

*Classics/Art History/Religious Studies*  
***The Archaeology of Early Christianity***  
Spring 09: T/Th 10:50- 12:10  
New Hall 111

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***Course description:***

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to sources, methodologies, and current debates focusing on the material culture of early Christianity from the 1<sup>st</sup> century through the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. Topics will include the context of early Christianity; the archaeology of religion and ritual; the visual language of Christianity in private and public contexts; pilgrimage and creating sacred topographies and the role of architecture in the new religion. The first half of the course will focus on Palestine and Judaea while the second half will consider the manifestations of and variations in early Christian material culture in Rome and other parts of the Mediterranean basin.

**Requirements:**

***Exams: (25 % each of final grade)*** There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. Each exam includes two short response essays and one long essay. You will have a choice of essay questions in the long essay. These should be thoughtful, factual, and well argued essays. Your grade will be based on content, grammar, clarity and organization.

***In-class group work & writing assignments: (10% of final grade)*** These are designed to prepare you for exams and help you reflect on the material you are studying with your peers.

***Research paper: (25% of final grade)*** A research and writing assignment is required for the class. (You should aim for 8-10 pages.) It is hoped that each student will choose a topic of personal interest though a list of possible topics will be provided upon request. These are due April 17. You may choose to document your paper with footnotes, endnotes or MLA style, but you must be consistent throughout. Please provide a bibliography with your paper. We will discuss appropriate web resources in class.

***Seminar report: (15% of final grade)*** Each student is required to present an short (10-15) oral presentation in class on her/his research. These will be presented the last three days of the semester.

***Participation***

Students are expected to be prepared for class every day and to show evidence of this by listening to lecture and participating in class discussion. Many of our readings will be discussed in class as a whole or in smaller group settings so it is imperative that you complete the reading and actively contribute to class discussion.

***Attendance***

You are allowed three unexcused absences before your final grade will suffer. Each unexcused absence beyond three will result in a lowering of your final grade by a whole letter for each absence.

**Suggested Texts:**

J. McRay *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids 2008).  
R. Jensen *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York 2007).

For the historical and intellectual background to the period, you may also wish to have a look at Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, (Oxford/Cambridge MA, 1996) and/or Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (London, 1989).

**Reading assignments**

In addition to your textbook, you will also have reading assignments from scholarly articles and books. These readings will form the basis of class discussions and group work and will come from the following:

***Online articles and materials***

These will be accessible through electronic reserve through the library or the course homepage (through OnePort).

***Book reserves***

Assigned readings from books on reserve in the library are noted on the syllabus below.

**Websites:**

Here are just a few websites where you can find images and relevant links to the archaeology of Early Christianity.

<http://ntgateway.com/ancient/archaeol.htm>

<http://ntgateway.com/ancient/israel.htm>

<http://www.kchanson.com/PTJ/ptj.html> (images)

<http://www.bibleplaces.com/> (some images of Israel/Palestine)

<http://www.catacombe.roma.it/> (official website of catacombs)

**Daily Readings and Topics (subject to revision)**

**1/15 Introduction to Course**

**1/20 The Discipline of Archaeology and Historiography**

J. McRay *Archaeology and the New Testament*: Introduction

**1/22 Geography and setting: The Historical Geography, Demography, and Archaeology of the Holy Land**

Course homepage: "The Lands of the Bible" pp. 13-28 and 137-140 from *Oxford Bible Atlas* (Oxford 2007).

**1/27 Urban centers and context: Herod the Great, Jerusalem and Caesarea**

McRay Ch. 3: 91-102 and Ch. 4: 129-145.

**1/29 Excerpts from Frontline film: From Jesus to Christ : the first Christians /**

**2/3 Second Temple Judaism, Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls**

McRay : 65-72

Library Reserve: J. Magness *The archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids 2002) chapters 1 and 2.

**2/5 Galilee, Tiberias and Sepphoris**

Course homepage: "Galilee and the World of Jesus's Ministry," in J. Reed *Visual Guide to the New Testament* (New York 2007) pp. 54-77 and "Languages and Cultural Traditions," in R. Horsley *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee* (Valley Forge 1996) pp. 154-175

**2/10 Secular Society and the family**

Electronic Reserve: S. Guijarro "The Family in First-Century Galilee," pp.42-65 in *Constructing Early Christian Families* ed. H. Moxnes (London 1997).

**2/12 Evidence about Jesus**

McRay: 153-162 and 206-221

J. Magness "Has the tomb of Jesus been discovered?,": [www.sbl.site.org](http://www.sbl.site.org)

**2/17 Pre-Constantinian Christianity in the Holy Land**

Library Reserve: "Early Christianity and Society: A Jewish Legacy in the Pre-Constantinian Era," pp. 53-71 in W. Frend *Archaeology and History in the Study of Early Christianity* (London 1988).

**2/19 Creating holy space and place: Constantine's Holy Land**

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 1.22-48, 3.25-47 and Gregory of Nyssa, Letter on Pilgrimage: <http://www.ccel.org/fathers.html>

Electronic Reserve: R.A. Markus, "How on Earth Could Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2:3 (1994) 257-271 and "Jerusalem: The Contrasting Eyes of the Beholder," pp. 187-229 in H. Sivan *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem 2008).

**2/24 Pilgrimage: Journey and Relic**

Electronic reserve: R.L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (1992), pp. 108-122 and Cynthia Hahn, "Loca Sancta Souvenirs: Sealing the Pilgrim's Experience," in *Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. R. Ousterhout, Chicago, 1990.

**2/26 Dura-Europus: the Domus Ecclesiae and the Synagogue**

**3/3 Catch-up and Review**

**3/5 EXAM**

3/9-3/13 SPRING BREAK

*\*Readings for the second part of the course will be handed out prior to spring break.*

*Topics include:*

**Imperial Rome and the Rise of Christianity**

**The Catacombs and the Character of Early Christian Iconography**

**Salvational Imagery in Early Christian Art: Catacombs and Sarcophagi**

**The Technology of Ritual: Baptismal Rites and Architecture**

**Changing Faith: Rome in the Age of Constantine**

**Society and the Sacred in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries**

**Christian Topographies: Constantinople**

**Ravenna and the Age of Justinian**