaries – 30%

- Summary 1 – 5% (due Oct 5)
- Summary 2 – 10% (due Nov 9)
- Summary 3 – 15% (due Dec 9)

Final Exam – 40%

Textbooks

1) Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (8th edition). Costs ~ \$106

2) The Bible (with entire Old Testament/Hebrew Bible + New Testament)

- Almost any version of the Bible is fine, with the exception of the King James Bible, New King James, and Good News Bible. So, if you own a Bible that is not one of these, you are not required to buy a new one. But if you want a Bible with excellent historical explanations and notes, there are two that are excellent: the Harper Collins Study Bible and the Oxford Study Bible.
- **Warning:** if you are looking for 2nd hand versions of Ehrman, beware that there are many editions of this book now. From the sounds of it, the 8th edition is quite different from the 7th.

Lecture Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

Sept 9	NO CLASS
Sept 14	Introduction (Ehrman, Chapter 1)
Sept 16	Political History of Ancient Israel (Ehrman Chapter 14)
Sept 21	Theological History of Ancient Israel (Ehrman, Chapter 4)
Sept 23	Cultural History of Ancient Israel (Ehrman, Chapter 3)
Sept 28	Textual Criticism I (Ehrman, Chapter 2)
Sept 30	Textual Criticism II (Ehrman, pp. 33-40)
Oct 5	Gospel Genre and Transmission of Material (Ehrman, Chapter 5) (Summary 1 Due)
Oct 7	Markan Themes, Issues, and Ending (Ehrman, Chapter 6 + The Gospel of Mark)
Oct 12	THANKSGIVING
Oct 14	Synoptic Problem (Ehrman, Chapter 7)
Oct 19	Matthean Themes and Issues (Gospel of Matthew)
Oct 21	Editing Mark (Ehrman, Chapter 8)
Oct 26	Fall Break
Oct 28	
Nov 2	Midterm Exam
Nov 4	Christian Interpretation of Israel's Scriptures (see Brightspace PDF)
Nov 9	History of the Quest for the Historical Jesus (Ehrman, Chapters 13-14) (Summary 2 due)
Nov 11	Non-Canonical Jesuses (Ehrman, Chapter 12)
Nov 16	Sources for the Life of Paul (Ehrman, Chapter 18)
Nov 18	Letter Writing (no reading)
Nov 23	1 Corinthians (Ehrman, pp. 373-384 + 1 Corinthians)

Nov 25	Paul and His Opponents (Ehrman, pp. 388-397 + Galatians)
Nov 30	Pseudepigraphy (Ehrman Chapter 23)
Dec 2	NT Translation (see Brightspace PDF)
Dec 7	Apocalyptic Literature (Ehrman, Chapter 28 + Revelation)
Dec 9	Work Day (Summary 3 Due)
Dec 11 FRIDAY	Review Day (details below)

Email Communication

- Carleton's Connect Mail is the official mode of email communication for all matters having to do with the university and with this course. All communications sent through Connect are official, and you are expected to get them. It is not an option to claim you did not get some announcement or request because you have another preferred email address. You can configure your Connect account to forward university emails to another address, but you must be reachable through your Connect account.

Class Attendance – 20%

- I want all students to do well in this class and to meet the learning objectives (see above), but I have found that students find it very hard to achieve these goals when they miss lectures. Poor attendance in this course always translates to poor learning. Therefore, I have a strict attendance policy that is intended to help students succeed.
- Students will sign in manually on an attendance sheet at the front of the classroom. Signing in has to be your top priority at the start of class, otherwise you will not get credit for attending.
- If any student is caught signing in another student, that student will lose their entire attendance grade (0/20), not merely the grade for that day.**
- If you will be required to leave class early for some reason, check with me no later than the night before class so that we can discuss whether the time spent in class qualifies as "attendance."
- At 1:15pm in each lecture, the sign-in sheet will be put away. Students who arrive later than that will have it counted as an absence. Don't be late to classes.
 - Perfect attendance = 20% (no missed lectures = no penalties). Best odds of mastering the material and achieving the course objectives.
 - For the Sept 14 lecture** (Course Introduction), there is an 8% penalty for missing it
 - Anyone registered in the course by Sept 14 **must come to this lecture**.
 - Anyone not yet registered in the course (i.e., those who register by the add-drop deadline of Sept 22) must come to my office for a mini-intro lecture if they wish to earn back that lost 8%.

- **NOTE:** This make-up option does not exist for those who were registered by the start of classes.
- **For all other classes** there is an exponentially increasing absence penalty. Per absence, you lose 1%, 2%, 4%, 8%, 16%. These are cumulative, so the fifth absence is technically only worth 5% because by then you've already lost all 20% for attendance. That is, it's not that by the fourth missed lecture you're at 8% in lost attendance points. It's that the fourth absence alone costs you 8% of your grade, and that missed lecture takes you to 5/20 for the attendance grade.
 - And remember: No missed lecture other than Sept 14 can be made up, and that one can only be made up by students who were not registered by class time on that day.
- If you have serious extenuating circumstance that *may* require you to miss a couple of classes, please come to me before the add-drop deadline so that we can discuss whether it makes sense for you to stay in the class. FYI: A job that competes with this class-time is not a "serious extenuating circumstance."
- I understand that just because you are sitting in the room does not mean you are listening or learning. The good news is that I am willing to aggressively help students with that too! Students that are seen on their phones, or gazing out the window, or zoned out with their hoodies up, or chatting amiably with each other, and so on, will be called out. If you have signed up for this course as a place to kill time, hang out, maybe catch a little shut-eye, this is definitely not the right course for you.

Midterm (10%): 1:05-1:50pm, Nov 2

- Midterm takes place in the classroom during regular class time. There is no lecture on this day.
- Test will be composed of short-answer definitions which will be marked out of 5 each, and should take no more than 4-5 minutes each to answer.
- Your answers will be high quality if they are detailed and accurate, and if you can show why the term is important in the context of this course.
- Material from every lecture and assigned reading up to and including Oct 21 will be covered.
- Quiz starts at 1:05pm and ends at 1:50pm. Coming late means getting less time.
- I will go over examples of good and poor answers at the start of class on Oct 21.
- I am willing to comment on lists of terms (multiple times) you think could appear on the midterm if you share them with me. The deadline for this is Oct 29.
- **Warning:** draw your information for the terms you come up with from my lectures and the textbook. Looking on-line for information can be risky because the internet is a place where people can say anything they want and almost always lack the expertise to do so. The presence of that kind of material in your answers would be detrimental to your answers.

Accessible Scholarship Summaries (30% total)

- You will watch short YouTube videos and write about them.
- See Accessible Scholarship Summaries in Brightspace for important information, and for links to the videos students may choose from.
- This exercise will be done three times, due Oct 5 (5%), Nov 9 (10%), Dec 9 (15%)
- **Submission:** File submissions and grading happen via Brightspace. Papers must be submitted in

.doc or .docx (MS Word) format. MS Word is available to all students for free (<https://carleton.ca/its/help-centre/get-microsoft-office-for-students/>). The system will not accept papers that are .pdf or .pages (or any other format)

- **Proofread** your work several times carefully before handing it in or ask someone whose writing skills are strong to help you. Needless and countless errors of spelling, grammar, and syntax are a serious impediment to effective writing and communication, and these will affect your grade. You might also consider making use of Writing Services at the Carleton Student Academic Success Centre (<https://carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>)
- **Retain Copies of Work Submitted:** It is crucial that you retain a copy of all assignments/take home tests submitted in every course. Also remember to do a computer/cloud back-up frequently.

Review Day (Friday, Dec 11)

- The “Friday” is not a mistake: in the calendar, this Friday follows a Monday schedule.
- This class *can* be spent reviewing material from the lectures if there is enough interest.
- Interest = enough students submitting questions or sources of confusion to me by email by 10pm Dec 10.
- FYI: the question or issue you submit for review or clarification is between you and me. I will not be making public who submitted which question/s.
- IF there are more questions than I can field in our 90 min class, I will take them in order of submission (first come first served).
- If there are not enough submissions, I will cancel the class and answer the questions privately. Cancellation of this class will be announced by 10:10pm Dec 10.

Final Exam (40%: Date TBA)

- Three-hour, formal, proctored exam to be scheduled by Exam Services.
- The precise layout of the exam will be made clear to the class well before the final exam.
- It will be a cumulative exam. The final exam will assess your mastery of the material at every level: have you mastered the small details, the terms, the jargon, and can you think holistically in a way that shows you understand how the details reveal broader patterns in early Christian thinking, in Christian Origins?

AI Statement

A full AI statement and explanation will be made on the first day of class (Sept 14). Here is the short version. None of the writing done for this course requires research. Research will detract from your assignments. Students are to rely on lectures, the textbook, and their own ideas. The use of AI to generate ideas, tell you what to say, or to write assignments for you is strictly prohibited. Evidence of the use of sources outside of the lectures and the textbook will result in a zero for the assignment. So, just don't do it. Thank you.

Due Dates and Late Penalties

- With an asynchronous class, I can be extremely flexible with due dates, but with an in-person class (like this one), there are limits to what I can offer. For instance, I don't have access to an endless supply of rooms where make-up tests can be held.
- Here is what I can offer:
 - **Midterm:** I will offer two opportunities for students to make up the midterm in a booked room, but it might require you to miss another class or to make arrangements with your employer to make it.
 - **Summaries** submitted by 10:00pm on each due date will receive a bonus of 3%. If you miss this deadline (even by one minute late, so please don't leave it to the last second!), you have a **grace-period of 5 days** to submit with **no penalty**. Once that 5-day grace period has passed, no summaries will be accepted. Remember, each summary has its own due date; this description applies to all three of them.
 - **Final Exam:** The only way to make up a final exam is by applying for a Deferral through the Registrar's Office.

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses (Updated Aug 12,2026)

Academic Dates and Deadlines

This schedule contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the Important Dates and Deadlines section of the Registration Website.

Copies of Written Work Submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

Online Learning Resources

[On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

Academic Integrity Policy

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT)
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own
- failing to acknowledge sources with proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.”

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor.

The Associate Dean of the Faculty follows a rigorous [process for academic integrity allegations](#), including reviewing documents and interviewing the student, when an instructor suspects a violation has been committed. Penalties for violations may include a final grade of “F” for the course.

Co-operation or Collaboration

An important and valuable component of the learning process is the progress a student can make as a result of interacting with other students. In struggling together to master similar concepts and problems and in being exposed to each other’s views and approaches, a group of students can enhance and speed up the learning process. Carleton University encourages students to benefit from these activities which will not generally be viewed as a violation of the Policy. With the exception of tests and examinations, instructors will not normally limit these interactions.

Students shall not co-operate or collaborate on academic work when the instructor has indicated that the work is to be completed on an individual basis. Failure to follow the instructor’s directions in this regard is a violation of the standards of academic integrity. Unless otherwise indicated, students shall not co-operate or collaborate in the completion of a test or examination.

Group Work: There are many cases where students are expected or required to work in groups to complete a course requirement. Normally, students are not responsible for violations of this policy committed by other members of a group in which they participate.

More information on the process [here](#).

Academic Accommodations

Academic accommodation refers to educational practices, systems and support mechanisms designed to accommodate diversity and difference. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to perform the essential requirements of their academic programs. At no time does academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University.

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the *Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances*, are outlined on the [Academic Accommodations website](#).

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes can be [found here](#).

Addressing Human Rights Concerns

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](#) at equity@carleton.ca.

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#).

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

[More information](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of extenuating circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work. Requests for academic consideration are made in accordance with the [Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical or Other Extenuating Circumstances](#).

Students who claim short-term extenuating circumstances (normally lasting up to five days) as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the instructor concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor. If the instructor requires supporting documentation, the instructor may only request submission of the University's self-declaration form, which is available on the [Registrar's Office website](#). The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule.

1. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.
2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to extenuating circumstances lasting for a significant period of time/ long-term (normally more than five days), the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.
3. If a student is concerned the instructor did not respond to the request for academic consideration or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should follow the appeals process described in the [Academic Consideration Policy](#).
4. If academic consideration is granted, but the student is unable to complete the accommodation according to the terms set out by the instructor as a result of further illness, injury, or extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses). Please note, however, that the course instructor will be required to submit an earned final grade and further consideration will only be reviewed according to established precedents and deadlines. (More information: [Undergraduate](#) | [Graduate](#)).

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of extenuating circumstances, as defined in the [Academic Consideration Policy](#), may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a

deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office no later than three (3) working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation. In cases of short-term extenuating circumstances normally lasting no more than five (5) days, students must include the University's self-declaration form, which can be found on [the Registrar's Office website](#). Additional documentation is required in cases of extenuating circumstances lasting longer than five (5) days and must be supported by a medical note specifying the date of onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

Academic Consideration Policy

As per the [Academic Consideration Policy](#), if students encounter extenuating circumstances that temporarily hinder their capacity to fulfil in-class academic requirements, they can request academic consideration. The Academic Consideration for Coursework is only available for accommodations regarding course work. Requests for accommodations during the formal exam period must follow the [official deferral process](#).

NOTE: As per the Policy, students are to speak with/contact their instructor before submitting a request for Academic Consideration. Requests are not automatically approved. Approving and determining the accommodation remains at the discretion of the instructor. Students should consult the course syllabus about the instructor's policy or procedures for requesting academic consideration. [More information here](#).

Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend, you must withdraw in Carleton Central within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load. A course dropped after the deadline for financial withdrawal will receive a grade of Withdrawn (WDN), which appears on your official transcript.

Even if you miss the deadline for financial withdrawal, you might decide to drop a course to avoid a failure or a poor grade showing up on your student record and bringing down your CGPA. It is your responsibility to drop the course via Carleton Central within the published [deadlines](#) (see Academic Withdrawal).

If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you may want to talk to an advisor first. Course withdrawal may affect your student status, as well as your eligibility for student funding, immigration status, residence accommodation and participation in varsity sports, etc. Additionally, remember that once you choose your courses, you must use the "Calculate amount to pay" button to determine the correct amount of fees to pay.

Carleton Central is your one-stop shop for registration activities. If you are interested in taking a course, make sure to complete your registration. Simply attending a course does not mean you are registered in it, nor is it grounds for petition or appeal.

Mental Health and Wellness at Carleton

As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me Counselling Service: call 1-844-741-6389
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service <https://walkincounselling.com>

The Centre for Indigenous Support and Community Engagement

The Centre for Indigenous Initiatives is proud to offer culturally centered individual counselling to students who self-identify as First Nation, Metis or Inuk. Through this service, Indigenous students [can access confidential, individual sessions for support with personal, mental health or academic challenges.](#)

Department Contact Information

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