

# Slavery & the New Testament



## Professor Name

Office:

Pronouns:

## Contact Info

Email Address

## Office Hours

Day 1: Hour-Hour

Day 2: Hour-Hour

## Course Assistant

Name Email

Address

## Course Description

Christianity has a reputation for being a religion of radical inclusion and universal salvation for all. Early critics of Christianity dismissed it as a “religion of slaves.” Over the course of its 2000 year history, however, Christianity has often supported the practice of enslaving and subjugating others. How did this shift take place and how should people read the New Testament today?

This history-based course is designed to introduce students to the complicated and troubling subject of slavery and the New Testament. It will introduce students to slavery in the Roman Mediterranean world, the founding texts of the Christian movement, and the legacies that they have in the present.

The course also asks ‘What roles did enslavement and enslaved people play in the emergence, spread, and success of Christianity?’ It will look at enslaved people as scriptural authors, missionaries, and interpreters. It will scrutinize the ways in which early Christians were invited to think about themselves as “slaves of God.” It will also ask how enslaved early Christians might have understood troubling scriptural passages about slavery and consider how enslaved Christians might have read against the grain.

1

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

2

PAPERS

3

READING RESPONSE

4

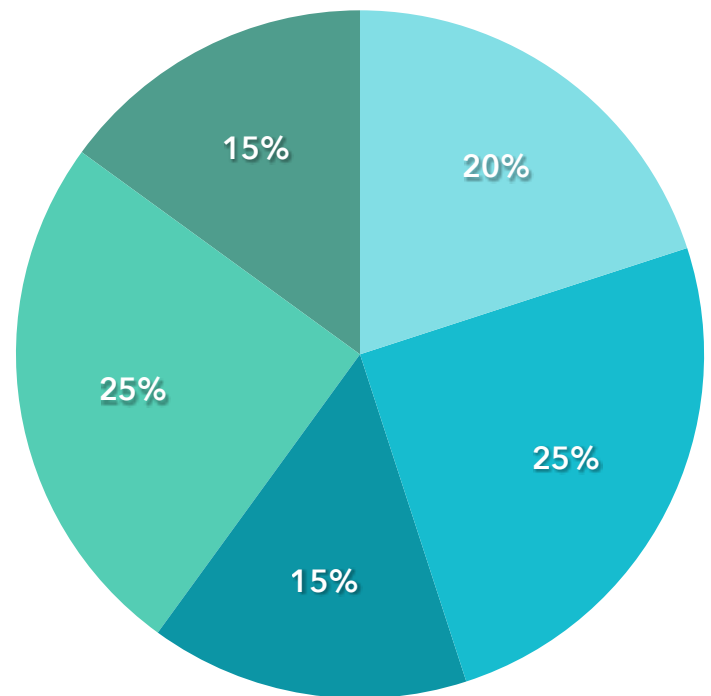
EXAMS

## Learning Outcomes

To be successful in this class you will

- Gain familiarity with biblical texts and the process by which they were written, copied, and interpreted
- Increase your ability to read historical texts through close reading and using the methods of “critical fabulation”
- Become conversant in contemporary debates about the relationship between Christianity, slavery, and racism and understand how these issues intersect with biblical interpretation
- Develop analytical and writing skills

- Essay 1
- Participation
- Reading Responses
- Essay 2
- Exam



## KEY DUE DATES & DEADLINES

ESSAY 1 is due on <x>

ESSAY 2 is due on <x>

There will be an EXAM on <x> date.

Essays should be submitted via <email/on the canvas site/in class>. They should be formatted in standard style (Times New Roman, 12pt, regular margins, double spaced).

## READINGS & RESOURCES

Candida Moss, *God’s Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Marking of the Bible* (New York: Little, Brown, 2024)

*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*

All other class materials are available through hyperlinks built into the syllabus or will be made available on the course website.

# CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading
Week 1	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Samuel O. Flores, "<a href="#">Teaching Ancient Slavery in the South</a>," SCS Blog November 23, 2018</li> <li>-Chance Bonar, "<a href="#">Dismantling the myth that ancient slavery 'wasn't that bad'.</a>" <i>The Conversation</i></li> <li>-Clarice J. Martin, "Womanist Interpretations of the New Testament: The Quest for Holistic and Inclusive Translation and Interpretation," in <i>I Found God</i>.</li> </ul>
Week 2	Slavery and the Hebrew Bible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Hagar: <a href="#">Genesis 16</a> and <a href="#">21:1-21</a></li> <li>-<a href="#">Exodus 21</a></li> <li>-Read <a href="#">AJR interview</a> with Nyasha Junior about her book <i>Reimagining Hagar</i></li> </ul>
Week 3	Ancient Mediterranean Slavery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Candida Moss, <i>God's Ghostwriters</i>, Introduction and Chapter 1 (hereafter GG)</li> <li>-Noel Lenski, "<a href="#">Slavery in the Roman Empire</a>," in <i>The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History</i>, ed. D. A. Pargas and J. Schiel. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023).</li> </ul>
Week 4	God's Ghostwriters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Romans <a href="#">16:22</a></li> <li>-GG, Chapter 2</li> </ul>
Week 5	Jesus the Enslaved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Luke 1:26-28; Philippians 2:6-11</li> <li>-GG, Chapter 3</li> <li>-Mitzi Smith, "Abolitionist Messiah: A Man Named Jesus Born of a Double," in <i>Bitter the Chastening Rod: Africana Interpretation after Stony the Road we trod in the Age of BLM, SayHerName, and MeToo</i>, ed. Smith, Parker, and Dunbar Hill (Fortress, 2022), 53-70.</li> </ul>

Date	Topic	Reading
Week 6	Where "Missionaries" and Human Traffickers Meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Josephus, <u>War of the Jews 6</u></li> <li>-Moss, GG, Chapter 4</li> <li>-Saidiya Hartman, "<u>Venus in Two Acts</u>," <i>Small Axe</i> 26 (2008): 1-14.</li> <li>-Watch Esau McCaulley, "<u>Finding Onesimus: Who has the Right to Speak to an Enslaved Person's Hope?</u>"</li> </ul>
Week 7	Copyists and Interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read Mark 13:19-23 and Mark 15:33-39</li> <li>-GG, Chapters 5 and 6</li> </ul>
Week 8	"Slaves of God" Enslavement and Christian Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Read: Romans 6:15-23</li> <li>-GG, Chapter 7</li> <li>-Angela Parker, "One Womanist's View of Racial Reconciliation in Galatians," <i>JFSR</i> 34.2 (2018): 23-40</li> </ul>
Week 9	Punishment, Violence, & the End of the World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Matthew 22:1-14</li> <li>-GG, Chapter 8</li> <li>-Christy Cobb, "Euclia's Story: Coordinated Sexual Assault, Violence, and Willfulness in the Acts of Andrew," in <i>Sex, Violence, and Early Christian Texts</i>, ed. Cobb and Vanden Eykel (Lanham: Lexington, 2022), 32-57.</li> <li>-Mark Letteney, "<u>Where, the Hell?</u>" <i>AJR</i></li> </ul>
Week 10	Bible and Atlantic Slavery 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read: Ephesian 6:5-7</li> <li>-Nicole Rae, "<u>How Christian Slaveholders Used the Bible to Justify Slavery</u>," <i>Time Magazine</i>.</li> <li>-Watch/Listen to Mark Noll, <u>Slavery and the Bible</u></li> </ul>

Date	Week	Reading
Week 11	Bible and Atlantic Slavery 2	Listen to Lisa Bowens discuss her book <i>African American Readings of Paul</i> on the <a href="#">On Script</a> podcast here. Read Ramon Tuason, " <a href="#">The Biblical Exodus in the Rhetoric of Martin Luther King</a> "
Week 12	Christianity, Slavery and Racism	Cain Hope Felder, <i>Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives</i> .(Fortress, 2023) ,1-14. Wongi Park, " <a href="#">The Blessing of Whiteness in the Curse of Ham: Reading Gen 9:18-21 in the Antebellum South</a> ," <i>Religions</i> 12.11(2021) -Javal Coleman, " <a href="#">Call It What It Is: Racism and Ancient Enslavement</a> ," SCS Blog, December 2021.

## RESPECT FOR OTHERS

This class deals with difficult issues that affect people’s lives, identities, religious beliefs, and experiences. We do not all experience this material in the same way but we will and should treat everyone in this class with respect and sensitivity. We will be generous in our engagement with others and patient when we encounter disagreement.

It is important that this class is an inclusive space for growth and learning for everyone. This involves actively listening to one another’s opinions. Many of the sources we are reading have been used to harm others and it is important to approach them both as historians (who acknowledge that they emerged in a different time and place) and as ethical people (who both recognize the harm caused by these texts and the fact that they have religious significance for some members of the group).

You are welcome to share your pronouns and/or preferred name at any time in the course.

## ATTENDANCE

It is important that you attend as much of the class as you can. Class is your opportunity to ask questions, interact with your peers, and deepen your understanding of the material. In a course like this one, where the subject matter is particularly sensitive, the support of your classroom community is also of great value for you in your learning journey. You will be expected to participate in discussion and exercise based portions of the class.

If you are sick please get in touch as soon as you are available. Similarly, if you fall behind or struggle with material please communicate this as soon as you are able. The sooner you get in touch with me the easier it is for me to assist you.

**Note:** You are permitted <x> unexcused absences. Subsequent absences will affect your overall grade

## LEARNING DISABILITY AND DIFFERENCE

If you are a student with a documented disability, I am happy to work with you to provide you with the accommodations that you need and help adapt course material. Please get in touch early about this.

For more information about how to document your needs and get support please contact: <information>

## GRADING RUBRIC

A 95-100%	C 74-76%
A- 90-94%	C- 70-73%
B+ 87-89%	D+ 67-69%
B 84-86%	D 64-66%
B- 80-83%	D- 60-63%
C+ 77-79%	F 0-59%

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (PLAGIARISM)

Plagiarism is when a writer presents the ideas, words, and work of others as their own. Given that much of this class deals with the theft of the ideas of others it would be especially ironic if you were to plagiarize here. For general guidance please consult the university's guidelines. Please don't plagiarize, please acknowledge the help you receive from others, and note that those "others" include AI tools like "ChatGPT" I, for example, received assistance in putting together this syllabus from Dr. Liane Feldman. See, that wasn't so hard.

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS

## ESSAYS (20% + 25%)

You will each write two X-Y page papers in this class. The prompts for the essay questions will be circulated in advance and can be found on the course website. Your papers should be 12pt font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides.

All papers should be submitted <on X/ via email> by 12:00 pm on the day that they are due. The grade of late papers will be penalized.

Assistance with writing essays can be found at the Writing Center. I highly recommend that you seek them out early in your writing process.

**Note:** If you need an extension on a paper please let me know as soon as possible.

## READING RESPONSES (15%)

You will be asked to write three 2 page reading responses. These responses will incorporate the historical and theoretical methods that we have been learning in class.

## CLASS PARTICIPATION(15%)

It is important to complete the reading ahead of time and arrive prepared to discuss it during class. You will be expected to participate in the discussion of the readings and subject matter that comes up during class.

Participation can take a variety of forms. Feel free to discuss this with your instructor.

## FINAL EXAM (25%)

There will be a final exam based on the materials that we have studied this term. You are responsible for being able to identify and define key terms as well as write some short essay style responses to questions that we have discussed during the course.