

**MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE**  
**BIBLE 432**  
**THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD**  
**CREDIT, 3 SEMESTER HOURS**  
**Fall, 2011**  
**DR. G. ROGER GREENE (“BIG G”), PROFESSOR**

**PREREQUISITES:** Bible 210 or Junior Standing

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** A study of the Jewish and Greco-Roman world into which Christianity was born, with a view toward the understanding of historical, archaeological, religious, and sociological perspectives of significant importance for New Testament interpretation today.

***RATIONALE FOR BIBLE 432***

While many approaches to Bible study are characterized by literary or theological analysis, Bible 432 seeks to offer an appreciative understanding of the world into which Christianity was born on the basis of historical, archaeological, religious, and sociological insights and methodologies. It seeks to blend together current insights into the culture of the Mediterranean world of the early centuries of the Roman Empire drawn from older methodologies such as analytical historical and archaeological studies with those insights drawn from more modern approaches that may be described as sociological, anthropological, and cross-cultural. Through the avenue of pivotal values and realities of life in the Greco-Roman world of early Christianity, significant windows are opened for understanding the New Testament texts more appropriately in a modern context. It offers a significant opportunity to come to understand the world of earliest Christianity and to avoid projecting the modern world onto the biblical world, or, more significantly, the biblical text..

The purpose of this course is as follows:

- 1. To acquaint the student with the historical realities of the Jewish and Greco-Roman world into which earliest Christianity was born by moving beyond mere historical description to comprehension of social, religious, and cultural realities of living in the ancient world.*
- 2. To move beyond the mere informational level and to acquaint the student with relevant archaeological work and discoveries as a means of elucidating the reality of living in the ancient world.*
- 3. To offer an opportunity to understand and to imagine what living was like—socially, culturally, religiously—in the cities and communities of the New Testament world.*
- 4. To better enable the student to interpret the New Testament literature without anachronism and a modern cultural ethnocentrism.*

***LEARNING OBJECTIVES***

The learning objectives of the course are as follow:

*Cognitive Objectives*

1. To gain an appreciation and understanding of what life in general was like in the early Roman Empire that moves beyond mere description and information through the utilization of historical, archaeological, and cross-cultural methodologies.
2. To gain an understanding of the pivotal values of the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire in

comparison to the values of the student's modern cultural context through the utilization of both literary and archaeological evidence and sociological models.

3. To grasp the relevance of understanding the New Testament world for the development of earliest Christianity and the New Testament writings

### *Behavioral Objectives*

1. The student will read all assigned materials and be prepared to discuss and/or present those materials in seminar-type discussion.
2. The student will complete take-home examinations which will provide full opportunity to demonstrate comprehension of assigned materials and the relevance of those materials for New Testament understanding.
3. The student will examine New Testament materials and make application of those texts to contemporary understandings of religious expression.

### ***APPROACH OF THE COURSE***

The approach to be taken in the study will employ both historical understanding and archaeological findings, as well as insights and models drawn from cultural anthropology and sociology. The focus is not upon verbal or literary analysis, mere descriptionism, or dissemination of informational data. It will seek to make explicit many things that may only be implicit in the New Testament texts—i.e., things that could be assumed by all persons who lived in that ancient world—as a means of fostering a more complete, correct, and comprehensive hermeneutical approach to New Testament

### ***ACADEMIC INTEGRITY***

Mississippi College students are expected to be honest. Dishonesty is not tolerated at Mississippi College and is subject to severe penalties including loss of credit and dismissal from school. The student should be thoroughly informed on these matters of academic and personal integrity which are delineated in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*, student publications, or **Policy 2.19** available on the Mississippi College web site.

### ***OUTLINE OF COVERED TOPICS***

Some of the topics to be covered include the following:

*Bible study and cultural anthropology*  
*Pivotal values of the Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire*  
*The way of Judaism in a Greco-Roman world*  
*The matter of personality in the ancient world*  
*The place of religion in the life of ancient peoples*  
*The place of families and groups in the ancient world*  
*The social Gospel of Jesus and its outcomes*  
*How political realities affected the lives of people*  
*Social classes within the world of Judaism and the Greco-Roman world*  
*Social relationships and morality*  
*Archaeological discoveries with significance for understanding early Christianity*  
*Economic and legal realities of living in the Greco-Roman world*  
*Contrasts between modern Americans and ancient Mediterraneans*

*Avoidance of anachronistic and ethnocentric hermeneutics*

These and other topics covered are reflected in the schedule of daily assignments.

### ***METHODS OF INSTRUCTION***

Primary methods of instruction utilized in this course include reading, dialogical lecture, class discussion, presentation of necessary background materials, group work which engages in primary materials, and exegetical interpretation and topical correlation of specific scriptural passages with a view toward ancient understanding and contemporary relevance. An experiential dimension will also be incorporated as a means of instructional learning. It is the intent of the professor to offer a modified seminar format, with primary responsibilities of research and presentation being shifted to the student. The focus will be upon student involvement and student learning.

### ***REQUIRED PRACTICES***

Required practices include reading of required texts, discussion and presentation of assigned or researched material, preparation of case studies, and experiential application. The student will be responsible for formal and informal class presentations. Recall and application of material learned or examined is also required.

### ***INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS***

Instructional materials include the following textbooks required for this course.

Connolly, Peter, and Hazel Dodge. **The Ancient City: Life in Classical Athens & Rome.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Ferguson, Everett. **Backgrounds of Early Christianity.** Second edition. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993.

Malina, Bruce J. **The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology.** Third edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

A Bible is required on a continuing basis for use in this course. **The New Oxford Annotated (NRSV)** and/or **The Greek New Testament** is strongly recommended.

Extensive pertinent bibliographies relevant to the subject matter may be found in the above textbooks. Some selected bibliographic resources include the following:

Stephen Benko and John J. O'Rourke (Eds.). **The Catacombs and the Colosseum: The Roman Empire as the Setting of Primitive Christianity.** Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1971.

Casson, Lionel. **Daily Life in Ancient Rome.** New York: American Heritage. Rev. ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1999.

Crossan, John Dominic. **The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant.** San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.

- Esler, Philip F. (Ed.). **The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation.** London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1994.
- Ferguson, John. **Moral Values in the Ancient World.** London, 1958.
- Finegan, Jack. **The Archaeology of the New Testament: The Life of Jesus and the Beginning of the Early Church.** Rev. Ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Garnsey, Peter and Richard Saller. **The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture.** Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987.
- Grant, F. C. **Roman Hellenism and the New Testament.** New York, 1962.
- Horsley, Richard A. **Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis.** Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996.
- Hanson, K. C. and Douglas Oakman. **Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.
- Hengel, Martin. **Judaism and Hellenism.** 2 vols. Philadelphia, 1974.
- Jeremias, Joachim. **Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions During the New Testament Period.** Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969.
- Kee, Howard C. **Understanding the New Testament.** 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983.
- MacMullen, Ramsey. **Paganism in the Roman Empire.** New Haven, 1981.
- Malherbe, Abraham J. **Social Aspects of Early Christianity.** Philadelphia, 1983.
- Malina, Bruce J. **The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels.** London: Routledge, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Jerome H. Neyrey. **Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality.** Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. **Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels.** Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993.
- Meeks, Wayne. **The Moral World of the First Christians.** Philadelphia, 1986.
- Moore, Clifford F. and John Jackson (Trans.). **Tacitus: The Histories; The Annals.** 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Moore, G. F. **Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, The Age of the Tannaim.** 3 vols. Cambridge, Mass., 1927.
- Nash, Ronald. **Christianity and the Hellenistic World.** Grand Rapids, 1984.
- Neyrey, Jerome H. (Ed.). **The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation.** Peabody,

- Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991.
- Nock, A. D. **Conversion**. Oxford, 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. **Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background**. New York, 1964.
- Pilch, John J. **Introducing the Context of the New Testament: Hear the Word**. Vol. 2. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Bruce J. Malina (Eds.). **Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook**. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B. **Goddesses, Wives, Whores, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity**. New York, 1975.
- Rawson, B. **The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives**. Ithaca, N.Y., 1986.
- Rohrbaugh, Richard L. **The Biblical Interpreter: An Agrarian Bible in an Industrial Age**. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (Ed.). **The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation**. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson.
- Rolfe, John Carew (Trans.). **Suetonius**. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959-60.
- Rostovtzeff, M. I. **Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire**. 2 vols. Oxford, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. **Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World**. 3 vols. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford, 1986.
- Rousseau, John J. and Rami Arav. **Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary**. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- S. Safrai and M. Stern (Eds.). **The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions**. *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- Sanders, E. P. 1985. **Jesus and Judaism**. Philadelphia: Fortress.
- \_\_\_\_\_. **Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.-66 C.E.** Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992.
- Shelton, Jo-Ann. **As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History**. Oxford, 1988.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. **Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament**. Oxford, 1963
- Stambaugh, John E. and David L. Balch. **The New Testament in Its Social Environment**. Philadelphia, 1986.

Thackeray, H. S. J., Ralph Marcus, and Louis H. Feldman (Trans.). **Josephus**. 9 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Veyne, Paul (Ed.). **A History of a Private Life, Vol. 1: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium**. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap.

Reading assignments in the above textbooks are given in the assignment schedule by periods. These readings are to be prepared in advance of the designated class period. Other assignments may be made in class pertaining to classroom activities. The student should come prepared to present and to discuss the assigned materials.

### ***METHODS OF EVALUATION***

Evaluation in this class is based upon class attendance and participation, individual class presentation, group work, sectional examinations, and a final examination. Attendance assumes a positive role in the learning process as it pertains to attitudes of learning and class participation.

#### *Evaluation of Student Progress*

1. There will be two sectional examinations, each worth 100 points, due at the points indicated in the schedule of assignments. It is intended that these be take-home exams to be written and submitted to the professor. Exams submitted late will incur penalty of 5-10% per day late or portion thereof. Each exam will be sectional, i.e., it will focus upon material covered in the course since the previous exam.
2. The student's class participation grade will count 100 points. The nature of the class will be such that the student will be expected to participate fully in classroom presentation and proceedings. While the student will be assigned definite presentations, the emphasis here is upon the freedom to lead and to contribute in a meaningful way to the classroom experience. This class is not meant to be a spectator sport, but a significant participatory learning experience. Thus, continuing preparation is required on the part of the student. In the event the class refrains from preparation and contribution, the professor reserves the right to attribute these and any other appropriate points to "pop quizzes."
3. A final examination, with a value of 150 points, will be given at the end of the semester during the regular examination period on the day and at the time determined by the Registrar's Office. It will be a maximum of two hours in length and will be comprehensive in nature.

#### *Class Policy on Make-Up Examinations*

If the student can not complete an exam on the due date for any reason, the professor should be notified **prior to** the exam period if the student is to avoid penalty. It is the intention of the professor that few or no make-up exams be given and that few or no late exams be received. **Any assessed penalties are at the sole discretion of the professor. Generally speaking, exams submitted late will incur a 5-10% per day penalty for unexcused lateness.** It is to the student's advantage to complete exams by the allotted time. In the event the student misses the final exam, the policies of this paragraph apply as well as the procedures involving incomplete grades. See below.

### *Criteria of Grade Assignment*

There are 450 possible points for this course. Any student who accumulates 91-100% of the total **after adjustment is made for attendance (see below)** will earn a grade of **A**, 81-90% a grade of **B**, 71-80% a grade of **C**, 61-70% a grade of **D**, and below 60% an **F**. These percentages represent both an ideal standard and an assured grade. Any adjustments beyond these will be at the sole discretion of the professor. Should any adjustments be made, they will be fair and equitable and to the benefit of the student. Needless to say, quality work and full participation is expected of the student in this course. The grade received will represent an evaluation of your work done in the course and not your person. One will get out of the course what she/he is both willing and able to put into it.

### *Final Course Grade*

In accordance with the percentages given above, the final grade earned in the course will be representative of the quality of student work accomplished in terms of mastery of the material assigned. A grade of **A** will represent superior work, **B** above-average work, **C** average work, **D** below-average work, and **F** a failure to meet minimal course and proficiency requirements.

## **OTHER COURSE INFORMATION**

### *Attendance*

Mississippi College has standards regarding attendance of classes. These are printed in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*. The student is expected to attend classes regularly and punctually. The student should be fully aware of these policies. All classes missed count as absences, whether excused or unexcused. An automatic **F** is given if absences exceed 25% of the class meetings. This is the equivalent of 4 class meetings in a night class which meets once a week, 11 class meetings in a MWF class, and 7 class meetings in a TR class. There is an appeal process which may be instituted through the office of the appropriate dean.

In addition to the above, the student should be advised that excessive *unexcused* absences beyond the allowable limits (three clock hours, which is only **3 unexcused absences** in a MWF class, **2 unexcused absences** in TR class) **will penalize** the student's final percentage semester grade point average by **1% per unexcused absence**. To reiterate, **the student's final grade point average will be penalized for excessive unexcused absences**. Thus, excessive absences can make a difference in the letter grade received in the course. The professor values class attendance and participation, particularly in a class with a seminar format.

### *Incomplete Grades*

An incomplete (grade of **I**) may be given to a student who has been hindered by circumstances beyond the student's control from completing work required for the course. The stipulations for awarding and removing an incomplete grade are given in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*. The student should be familiar with the full statement of these stipulations. Briefly, the student should contact the professor to determine a date for completion of the work. An incomplete grade becomes an automatic **F** if not completed in a timely manner. To remove an **I** grade, the student must obtain a form from the Registrar's Office, pay a fee, and give the form to the professor for submission of the new and final grade.

### *Late Assignments*

In the event of late completion of outside assignments for reasons other than excused absences, the late work will be accepted only during the next seven days from the date due and only with penalty. The penalty assessed will represent the equivalent of one letter grade for each two days late as stated above.

### *Tardiness*

Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Class attendance will be emphasized by this professor and roll will be checked at the beginning of each class period. **In the event of tardiness, it is the student's responsibility to notify the professor at the close of the particular class period in order to assure that she/he is not marked absent.** No recorded absences will be erased after the week in which they are recorded, if the tardy student fails to properly notify the professor.

### *Information on Student Appeals*

Information on student appeals of academic matters is given generally in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*. In general, appeals pertaining to a specific course begin with the instructor of the course and proceed in order through the department chair, the dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

### *Application for Accommodation*

As stated in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog*, Mississippi College does not discriminate in admission to its programs or activities. See the following statement:

“In order for a student to receive disability accommodations under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, he or she must contact Student Counseling Services (SCS). SCS will assist with information regarding the appropriate policy and procedure for disability accommodations before each semester or upon immediate recognition of the disability. SCS is located in Alumni Hall Room #4 or you may contact them by phone at 601-925-7790. The Director of Student Counseling Services, Dr. Bryant may be reached via email at [mbryant@mc.edu](mailto:mbryant@mc.edu).“

Should students need special accommodations due to learning, physical, psychological, or other disabilities, students should direct their inquiry to the Director of the Counseling and Career Development Center. For more information, the student is referred to the Mississippi College Catalog, Students with Disabilities section, student publications or the web site.

### *Support Service References*

The student should be advised that Mississippi College is a service oriented institution. Academic concerns may be addressed in appropriate order by the course instructor, the advisor, the department chair, the dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Other support services may be found through the Counseling and Career Development Center, through the Office of Financial Aid, etc., according to the specific area of need. The student is referred to the general catalog and to his/her advisor for referral of specific needs.

## *University Calendar*

Important dates pertaining to the current academic session of Mississippi College may be found on the Mississippi College web site. In addition, they may be found in the *Mississippi College Undergraduate Catalog* and the *Mississippi College Registration Class Schedule*. The final examination schedule may also be found in the *Mississippi College Registration Class Schedule*.

## *Assignments*

Assignments are listed in the assignment schedule. Any deviation from the schedule or period correlation will be made by the professor in class. A basic outline of course content is incorporated into the assignment schedule. Additional assignments to the readings in the textbooks may be made as appropriate to the material being studied.

It is important that the student read the assigned materials for each class period prior to that class period. Essentially, one assignment will be covered per class period. While it is possible (and maybe even desirable) to spend much more time on each topic listed, time will be a limiting factor. Best use of class time will be made with advance preparation.

## ***OTHER CONSIDERATIONS***

### *Matters of Decorum*

Generally speaking, because they provide distraction and inhibit classroom dialogue, the professor does not allow the use of tape recorders in the classroom. The exception is use needed because of medical disabilities as certified by a physician. Cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. If a student chews gum, it should be done with the mouth closed. No meals are allowed in the classroom. The professor finds it very distracting for the student to be writing notes to or talking with a neighbor during class about matters not pertaining to this class. The professor does not easily tolerate the student making preparation for other classes during the period for this class. The professor expects the student to be involved in the classroom proceedings with full freedom to contribute to the classroom learning experience.

### *A Final Word*

Participation is expected in this class—it is not a spectator sport. While there is a significant amount of reading and study to be completed in this course, it is meant to be an enjoyable course which offers some rather unique learning opportunities for developing significant skills and understanding of the New Testament. The course is intended to be experienced as an opportunity for the broadening of both knowledge and faith. It is also intended to develop the student's thinking, writing, and exegetical skills through inquiry and dialogue with the professor, other students, and relevant class materials and exercises. The course will be, however, what **you the student** make it to be. The more one is willing to both receive and give, the more one will gain foundationally from the course.



7. Understanding the Political History: Judaism  
F, 397-430

### **III. SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD**

8. Roman Society and Culture: Social Structure and Governance  
F, 48-81  
Importance of Citizenship, cf. F, 62-69
9. Roman Society and Culture: Economic and Daily Life  
F, 82-97, 107-147  
C, 126-169
10. Roman Society and Culture: Entertainment  
F, 97-109  
C, 176-217
11. Hellenistic-Roman Religions  
F, 148-251
12. Hellenistic-Roman Religions  
F, 251-318
13. Hellenistic-Roman Philosophies  
F, 319-395

### **FIRST EXAM DUE—Tuesday, October 13**

14. Understanding Judaism: The Sources  
F, 431-513
15. Understanding Judaism: Groups and Sects  
F, 513-536
16. Understanding Judaism: Beliefs and Institutions  
F, 537-582
17. Understanding Early Christianity: Sources, Attitudes, Acceptance  
F, 583-620

### **IV. INTERNAL SOCIAL REALITIES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WORLD**

18. Pivotal Values of the First-Century Mediterranean World: Honor-Shame  
M, 27-57
19. The Individual and the Group: First-Century Personality  
M, 58-80

20. Maintaining One's Social Status: Perception of Limited Good  
M, 81-107
21. Envy and the Evil Eye: Most Grievous Evil  
M, 108-133
22. Family Matters: Kinship and Marriage  
M, 134-160
23. Rules of Purity: Clean and Unclean  
M, 161-197
24. The Development of Jesus Groups  
M, 198-222

**SECOND EXAM DUE—Tuesday, November 15**

**V. RE-EVALUATION: COMPREHENDING THE NEW TESTAMENT**

25. Catching the Drift: Back from the Future  
Gaining Awareness of the Biblical World  
Gaining More Accurate and Adequate Understanding  
Cultural Ethnocentricity
26. The Kingdom of God in a Roman World  
The Reign of Caesar  
The Jerusalem Temple  
The Reign of God
27. The Pyramids of Power  
Patronage and Peasants  
Politics of Power  
Brother, Can You Spare a Denarius?  
Political Economy in Palestine  
Political Economy and Early Christianity
28. All in the Family  
Family Matters in the Gospels  
Matters of Family in Early Christianity
29. **FINAL EXAM— Saturday, December 10, 11 AM-1 PM**

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