

APPENDIX 1

M.E. Stortz, excerpt from syllabus for HS 1102, Fall, 2004:

Schedule of Lectures, Readings, and Assignments:

WEEK 1:

Thursday 9/9 Introduction: Why History Matters to the Present?
Readings:
Gonzalez, chapters 1,2
Bondi, chapters 1-3

Image: Show a clip of various images of Jesus from past films: Pasolini, Scorsese, Arcand, and Gibson.

Notes on content: In this first class, I want to show students that the study of history is both a window to the past, but also a mirror to the present. We can expect two shocks: a shock of recognition, as we see ourselves in these ancient figures and controversies, but also a shock of alienation, as we let the strangeness of the past seep into our bones. What we can expect to experience is that strange distancing that happens whenever I look into a store window to see what's there – and catch a glimpse of myself looking. The window/mirror effect, delivering these two simultaneous shocks to the system, happens with any historical study, but particularly the history of a tradition which claims us.

Notes on pedagogy: I will ask students to write on a piece of paper why this tradition claims them. They will then share this with the person next to them, then share in pairs. I will then have students introduce the person they initially shared with. I want to signal to students that the diversity they experience among themselves will be replicated in the material they study. We will all be claimed by the texts in different ways, just as these communities were claimed by their faith in different ways. Should I assign gospels to each student?

WEEK 2:

Monday 9/13 A Triptych of Earliest Christianity
Thursday 9/16 Earliest Portraits of Jesus: Discussion
Readings:
Mt. 1; Mark 1; Luke 1; John 1
Gonzalez, chapters 3,4
Bondi, chapters 4-6

Question: Approach the first chapters of the four Gospels as an archaeologist. Choose a gospel and answer the following question: What is the portrait of Jesus that emerges? You are a member of the community that came up with this portrait; make a case for your portrait.

PAPER DUE ON GOSPELS.

Image: DVD of the Lindisfarne Gospels, showing the major evangelists and their carpet pages. They are all writing, being dictated by their symbolic animal – save John who stares out at the audience.

Notes on content: The material explores very different images of Jesus that emerged from Palestinian-Jewish, Hellenistic-Jewish, and Hellenistic-Gentile Christianities. The lecture tries to tie these to respective images of sin (what is wrong with the world?) and soteriology (what is needed to fix it?). Just using the world “Christianities” will be jarring to some of these students. The assignment compounds this sense of diversity by making them focus on four very different images of Jesus presented in the canonical Gospels, a fact they must wrestle with in their assignment.

Notes on pedagogy: The students will have in memory film clips from the prior week, as well as the visual images from the Lindisfarne Gospels – they are arresting and exotic. I want them to focus on three questions: what do you think is wrong with the world? What or who is needed to fix it up? What is your image of Jesus?

Finally, I want students to wrestle with that.

It may be too early in the class to deal with one's own image of Jesus directly, but at least we can discuss the assignments. In the second class, I will group people according to the evangelist on whom they wrote, asking each group to make a case for their evangelist's portrait of Jesus. Each group will then present their case. End class with the question: who do you and your community think Jesus is? How does that reflect their own understandings of sin and soteriology?