

Jesus, the Bible, and the Invention of Christianity  
University of Arizona  
Humanities Seminar Programs  
Mondays, 1–4pm, 25 April–16 May 2022

**Instructor**

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**I. Course Description**

The Christian religion is inextricably bound up with contemporary culture not only in America but also around the globe. Yet, even after centuries of scholarly inquiry, numerous questions regarding its historical origins remain contested and unanswered. This course probes several: How did Jesus of Nazareth, the son of an obscure carpenter, come to be worshiped as the eternal son of God? How did his death at the hands of the Romans, by any ordinary measure a calamitous misfortune, come to be interpreted as a means of salvation for the world? And how, in the wake of this death, did his marginalized band of followers evolve into the church that would eventually convert the Roman Empire? Using historical and literary methodologies, we will discover which aspects of these events can be reconstructed and which ones remain obscure and speculative.

**II. Textbooks**

Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford, 2016.

Or,

Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford, 2020.<sup>1</sup>

*The Harper Collins Study Bible Student Edition*. Revised and Updated. HarperCollins, 2006. Or, something similar.

**III. Schedule**

Week 1 (June 4): The Kingdom of God and the End of the (Roman) World

Reading: Ehrman, *The New Testament* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 1 and 3. Optional: chs. 2 and 4  
Ehrman, *The New Testament* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 1 and 3. Optional: chs. 2 and 4  
Gospel of Mark, especially chapters 1–4 and 8

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<sup>1</sup> Equivalent reading selections are given for both the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Ehrman.

Week 2 (June 11): Tell Me the Story of Jesus: (Synoptic) Gospel Traditions and Inventions

Reading: Ehrman, *The New Testament* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 5 and 6. Optional: chs. 7 and 8  
Ehrman, *The New Testament* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 5. Optional: chs. 6 and 7  
Gospel of Matthew, chapters 1–7

Week 3 (June 18): Historical Jesus: A Man behind the Myths?

Reading: Ehrman, *The New Testament* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 14 and 16. Optional: chs. 15 and 17  
Ehrman, *The New Testament* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 13 and 14. Optional: Excurs. 4, ch. 15

Week 4 (June 25): Jesus of Nazareth: From Resurrection to Pre-Existence and Back

Reading: Ehrman, *The New Testament* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 11 and 18  
Ehrman, *The New Testament* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) chs. 10 and 16  
Gospel of John, chapter 1; First Corinthians, chapter 15