

Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

Lecture 1 - Introduction: Why Study the New Testament?

Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rkst-152/lecture-1>

Overview

This course approaches the New Testament not as scripture, or a piece of authoritative holy writing, but as a collection of historical documents. Therefore, students are urged to leave behind their pre-conceived notions of the New Testament and read it as if they had never heard of it before. This involves understanding the historical context of the New Testament and imagining how it might appear to an ancient person.

1. Why Take This Course?

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* This is Introduction to New Testament History and Literature. My name is Dale Martin. I've been teaching here at Yale for ten years now. I also was a grad student here in the '80s, in the Religious Studies Department. I then left, taught one year at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee, and then I taught eleven years at Duke and got in love with their basketball team. But then I came to Yale in 1999.

[2] This is a course that introduces you to the New Testament literature, but also the history of other material from the very first one hundred years or so of early Christianity. The first question you need to ask yourself is why do you want, or why are you thinking about taking this course? Why do you want to study the New Testament? What is the New Testament and why should you study it? The first obvious answer that a lot of people would give is, "Because I'm a Christian," or "I believe the New Testament's scripture and, therefore, I'm here to learn more about this document that is scripture for me in my church." The problem with that answer is before you say something is scripture, you have to say why is it scripture, for whom is it scripture, and what does that mean? And, in Christianity, when you call the Bible scripture, what that means is that you're going to listen to it for the Word of God. You're expecting somehow the Holy Spirit or God to

communicate to you and to your church and to your community through this document.

[3] But the text of the Bible isn't scripture in itself, it's only scripture to a community of people who take it as scripture. The text itself, any text, is not itself holy writing. That's what scripture means to us. It actually just means "written stuff," from the Latin. But we take it to mean holy writing, sacred writing. But the writing itself is not holy. It's only holy to people who take it as holy. Now the problem is we're at Yale College. This is not a holy place. I know they might have told you that when you came, but you've learned differently, haven't you? This is also not a church. So what does it mean to read the New Testament as scripture is not something we're going to really pursue in this class, because this is not a religious community. So one of the things that— if you're here to learn about the New Testament because it's scripture, the class may disappoint you, from that point of view. Somebody else might say, "Oh I'm here because this is a foundational document for Western civilization and I want to know something about the Bible."

[4] But what does that mean also, if you say that the Bible is a foundational document for Western civilization? Does that mean you can't really get along in Western civilization unless you know something about the Bible? And think about that. Isn't a knowledge of lots of other things much more important for how you get along in Western civilization than knowing the New Testament? For example,

it's much more important to know about cars. It'd be actually much more valuable for you to know how to fix your car than it is to know about the New Testament—right? – if you're getting along in Western civilization; or how to use computers, or sexual technique, or how to speak other languages. There are all kinds of things that it might be very useful for you to know as an inhabitant of Western civilization; and the New Testament, you might find out, would rank kind of down on the list of those kinds of things.

[5] Besides that—okay, let's take a quiz first. Get out a piece of paper. This is your first exam. This'll determine your grade for the rest of the semester. Tell me if this is in the New Testament, is in the Bible, or is not in the Bible. All right? It's just a yes and no question. All you need is ten places to write yes or no. You can even abbreviate and put Y or N. First, which of these things are in the Bible? The Immaculate Conception? Now you may not know anything about the Bible. If you don't know, just kind of guess, just make a guess. I'm not actually going to grade these. Is the Immaculate Conception something that's in the Bible? (2) This quotation: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Is that quotation in the Bible? "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (3) At Jesus' birth three wise men or three kings visited the Baby Jesus. Is that in the Bible? (4) This quotation: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need." (5) The Doctrine of the Trinity; is it in the Bible? (6) This quotation: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." (7) Peter founded the church in Rome. In the Bible, not in the Bible? Peter founded the church in Rome. Make a guess. (8) After his death, Jesus appeared to his disciples in Jerusalem. Is that in the Bible? After his death Jesus appeared to his disciples in Jerusalem. No talking with your neighbor. [Laughs] (9) After his death, Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee. After his death, Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee. Tenth and Last: Peter was martyred by being crucified upside down. Oh hard one.

[6] Okay, let's go back. Number One: Is the Immaculate Conception in the Bible? How many people think so, yes? How many people

say no, it's not in the Bible? Somebody tell me what the Immaculate Conception is. Anybody know? Yes?

[7] *Student:* Mary's conception.

[8] *Professor Dale Martin:* Mary's conception. It doesn't refer to the miraculous conception of Jesus. That's what often people think. See, one of the things about this course is you'll learn a lot about the Bible and early Christianity, but the most important thing is you learn cocktail party conversation tips. [Laughter] So think about—you really want to impress that girl you're with. "Hey, did you know that a lot of people think that the Immaculate Conception refers to the conception of Jesus? It doesn't!" It refers to the conception of Mary as being without Original Sin. Immaculate means "without stain." So it refers to the conception of Mary, by her mother, Anna, without—according to tradition—without Original Sin being transferred to Mary; and that's because, according to Roman Catholic tradition, then she could transmit the birth of Jesus without Original Sin also. Now that's not actually in the Bible. It's part of Roman Catholic doctrine. It's something that Protestants don't accept. But a lot of people think it's one in the Bible, or a lot of people confuse it with the Miraculous Conception of Jesus, which is in the Bible, in the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew.

[9] Second: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." How many people say it's in the Bible? Can anybody tell me where? Come on, there's got to be some fundies in here.

[10] *Student:* 1 Corinthians 13.

[11] *Professor Dale Martin:* 1 Corinthians 13. Good Sunday School education. (3) Three wise men or kings visited the Baby Jesus. In the Bible? Not in the Bible? How many people say it's not in the Bible? You say it's not in the Bible. Why?

[12] *Student:* I guessed. I have no idea.

[13] *Professor Dale Martin:* You have no idea. It's not in the Bible. It's true that wise men or kings did visit Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, but it's only tradition that says that it's three of them. Why was the tradition developed that

there were three kings that visited the manger of Jesus? Yes?

[14] *Student:* The gifts.

[15] *Professor Dale Martin:* The gifts; there are three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. And so tradition just said, “Well if there are three gifts, there must be three kings.” So that’s why we have that. But it’s not in the Bible. This quotation: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” In the Bible? Raise your hand. Not in the Bible? Raise your hand. Ah, couldn’t trick you. Does anybody know where it is from? Yes?

[16] *Student:* The Communist Manifesto.

[17] *Professor Dale Martin:* Yes, Marx. [Laughter] It’s from Marx. But a lot of people hear that and they think that’s from the Bible.

[18] The Doctrine of the Trinity. In the Bible? Not in the Bible? Okay, why are all you people saying the Doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible? That’s usually a real good one. Somebody explain why the Doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible. You’re right, it’s not in the Bible.

[19] *Student:* I thought it was thought up by the church to explain the paradox of the Son and the Father.

[20] *Professor Dale Martin:* Exactly. The Doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine that developed post-New Testament times to explain why Christians were worshipping Jesus and the Holy Spirit also as divine. So the Doctrine of the Trinity developed in the later centuries, after the New Testament. Now some people will say at least the Doctrine of the Trinity is hinted at in the Bible and that the later church was correct to read the New Testament to support it. And that may well be right theologically, but read historically it’s not in the Bible.

[21] “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church.” How many people say it’s in the Bible? How many people say it’s not in the Bible? It’s in the Bible. It’s in Matthew 16. (7) Peter founded the church in Rome. Is it in the Bible? You all aren’t sure. Is it not in the Bible? Ah, more people say it’s not in the Bible. You’re right, it’s not in the Bible. It’s

part of tradition. It’s a very strong part of Christian tradition but it’s not in the Bible.

[22] After his death, Jesus appeared to his disciples in Jerusalem. In the Bible? Raise your hand. A few people. Not in the Bible? You’re wrong, it is in the Bible. It’s in the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

[23] After his death, Jesus appeared to his disciples in Galilee. Is that in the Bible? Yes, some of you say yes. Not in the Bible? Anybody who’s brave enough to say it’s not in the Bible? It is in the Bible. It’s in the Gospel of Matthew. But now notice, the Gospel of Matthew, as we’ll talk about later, has Jesus appear to his disciples only in Galilee, not in Judea, and the Gospel of Luke and Acts have Jesus appear to his disciples only in Judea but not in Galilee. Ah, that’s an interesting problem we will have to get to at some point.

[24] Tenth and last: Peter was martyred by being crucified upside down. In the Bible or not in the Bible? In the Bible? Not in the Bible? The not-in-the-Bibles have it; it’s not in the Bible, but it’s a very important part of Christian tradition.

[25] Now I did the little quiz—these are all things that a lot of people out there would say, “Oh yeah, that’s in the Bible, or it sounds like something that should be in the Bible.” Right? Most of them aren’t, or about half of them, I think, are not in the Bible, and yet they’re very important for the history of Western Civilization. They’re important for people’s conceptions. They’re important for the history of art. How many paintings are there of Peter crucified upside down, or depictions in Western Art? So it’s very important for someone to know that there is an important tradition about Peter being crucified upside down, but it’s not a part of the New Testament. It illustrates again this idea that how much of this ancient text is it important for you to know, on its own terms, in its historical context in the first century, or how is it important for you to know in the way it’s been interpreted for the last 2000 years?

[26] And what I am telling you is kind of contrary to the way I’m going to teach this course. I’m actually advertising against myself, and there’ll be fewer of you here next time, right? Contrary to the way I’ll teach this course,

which is more on the history of the first century of these documents and what they meant in the first century, sometimes the most important thing about the Bible is its impact on the later history. And that's something that we'll talk about from time to time in the class, but it's something you'd get more out of, for example, if you studied an art history class, or if you studied a literature class that talked about some of these issues in later European times.

[27] I could illustrate with a lot more other things. For example, if I said, "What do most people believe about what happens to you after you're dead?" And you'd get lots of different answers. "You're dead like Rover, you're dead all over." Some people say, "You go to heaven." Some people—there's all kinds of different things. If I said, "What do you think most Christian religious people believe about what happens to you after you're dead?" In other words, "Where is Aunt Martha at the funeral?" "Well she's up with the arms of Jesus. She's safe in heaven. Her soul is there." Most people would say that Christians or religious people believe in the immortality of the soul, and that is part of a good bit of Christian doctrine. That again is not something that's in the Bible, really, so—and it's not even the best interpretation of official Christian orthodoxy. According to official Christian orthodoxy, the form of your afterlife existence is the resurrection of the body. That's what the New Testament talks about, either the resurrection of the flesh or the resurrection of the body. That's contrary to what most people kind of assume is what people believe.

[28] The point about this—and where do they get the idea of the immortality of the soul? Much more from Plato. So again it raises the issue, if you want to know most about the most influential aspects for Western civilization, would it be better for you to take an entire semester on Plato than it would on the New Testament? I'm saying it might, actually. The ironic fact is, because the New Testament is considered more important by people, there are a whole lot more people who take my New Testament classes than go over to the Classics Department and take a course in Plato. I'm not sure that's the way it should be, but that's the way it is. What this does is it brings up this issue of why are you here, what do you hope to get out of this course? And I want you to

understand the method that we'll pursue in the course.

2. *The Bible as a Historical Text*

[29] My point is to get you to see that when we study this text in this class, we're not going to be studying it necessarily as scripture, as the Word of God. We're not going to be studying it necessarily for how important it was for Medieval and Early Modern Literature, for example. We're going to look at what it meant in the first century. In fact, what I'm going to try to do is get you to come at the New Testament from the outside. I've been teaching this stuff for twenty years, and I tend to find two basic kinds of students who shop my classes for the New Testament Introduction course. One of them are the kinds of students who grew up in a religious household. They went to church. They maybe even have taken a lot of Sunday School, and so they feel like they know these texts from at least a Sunday School or a church kind of point of view. In some ways they kind of feel like, "Okay, I know what the New Testament is, and I already know sort of what I think about it." There are other people who come to these classes who grew up in a non-religious context; they know nothing about this. They've never read the Bible, and they come in and they think, "Well I'm taking it because I don't know anything about it." But, oddly enough, because they've been raised in our society, they still actually come at this text with some kind of pre-knowledge of the text. They have a conception of what the Bible is. They have a conception of what—who Jesus is, who Paul is. And so they're coming at the text already with some kind of familiarity with the topic, at least in a popular conception.

[30] Now the reason that is true is because we live in a post-Christian culture, and both aspects of that term are important. It's post-Christian in the sense that it's hard to live in America without having some kind of exposure to Christianity and without seeing its influence on our society, on our politics, on our culture and our art, and that sort of thing. But it's also post-Christian because you can no longer assume, in this culture, especially in a multivalent, poly-ethnic situation like Yale, that everybody here is going to be Christian. So we're in this kind of situation where we

have the hangovers of Christianity still occupying the culture, without necessarily knowing a lot about it.

[31] So I'm going to ask you to come at the New Testament, though, from the outside. If you feel like you know something about it, put those aside for the moment, because when we do the class we'll be trying to get you to see this document as if for the first time, to see early Christianity completely as if for the first time.

[32] So let's do a little practice run through this. Come with me now, open up your New Testament as you're just going to look at it, and we're going to go through a rushed little survey, through the New Testament. How would it strike you if you knew nothing about it, if you had never heard of it before, if you open up the covers of this book for the first time?

[33] At the very beginning is the Gospel of Matthew, and it starts like this: "The book of the origin" (or the genesis is the Greek word) "of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. Abraham had a son named Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob had Judah and his brothers. Judah had Perez and Zerah from Tamar." And you know how this goes, right? This is the begats, the famous begats, that start the Gospel of Matthew. So-and-so begat, so-and-so begat, so-and so, and it goes on like this for sentences and sentences and sentences. And, as a modern person, you're going, "What is this? What's going on with this?" And then you get to the birth narratives in Matthew, the stories of the Baby Jesus. If you lived during the time of Matthew himself, all of this stuff would seem fairly familiar to you, the idea that kings would come from far off and see a star, and that meant that the birth of someone great had been born. This is actually part of propaganda culture of the Ancient World. If you were an ancient person and you picked up the Gospel of Matthew and you heard these stories about these kings from the East, following a star and arriving and finding this baby, that would sound—you know, okay, this is going to be somebody great. This is telling you that this is himself a king or somebody great. So it would sound familiar to you in the ancient world. Then you'd go on and read the rest of the Gospel of Matthew. It's a story of a man who travels

around, giving speeches, sometimes talking to people or teaching. He's exorcising demons, performs a few miracles, he heals people. And, again, to us in the modern world, if you didn't already have some exposure to religious narratives like this, that would sound odd. In the ancient world, actually, it would've sounded familiar, because there are other stories of other kinds of teachers who'd healed and exorcised demons and performed miracles. That was not an uncommon way to talk about someone who was supposed to be great.

[34] But then you get to the next book in the New Testament, the Gospel of Mark. Well, it's kind of the same story. It's shorter, there's less, fewer teachings in it but it's—so why do you have the second chapter of this book retell the same story that the first chapter of the book told? The Gospel of Luke, same thing. You get to the Gospel of John—John's kind of different, it sounds different, there's a different style. But again it's the same story of this same guy. Why do you have four different chapters of this book, all telling the same story? That's odd in itself, from our point of view; or it should look odd to us.

[35] Then you get to The Acts of the Apostles. Now we're back on more familiar ground. It starts off like the Gospel of Luke, because it's written by the same guy who wrote the Gospel of Luke, and in fact it starts off with a paragraph that kind of encapsulates the way—how the Gospel of Luke ended. You know, like TV shows, "Last time on ER." And this is the way The Acts of Apostles begins. "Last time in Luke it ended this way. Now we're going to take up our heroes at their next point." Then it starts sounding like a Greco-Roman novel. And I have to tell you something about novels in the ancient world. There were Greek and Latin novels. Greek novels usually were about a man and a woman, young, rich, who see each other and fall madly in love and passionately want one another. And they might get married, or they might not get married, but they don't get to consummate their love. Instead, one of them gets kidnapped or has to go off to war or captured by pirates, and she's taken off by pirates and sold into slavery, and she goes all the way around the Mediterranean, and the young man follows her around the Mediterranean in chapter after chapter after chapter. They always almost connect and

almost get to have sex, and then no, they're—she's bought by somebody else and taken into another slave job, or he's captured by pirates. So the whole novel is them chasing each other around the Mediterranean, with shipwrecks and battles and miracles and gods intervening, and all kinds of stuff. And that's what The Acts of the Apostles kind of looks like. It's looks like an ancient Greek novel, except it lacks the one thing every good Greek novel had, sex. The Acts of the Apostles doesn't have sex. You might be disappointed there, but you also have other things that the novels don't have, such as the Holy Spirit being the main actor for the whole thing. But, notice, that would look kind of familiar to you in the Ancient World. It definitely looks odd to you in the modern world, if you don't read it as the Bible, and if you just read it as literature. And we also realize that The Acts of the Apostles is mistitled. It's not the acts of all the apostles, it's the acts basically of Paul, and Paul's not considered an apostle by the guy who wrote the Acts of the Apostles. This is another little clue here we'll from learn this semester. The titles of most of the books in the New Testament were not put there by their authors; they were put there by later Christian scribes. This will be very important.

[36] Then you get to The Letters of Paul. And is it strange that most of the New Testament are actually letters?

[37] They're not like modern letters. They're quite a bit like ancient letters. They're usually addressed to groups of people, and they deal with sort of philosophical sounding issues, and they give advice on group problems.

[38] Then you get to The Epistle to the Hebrews, or, in what a better translation would be, The Letter to the Jews. What's odd about it is that as you read this Epistle to the Hebrews, you realize two things. Number one, it's not a letter, it's actually a sermon. In fact, it doesn't even claim to be a letter; it looks just like a sermon. And, you realize this is not really addressed to Jews, it seems to be addressed to Gentile Christians to convince them that Jesus provides for them a liturgy that is superior to Judaism. It's actually neither a letter, nor is it addressed to Jews. This leads to an insight, though, by this time, when you're surveying your New Testament.

[39] These letters seem to be meant to be read out loud. So what—we'll ask this over and over again in this semester—what would it mean to read this letter out loud in a community, not alone in your dorm room, or just by yourself, in the library?

[40] Then you get to 1 Peter. It's written not to one place, but it's a circular letter, meant to be circulated around.

[41] Then you get to 2 and 3 John, two letters that are written to “the elected lady and her children.” What does that mean?

[42] Then finally you get to the Revelation of John, The Apocalypse. The word “revelation” is just the Latinized, English version of the Greek word apocalypse. And apocalypse just means opening up, revelation. This document is really bizarre. It's not like anything you've confronted so far in the New Testament. It starts off with a narrative about a vision. This guy named John says, “I was on the Island of Patmos. I was in—the Lord's Day. I started having this vision and this angel appeared to me and this all happened.” Then it has several letters, seven different letters, very short letters, addressed to seven different Christian churches. And then it goes into this wild videogame, MTV-style narrative of a heavenly journey of this guy John. He goes up into the heavens. He sees the throne room of God. He sees weird kinds of beasts and animals that had like—they're bodies of lambs, but they've got horns and they're bleeding all over the place. It's a story of catastrophes. It's a story of a cosmic battle between forces of good and forces of evil. It's like several installments of Star Wars. And finally it ends up with the establishment of a new world and a new City of God.

[43] Now that's a long way—that's the end of the New Testament—that's a long way from the little Baby Jesus and the Three Kings in Matthew, isn't it? But the New Testament includes all that kind of diverse literature; 27 different books, written anywhere from the year 50 to the year 150. So a hundred-year period of time that these books were probably written in. They have different points of view, different situations, different theologies, different genres. They use confusing in-house language. I'll point out that in-house language throughout the semester, and we'll talk about

how it should be interpreted. And these texts almost defy interpretation by a modern person, unless you have guidance from a historian and expert like moi.

3. *Imagining an Ancient's Perspective*

[44] Let's do this little trick again. Instead of looking at the documents from the outside, let's look at what would an early Christian church look like if you were just to stumble upon them? A little imagination. Let's pretend that you're a seamstress. You work in a clothing shop in the City of Corinth, in Greece, in the year 56. A guy next door to you, named Fred, works in a leather factory next door. He has just joined a new club and he's going to tell you all about it. First, they don't meet in the daytime; they meet either early before light, at dawn, or after dark, at night. There's only enough of them to fill a decent sized dining room, but they call themselves the "town meeting." You're not sure what they do at these meetings. They don't appear to worship any god or goddess that you can see. They use the term "god" sometimes, but this god doesn't have a name, and that's very bizarre to you. Remember, you're pretending you're a Greek person living in the year 56 in Corinth. In fact, these people don't look like they believe in gods at all, they look like atheists.

[45] They have a very high respect for a criminal Jew, who led some kind of guerilla war and was executed long ago, somewhere in Syria. Fred says, though, that this Jew is still alive somewhere. In fact, Fred says that the Jew "bought" him, though you didn't know that Fred was even ever a slave. In fact, you're pretty sure the slave wasn't a slave. So what does it mean that this guy bought him? At these town meetings they eat meals—which is not unusual since most clubs in your society eat meals—but they call the meals "the boss's dinner," or sometimes "the thank you." Some people say they eat human flesh at these dinners, but you doubt that because for some reason they seem to be all vegetarians. You kind of doubt whether vegetarians would eat human flesh. Fred says that to initiate new members into their club, they "dip them," naked, and then they "get healthy." Once you're in the club they call you "comrade," and you have sex with anyone and everyone,

because it doesn't matter anymore whether you're a man or a woman; in fact, they kind of figure you're neither or both. That's this new group.

[46] Now I constructed that little picture out of actual data from the New Testament, and what we have from writings about ancient Christians. This was the way at least a good many number of ancient people saw early Christian groups. Every one of the little details there I gave—I won't unpack them all for you now because it would just be boring and we need to move along—but every one of those details comes from some interpretation of a particular Greek term that Christians used. For example, I said this meal they have, it's called "the boss's dinner." We call it the Lord's Supper. But "the Lord" doesn't mean "God" necessarily, it means your boss. So the Lord's Supper, put back into normal Greek language, would be something like "the boss's dinner." Or, as I said, they call it, "the thank you." Episcopalians call the Communion, when they take it on Sunday, "the Eucharist," which is just from the Greek word meaning "thanks." So all of these different things—the part about it, it doesn't matter whether you're a man and woman, Christians went around saying things like, "In Christ there is no male and female." What, no male and female? And some outsiders did interpret that as meaning that these Christians seem to kind of have sex with each other. They call each other "brother" and "sister" and yet they're always talking about love all the time. They have meetings at night, in the dark. Yeah, so there were all these rumors about early Christian groups like this.

[47] So a lot of these things—I said they call you "comrade." Well Christians called each other "brother" and "sister." But that wouldn't have been sort of a normal, everyday way to talk about a stranger in the ancient world. It would sound somewhat odd, like in our thinking it would be somewhat odd, or Communist or something, to call somebody "comrade." So the language that different early Christians used about each other, and for themselves, was sometimes very common Greek language, but sometimes it would've also sounded strange and kind of in-house to other people. In other words, the Bible presents us with a very strange world, if we approach it without our normal preconceptions, if we approach it fresh and from the outside. This is an ancient

collection of documents. It wasn't all put together right when they were written.

[48] Next time I'm going to actually talk about how did these 27 different diverse documents come to be included in the New Testament? That's the whole history of the canon, and I'll talk about that in my next lecture. In fact, a good bit of the history of early Christianity, and the New Testament itself, was to take what was a diverse group of different people, all somehow being loyal to this guy they called Jesus. But they weren't all the same, and they were in different geographical situations, they had different beliefs. And early Christianity was an attempt to pull all these things into one unified movement, in some way, to get some kind of uniformity of belief and practice.

[49] So this course is actually going to run counter to that historical tendency to make unity out of diversity. What we're going to do is we're going to take the New Testament, and we're going to take the different writings, and we're going to take them apart. And one of the major themes of the course will be the diversity of Early Christianity; in fact, the diversity of Early Christianities, is one of the ways I put it on the syllabus. We will look at all the different ways Jesus was thought of to be either divine or human or some combination of both. We'll look at different ways that early Christians dealt with the fact that this movement seemed to come out of Judaism. Well, does that mean we're Jews? If not, what does it mean we are? We'll look at all the different diversities. How they treated women, different ways that women could take a place in this movement. Or different ways that they treated slaves and other servants in their households. How did they react to the politics? How did they react to the powerful Roman Empire? We'll take all these different topics, at different points in the course, and we'll talk about the diverse ways that early Christians reacted to these social and cultural issues, and we'll read the New Testament in light of that. So what's going on is taking what is a unity, and pulling apart that unity to see the diversity of this early Christian movement and these documents.

4. Q&A

[50] Now I'm going to pause for a minute and let you ask questions, or make comments, or throw things, or whatever. Don't be shy. Yes?

[51] *Student:* Are you going to talk at all about sort of how the decisions were made to what documents to include or what documents to exclude?

[52] *Professor Dale Martin:* Yes. He asked if I was going to talk about how decisions were made about what to include in the New Testament and what not to include in the New Testament. And I'll talk about that actually the next lecture, when I talk about the history of the canon. Why were some books – there were a lot more early Christian pieces of literature that we know of. Some we're discovering all the time. The Gospel of Judas. You may have read in the newspapers and magazines that a new Gospel of Judas has just been published, that some people at Yale actually knew twenty years ago existed because it was shown to some people here. But most people didn't know about it. And it's just been published in an English translation. Why did the Gospel of Judas not make it into the canon? We'll talk about those issues next time. Yes sir?

[53] *Student:* Are we going to go over the different translations?

[54] *Professor Dale Martin:* Are we going to go over the different translations, and which one is best? We will raise the issue of translation periodically. For example, when I talk about the syllabus in just a moment, I'm going to talk about what Bible you should bring to class, and I recommend—I did recommend one particular study bible to the bookstore to buy, but I'm sort of hoping that not everybody will bring that same translation of the New Testament, because sometimes I'll say, "Well this translation says this in the English. Does anyone have a different translation?" And at particular points, when there is something important about the different translations, I'll bring that up, and I'll explain every once in awhile. That won't be sort of a major lecture in its own right. It's something that will come up over and over again. How does translation happen? How do debates about translation get resolved? Yes?

[55] *Student:* Are you going to talk about the Old Testament at all, either sort of how [inaudible].

[56] *Professor Dale Martin:* Am I going to talk about the Old Testament at all? I will when it's relevant. So, for example, next time I will also talk a bit about the canon of the Old Testament, and how there are different decisions about that from the New Testament. I'll talk about why the Jewish Bible is different from the Roman Catholic Bible, even with regard to what they consider the Old Testament. When we talk about apocalypticism, and the Gospel of Mark and Judaism, I'm actually going to—you have to read at least the last half of the Book of Daniel, from the Old Testament. And the reason is because Daniel is an older apocalyptic, prophetic text that was heavily influenced on early Christian literature. And I will give a lecture in about two more times on the history of Judaism in this Second Temple Period; that is, what did Judaism look like at the time of Jesus and Paul? And that will necessitate referring to the Hebrew Bible some. So I will every once in awhile.

[57] But I'm not going to—I will, for example, talk about why did the Gospel of Matthew take this particular Hebrew Bible text to be a prophesy about Jesus? And we'll look back maybe and see how that difficult text would've looked in its original context. But—so when it's relevant, I will refer back to the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. And for those of you who are not aware, what Christians call the Old Testament is simply what Jews call the Hebrew Bible. It basically refers to the same document. We just use different terms, because for the Jews, of course, Hebrew scripture is not old, in the sense of *passé*. Any other questions? Yes.

[58] *Student:* Will we be talking somewhat about the legacy of the Bible on later literature or in the context?

[59] *Professor Dale Martin:* Will we be talking about the legacies of the Bible in later literature? Not as much as I should. And that's why at the very beginning of this lecture—you may have come in a little bit late—I said this course will concentrate on the meaning of these texts in their early historical context. Every once in a while we'll bring up an issue of well, how has this been interpreted over the centuries? The one time we will get this very strongly is the one time where you go with

your discussion section—I'll talk about the discussion sections in a moment. You're expected to all go to the Yale Art Gallery and go through the Art Gallery, with your discussion leader, and then you'll do a lot of looking at how are biblical themes and issues portrayed in later art? And that may bring up chances to talk about literature also. If you want to bring up those kinds of issues, feel free to. But I'm going to concentrate, in this course, on the meaning of these texts in their earliest context.

5. Going over the Syllabus

[60] Anybody else? Questions? Okay, look at your syllabus. If you don't have a syllabus—are there any extras back there? Okay, well you can find the syllabus—if you want to—there are some more right here, if anybody needs one. If you, or a friend of yours, wants to see this syllabus after the class, and you don't have one, it's on the Classes v2 server. So you can go online and get the syllabus, and download it and print it.

[61] One of the things I want to emphasize, that I've not emphasized already, is attendance here in the lectures is very much required. You will be expected to come to the lectures. Just because this is a large lecture course doesn't mean you can skip the lectures. Even if you're doing the readings from the textbook, you'll get stuff from my lectures that you won't get elsewhere. So you are required to come to the lectures. The section leaders, once they get to know you, they'll actually be looking to see whether the people in their section are missing a bunch of lectures; and I've asked them to take notes. If you're missing a lot of lectures, it could affect your grade. So please come to the lectures.

[62] There are only three assignments: two six-page papers, that I'll explain how to do. One is a exegesis paper, and we'll spend a whole section discussion talking about what we mean by exegesis and teaching you how to do it. Another paper will be a thematic paper on some aspect of conflict among early Christians, such as Judaism and the Law, or women, or politics. And then the final. There will never be a sit-down final in class.

[63] Your final exam will be basically one or two questions that I'll give to you ahead of time. You take it home and you write basically an 8-

page, double-spaced paper on the question, not doing research—we don't want you to run outside and do research. Using the material you've learned in class, you'll be expected to answer some big questions for an 8-page final paper that you'll turn in at a date to be assigned.

[64] Procedures for evaluation are important. To make an A paper in my class, to make an A on a paper, not only does the paper have to have the right answers and fulfill the assignment, it has to be written elegantly and excellently. Every Yale student has access to free writing tutors. I don't know if you realize how rare that is, in a college. It certainly wasn't available to me or most people of my generation. But I know you have access to writing tutors. You can make an A in this class by writing your paper as far enough ahead of time that you can take it to a writing tutor and get the writing tutor to help you get the style better, and then turn that version in. That'll be much more likely to give you an A. If you write a paper that says all the right things, does all the right things, and yet it's not well written, it gets a B. If it's a C, that means it's even worse written, and Ds and Fs mean you didn't really fulfill the assignment.

[65] The texts that I've ordered from the bookstore—unfortunately I ordered them late, but the Labyrinth Bookstore will have the textbook by Bart Ehrman, that you can also go online and just order it yourself. The information is here on the syllabus. I've ordered the Oxford Annotated Version of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. But, like I say, you're welcome to bring other translation, other versions. When we use the term version, of a Bible, that just means a different translation of the Bible into English. So if you want to use a Revised Standard Version, that is other than the New Revised Standard Version, that's fine. The New International Bible. There are several other

Bible translations that are acceptable. I don't want you to use the old translations, such as the King James Version, or the Catholic Douay Version. Those have too many inaccuracies because they're just too old. I also would rather you not use the sort of paraphrases, like the Living Bible. But if you want to use other translations, that's fine. In fact, sometimes that'll help us because we'll compare translations.

[66] Don't worry about discussion sections yet. I'm not sure whether we'll use the Classes server to have you sign up for discussion sections online, or whether we will do it the old-fashioned way and have you sign up on forms that we'll give you here in class. But we will organize you into discussion sections. There'll be a variety of times you can choose. So there'll be options about when your discussion section will meet. We'll try to make sure everybody's schedule is accommodated, and you'll either meet on Thursdays or Fridays, in discussion sections, and we'll organize those sections closer to the end of the shopping period, when we have a better idea who will be in here.

[67] As I said, the rest of the organization of the class I think is pretty well self-evident. The class is organized first to teach you the methods of the historical critical approach to the New Testament, and help you learn how to do those through exegesis and historical study. And then the second half of the class, we turn our attentions to more of these issues of disagreement and debate within early Christianity, around issues such as Judaism and the Law, women's positions, politics, and the interpretation of scripture. So that's basically the semester. Any other questions? Comments? Outbursts? Last chance. All right, if you decide to take the course, I will see you same place, same time, on Wednesday.

[end of transcript].