

## **FWIS 184**

### **Rewriting Creation: The Secret Book of John**

Rice University, Fall 2014, MWF 1:00-1:50pm, KCK 107

#### **Instructor**

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#### **Office hours**

By appointment, weekdays.

#### **Course description**

Who created the world and humans? Did *they* do so accidentally, even malevolently? Was man created before woman or not? Did she tempt him or rather save him when they ate the fruit? Why were they cursed for eating it? Was Cain's father actually an evil angel? At the time of the flood, did God's angels seduce other women? In this course we will find out what some of the keenest interpreters of the book of Genesis had to say about such questions in the Apocryphon or Secret Book of John, an early Christian text in which the Bible is rewritten along with Plato's *Timaeus*. You will be doing plenty of writing yourselves as we reflect critically on the relationship between text, culture, and interpretation.

#### **FWIS learning objectives and additional course goals**

By taking this First-year Writing-Intensive Seminar, you will:

- Enhance your understanding of the central place of writing and communication in the learning process and in academic life.
- Learn strategies for analyzing, synthesizing, and responding to college-level readings.
- Improve your ability to communicate correctly and effectively in writing and in speech, taking into account audience and purpose.
- Become comfortable with writing as a process and learn strategies – such as prewriting, outlining, and revision – for working through that process.
- Learn appropriate use of the work of others and, where necessary, specific practices of citation.
- Learn to articulate oral arguments and to respond productively to arguments of others in formal presentations and in class discussion.
- Additionally you will become familiar with the content, time, and place of the main readings in this particular FWIS, namely selected books of the Bible, a Platonic dialogue, and ancient interpretation of them by early Christians.

#### **About the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication (CWOVC)**

Plan ahead and make appointments with the peer consultants at the Center for any of your assignments in this course, especially the three papers and the oral presentation. These consultants do not proofread or edit your work for you, but they will provide feedback on topics such as the organization of your paper or presentation, the coherence of your argument,

appropriate sentence structure, and grammatical errors. For more information and to schedule an appointment, visit the Center's website. See <http://cwovc.rice.edu>.

**Required texts to buy/rent:**

Coogan, Michael D., et al. eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford; multiple editions).  
Kalkavage, Peter, ed., *Plato's Timaeus* (Focus, 2001).

Other required readings are posted on Owlspace.

**Recommended texts:**

Booth, Wayne C., et al., *The Craft of Research* (Chicago; multiple editions).  
Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say* (Norton; multiple editions).  
Trimble, John R., *Writing with Style* (Prentice Hall; multiple editions).

**Course requirements and policies**

*1. Grade overview*

Attendance, preparation, and participation 20%

0-3 points/day

0 = absent

1 = was not prepared and (so) did not participate (meaningfully)

2 = prepared and participated partially

3 = prepared and participated fully

Major assignments

Three papers (4-5 pages each) 15%, 20%, 25%  
graded on scale below

Individual oral presentation (5 minutes) 10%  
graded on scale below

Minor assignments

Statement of interest and writing goals (1 page) 2%  
completed = full credit

Research and citation assignment (2 pages) 4%  
completed = full credit

Rhetorical style and mechanics assignment (2 pages) 4%  
completed = full credit

*2. Grading scale*

100-94 (A), 93-90 (A-), 89-87 (B+), 86-84 (B), 83-80 (B-), 79-77 (C+), 76-74 (C), 73-70 (C-),  
69-67 (D+), 66-64 (D), 63-60 (D-), 59-0 (F).

*3. Attendance.* "Students are expected to attend *all* scheduled activities for *all* of the classes for which they are registered during the entire course of the academic semester for which they are enrolled," according to university academic policies and procedures (emphasis added). See <http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=223&libID=243>.

*4. Absence.* "The university understands that students participating in university-sponsored extracurricular activities *may, on rare occasions,* need to miss a class session during the semester. As a matter of course, students should inform their instructors *in advance* of absences

resulting from participation in university-sponsored activities, and faculty normally will give a reasonable opportunity to make up work missed on such occasions ... Absences for activities other than university-sponsored events *may be negotiated* on an informal basis between the student and the faculty member,” again according to university academic policies and procedures (emphasis added). See <http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=223&libID=243>.

In case of rare absence due to university-sponsored extracurricular activities, please send me an email in advance. To negotiate any other absence, please do the same. At most, 3 total absences may be excused in either case.

5. *Deadlines and Late Work*. “No student should be given an extension of time or opportunities to improve a grade that are not available to all members of the class, *except for verified illness or justified absence* from campus,” according to university grading guidelines (emphasis added). See [http://professor.rice.edu/professor/grading\\_guidelines1.asp](http://professor.rice.edu/professor/grading_guidelines1.asp).

To verify an illness or justify another cause of absence (primarily medical or family emergency) please send me an email in advance if possible, and if not, then as soon as possible after the fact. At any rate, please do so before returning to class or turning in any work late.

Otherwise deadlines in this course are not flexible, and late work will not be accepted.

6. *Electronic devices in class*. Laptops and tablets are not prohibited, but of course you will only want to use them for the purposes of our class (it goes without saying that you won’t want to text or talk on your cellphone). Before using a laptop to take notes, consider the advantages of the traditional pen-and-paper method or its equivalent. See <http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/take-notes-by-hand-for-better-long-term-comprehension.html>.

7. *What to bring to class*. To facilitate and ground our discussion of the reading, please bring the required text/s with you to class.

8. *Seminar means discussion*. In keeping with FWIS learning objectives reflected in the very designation of the FWIS as a seminar rather than a lecture course, class will be a mix of lecture and discussion, with an emphasis on the second. This is also in keeping with my teaching philosophy: While I certainly lecture as appropriate, I see my role as a teacher to be not only delivering information but more importantly posing carefully informed questions as prompts for reflection, discussion, and knowledge application. I believe that the give-and-take of discussion and human interaction between instructor and student as well as between the students themselves is an essential part of learning that solitary study, as imperative as it is, simply cannot get at. I am keen to foster a critical exchange of ideas in the classroom and do not expect that my interpretations or conclusions will become those of my students.

9. *Reading*. Because all of the papers and many of the other assignments are based on these required texts, it’s imperative that you read them before you begin the writing process. And you’ll want to do that early. By all means, then, read ahead. Moreover you’ll find at least some rereading to be necessary as you write and revise your papers.

*10. Writing and revision.* Most any good writing process involves several steps, including prewriting (cataloguing and ranking your ideas), writing (articulating your ideas and their relation to one another), and rewriting or revising (re-arranging, adding to, and subtracting from what you have written). It takes time, in other words, and you should start soon enough for your papers to sit a while before they're due.

I expect you to have revised your papers already when you turn each of them in to me. Before the due date, you will have opportunities to revise in light of our regular class discussions of writing, the texts you will be writing about, and the progress of your papers. You will also have opportunities to revise in light of my email interventions, peer-review exercises, and the Q&A to follow your oral presentation. Additionally you are welcome to solicit individual feedback from me at any time (excepting the last two days before the due date); just make an appointment. And don't forget the consultants at the CWOVC.

After the due date of each paper, there will be no further opportunities for graded revision, with this exception: you may further revise one of your three papers and resubmit it M 12/1. To do so, make an appointment with me no later than W 11/26. At the appointment, have an action plan ready. I will give you feedback and offer additional suggestions for revision. The grade of the revised paper will not replace the original grade; the two will be averaged.

### **Honor code statement**

One of the purposes of FWIS is to help new students understand the Rice Honor Code and, more explicitly, to teach students the rules of paraphrasing and scholarly attribution as well as the appropriate uses of different types of evidence. Accordingly FWIS instructors will take an educational approach to transgressions of these rules and respond to errors in these areas foremost as issues for grading and opportunities for correction, rather than as instances of academic dishonesty. At the same time, all FWIS instructors retain the authority to treat instances of repeat or egregious violations as matters for the attention of the Rice Honor Council.

In this course, you are expected to do the actual writing of your assignments in your own words, with no help from anyone else. You are strongly encouraged, however, to collaborate on all other aspects of your coursework, which includes discussing the texts and assignments with your fellow students, reading each other's writing, and making suggestions for revision.

### **ADA statement**

If you have a documented disability and will be seeking academic adjustments or accommodations, please let me know during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain as confidential as possible. Students with disabilities will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Allen Center.

### **Add/Drop**

Because the registration process for FWIS is unique, I include the how-to link here:  
[http://registrar.rice.edu/fwis\\_reg/#how](http://registrar.rice.edu/fwis_reg/#how)

### **Proviso**

The information contained in this course syllabus, other than the absence policy, is subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

## Schedule

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### UNIT ONE

#### **M 8/25 First day of class**

*In class:* Course intro and overview

*After class:* Upload a statement of your interest and writing goals to OwlSpace by 11:55pm.

#### **W 8/27**

*Before class:* Read Coogan et al. 453-460 (Canons of the Bible) and 505-533 (Geography of the Bible, Cultural Contexts, Timeline, Chronological Table of Rulers).

*In class:* Some ancient history

#### **F 8/29**

*Before class:* Read Coogan et al. 460-505 (Textual Criticism, Translation of the Bible into English, Interpretation of the Bible, Contemporary Methods in Biblical Study).

*In class:* Biblical study in a nutshell

*After class:* **Start the first paper**

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### UNIT TWO

#### **M 9/1 Labor Day**

#### **W 9/3**

*In class:* About writing (argument and evidence)

#### **F 9/5**

*In class:* Discussion of Genesis 1-9 and the progress of your papers

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#### **M 9/8**

*In class:* Discussion of Genesis 1-9 and the progress of your papers

#### **W 9/10**

*In class:* Discussion of Genesis 1-9 and the progress of your papers

#### **F 9/12**

*In class:* Discussion of Genesis 1-9 and the progress of your papers

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### UNIT THREE

#### **M 9/15 First paper due at the beginning of class**

*In class:* About oral presentations

*After class:* **Start the second paper**

#### **W 9/17**

*In class:* More about writing (organization and flow)

#### **F 9/19**

*In class:* Discussion of Secret Book of John and the progress of your papers

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#### **M 9/22**

*In class:* Discussion of Secret Book of John and the progress of your papers

#### **W 9/24**

*In class:* Discussion of Secret Book of John and the progress of your papers

#### **F 9/26**

*In class:* Discussion of Secret Book of John and the progress of your papers

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**M 9/29**

*In class:* Discussion of Secret Book of John and the progress of your papers

**W 10/1**

*In class:* Individual oral presentations (with handout), followed by Q&A

**F 10/3**

*In class:* Individual oral presentations (with handout), followed by Q&A

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**UNIT FOUR**

**M 10/6 Second paper due at the beginning of class**

*In class:* More about writing (introductions and conclusions)

*After class:* **Start the third paper**

**W 10/8**

*In class:* Discussion of *Timaeus* and the progress of your papers

**F 10/10**

*In class:* Discussion of *Timaeus* and the progress of your papers

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**M 10/13 Midterm Recess**

**W 10/15**

*In class:* Discussion of *Timaeus* and the progress of your papers

**F 10/17**

*In class:* Discussion of *Timaeus* and the progress of your papers

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**M 10/20**

*In class:* Discussion of *Timaeus* and the progress of your papers

**W 10/22**

*In class:* Discussion of *Timaeus* and the progress of your papers

**F 10/24**

*In class:* Discussion of Gospel and Letters of John and the progress of your papers

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**M 10/27**

*In class:* Discussion of Gospel and Letters of John and the progress of your papers

**W 10/29**

*In class:* Discussion of Gospel and Letters of John and the progress of your papers

**F 10/31**

*In class:* Discussion of Gospel and Letters of John and the progress of your papers

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**M 11/3**

*In class:* Discussion of Gospel and Letters of John and the progress of your papers

**W 11/5**

*In class:* Individual oral presentations (with handout), followed by Q&A

**F 11/7**

*In class:* Individual oral presentations (with handout), followed by Q&A

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**UNIT FIVE**

**M 11/10 Third paper due at the beginning of class**

*In class:* About research

*After class:* **Start the research and citation assignment**

**W 11/12**

*Before class:* Read Booth et al. 188-199 (Owlspace).

*In class:* About summary, paraphrase, quotation, citation, and the problem of plagiarism

**F 11/14**

*Before class:* Read Graff & Birkenstein 55-67 (Owlspace).

*In class:* Some ways of engaging other researchers and their ideas

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**M 11/17 Research and citation assignment due at the beginning of class**

*In class:* Reports and reflection on the assignment

**W 11/19**

*In class:* My research processes

**F 11/21 No class (annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature)**

[*Outside class:* Further revise one paper]

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**M 11/24 No class (annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature)**

[*Outside class:* Further revise one paper]

**W 11/26** I'll be available to discuss the further revised paper

[*Outside class:* Further revise one paper]

**F 11/28 Thanksgiving Recess**

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**M 12/1 [Further revised paper due at the beginning of class]**

*Before class:* Read Trimble 64-93 (Owlspace)

*In class:* On rhetorical style and mechanics

*After class:* Start the rhetorical style and mechanics assignment

**W 12/3 Rhetorical style and mechanics assignment due at the beginning of class**

*In class:* Reports and reflection on the assignment

**F 12/5 Last day of class**

*In class:* Discussion of transferring skills; wrap-up

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[12/6-9 Study days]

[12/10-17 Finals]

## Assignment instructions for FWIS 184: Rewriting Creation

### MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

#### First paper

- Read through the prompts so that you have them in mind.
- Read:

--Coogan et al. 3-7 HB (Intro to the Pentateuch)

--Coogan et al. 9-23 HB (Genesis chs. 1-9 with intro)

- As you read, consider what you want to write about. It can be based on the prompts or else something you come up with yourself from the reading (be sure to get my approval). Jot down your ideas. Start drafting.
- The aspect of writing that we are focusing on here, and according to which your paper will be graded, is: argument and evidence. Do you make an argument? How clear is it? Do you have supporting evidence? How sufficient is it?

#### Second paper

- Read through the prompts so that you have them in mind.
- Read:

--Meyer 103-132 (Owlspace);

--Meyer 784-789 (Owlspace) is optional, though recommended.

- As you read, consider what you want to write about. It can be based the prompts or else something you come up with yourself from the reading (be sure to get my approval). Jot down your ideas. Start drafting.
- The aspect of writing that we are focusing on here is: organization and flow. Is there a conscious sequence to the order of elements in your paper? Is it intuitive? Do you use topic sentences or other appropriate sign posts such as headings in order to guide your reader?

#### Third paper

- Read through the prompts so that you have them in mind.
- For the *Timaeus*, read:

--Kalkavage ix-x (Preface);

--Kalkavage 47-132 (Timaeus);

--Kalkavage 1-46 (Intro Essay) is optional, though recommended;

--Kalkavage 133-147 (Glossary) and 148-159 (Appendices) are useful references.

- Then for the Gospel and Letters of John, read:

--Coogan et al. 3-6 NT (Intro to the Gospels);  
--Coogan et al. 146-182 NT (Gospel of John with intro);  
--Coogan et al. 406-416 NT (1-3 John with intros).

- As you read, consider what you want to write about. It can be based on the prompts or else something you come up with yourself from the reading (be sure to get my approval). Jot down your ideas. Start drafting.
- The aspect of writing that we are focusing on here is: introductions and conclusions. Do you have a formal opening? How well does it prepare the reader for what follows and interest the reader in what you have to say? Do you have a formal closing? Does it go further than just reiteration?

### **Individual oral presentation**

- Prepare a 5-minute oral presentation of your second or third paper.
- This includes a 1-page handout to distribute in class, but otherwise no visuals.
- You won't have time to read your full paper, so decide what to showcase, adapting sections of what you have written there.
- For yourself, consider whether you want a set of talking points or a complete script.
- Either way, rehearse your presentation more than once, and be sure that it comes in at right around 5 minutes.
- Anticipate questions.

### **MINOR ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **Statement of writing goals**

- In 1 page, state your interest in this course and your writing goals for the semester.
- Upload your file to Owlspace.

#### **Research and citation assignment**

- Using the library catalog, find a single published book, chapter, or journal article that deals as directly as possible with the topic of one of your three papers.
- Access that publication in print on the stacks or electronically and read it (in the case of a book, select one chapter).
- In 2 pages, summarize, paraphrase, and/or quote the publication where necessary as you describe how you could interact with it, that is, the author, in a revision of your paper. Does the author support or challenge your claims? What is your response? Where would you revise your paper, and how?
- To cite the publication, use footnote citation, according to the Chicago Manual of Style (ch.14), which can be accessed in print on the stacks or electronically. See <http://library.rice.edu/collections/eresources/chicago-manual-of-style>

- At the end of your document, type-up a bibliographic entry for the publication, according to the Chicago Manual of Style (ch.14).
- Finally look into Zotero. Consider taking a short course on either in the Digital Media Commons sometime. See <http://library.rice.edu/services/dmc/services/short-courses>

### **Rhetorical style and mechanics assignment**

- Reread your three papers and ask yourself: What about my writing does or does not make it enjoyable to read? Do I vary the length of my sentences? Do I choose appropriate words? Do I repeat certain words or phrases (too often)? How is the tone of my writing (e.g. serious or impersonal, playful or flippant, critical or antagonistic)? Do I make any common mistakes in spelling, punctuation, or grammar? Are they plainly mistakes?
- In 2 pages, answer the questions, justifying as much of your language usage as you want.