HUMA 3422 Interpreting the New Testament II

**Mar. 19:  The Gospel of John**  
Read for today’s class: Ehrman, ch. 11–12; Gospel of John; 1, 2, 3 John  
Assignment: the Gospel of John has been labeled the most anti-Semitic of the NT gospels. Do you think this is true? Is the Gospel of John anti-Semitic? Be sure to note in your answer which particular material from the gospel could be considered anti-Semitic.  
Online resources: Part of our discussion today will focus on the identity of the enigmatically named “Beloved Disciple.” For an introduction to the issue of the gospel author’s identity, read this [Wikipedia article](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disciple_whom_Jesus_loved).

1. Jesus in the Gospel of John (discussion)

2. The Christology of John

* the Greek word logos means “word,” “reason,” or “plan”
* in Greek philosophy and theology, the Logos was the divine reason implicit/immanent in the cosmos, ordering it and giving it form and meaning; first used by Heraclitus (ca. 540-480 BCE) who explained transformation in nature as the product of *logos*, or reason
* overlaps with the Jewish view of Wisdom (Proverbs 8:22-31)
* in later Wisdom literature, the attainment of wisdom is equated with the attainment of life: “The beginning of wisdom is the most sincere desire for instruction, and concern for instruction is love of her, and love of her is the keeping of her laws, and giving heed to her laws is assurance of immortality, and immortality brings one near to God; so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom” (*Wisdom of Solomon* 6:17-20)
* Jews identified Lady Wisdom with the word of God contained within the Torah: “She is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endures for ever. All who hold her fast will live, and those who forsake her will die. Turn, O Jacob, and take her; walk toward the shining of her light. Do not give your glory to another, or your advantages to an alien people. Happy are we, O Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God” (*Baruch* 4:1-4)
* Philo of Alexandria: taught that the logos was the intermediary between God and the cosmos, being both the agent of creation and the agent through which the human mind can apprehend and comprehend God

3. The Gospel of John: A Literary History

* “seams” in the text indicate where different source materials have been joined together
* Hymn to Christ (1:1-18) change in style from hymn to rest of gospel
* Jesus performs first sign in Cana (2:11)🡺 2:23 mentions “signs Jesus was doing”🡺in ch. 4 he does his “second sign”
* in 2:23 Jesus is in Jerusalem, capital of Judea; while there he speaks with Nicodemus; then the text says: “after this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea” (3:22)
* 5:1 Jesus is in Judea; after the chapter ends the text says “Jesus went to the other side of the sea of Galilee” (6:1) but he is not only not on the other side of the sea, he’s nowhere near the sea of Galilee
* the different sources used by John indicate different stages in the life of the author’s community
* 1. The Signs Gospel: text that described the signs of Jesus, written to persuade other Jews that he was the messiah, the Son of God; this text had at least seven, perhaps eight, signs; may have ended with the summary of 20:30-31 (“Now Jesus did may other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But those are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name”)
* 2. The Passion Narrative: story of Jesus’ trial, death, and resurrection, along with other materials added to the Signs Gospel as the community experienced rejection by their fellow Jews and were kicked out of the synagogues; much of this material reflects conflict between the Jesus community and “the Jews”
* 3. The Discourse Material: sayings which divide the marginalized Jesus community (us: the light) from their persecutors (them: the darkness); see change also in the divinity of Jesus; God and Jesus start to be identified as one entity; path of salvation is no longer the synagogue or the temple but belief in Jesus himself

4. Who Wrote John?

* the “Beloved Disciple”:
  + first mentioned at the last supper (13:21-25)
  + helps Peter get entry into the courtyard where Jesus is being tried (18:15-18)
  + Jesus commands him to take care of Mary (19:25-27)
  + he and Peter “race” to the empty tomb (20:1-10)
  + he is said to be the “author” of the gospel (21:21-23)

5. Text-Criticism and the Gospel of John

* “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, because salvation comes from the Jews” (John 4:22)
* the invalid at the pool (John 5:2-9); what does it mean “when the water is troubled”?
* the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:12

6. Letters of John

A. Date and Authorship

* 1 John anonymous, 2 and 3 John written by “the elder”
* by late second century determined author of 1 John is the apostle John, author of the Fourth Gospel; eventually “the Elder” also identified with John
* 2 and 3 John follow typical epistolary structure (and length), but 1 John is more accurately a treatise
* stylistic similarities suggest same author for all three
* perhaps same community as the gospel but at some development
* 1 John found early acceptance among Christians but 2 and 3 John continued to be debated into the 4th century

B. Text Critical Issues

* Erasmus (1469-1536) and the Greek New Testament (first published in 1516)
* the *Comma Johanneum* (1 John 5:7-8): “There are three that testify in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth: the spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree” (KJV); “There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree” (NRSV)
* 1 John 2:23: “No one who denies the Son has the Father” (KJV); “No one who denies the Son has the Father; everyone who confesses the Son has the Father also” (NRSV)

