

Jesus: Sage, Savior, Superstar RLGS 300
Alfred University Fall 2009

Class meetings:

TuTh 3:20-5:10 p.m., 104 Kanakadea Hall

Professor: Wakoh Shannon Hickey, Ph.D.

Office hours: Tue. 10:30-11:30 a.m.; Wed. 3-4 p.m.; Thu. 11:15 a.m.-noon; or by appointment, 2nd floor, Kanakadea Hall

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OVERVIEW

In this seminar course we will examine a variety of ways that people have understood Jesus and his teachings. We will consider the four Biblical Gospels, Gospels that were not included in the Bible, Jewish and Buddhist perspectives, and representations of Jesus in popular culture. Prerequisite: at least one course in Philosophy or Religious Studies, or permission of instructor.

The first half of the course will begin with an historical overview of the early Christian church; then we will examine the four Gospels included in the Christian New Testament; then the Dalai Lama's Buddhist interpretation of key Gospel passages. This segment will conclude with a take-home midterm exam. In the second half of the course, we will consider Jesus in his first-century Jewish context, a variety of non-canonical Gospels (e.g., Peter, Thomas, the Ebionites, Mary); the Apostle Paul and the rise of Christian orthodoxy; and Jesus in popular American culture. Students will present a pop-culture representation of Jesus and a final reflection paper. Throughout the course, students will also take turns presenting gospel texts to their classmates, and chapter summaries of secondary sources.

Note: This course requires about 100 pages of careful reading and note-taking per week. We will cover quite a bit of fairly dense material, fast. Before you decide whether to take this course, please consider carefully whether you are willing to do this work. If you are, you will develop skills that will serve you well in college and after, and you will learn a LOT.

Methods

The course will draw upon both primary and secondary literature, and will employ: video, discussion, writing assignments, a midterm exam, a creative assignment, and a final reflection paper. In each class meeting, students will be asked to show their notes on the assigned reading for the day, to demonstrate that they are prepared for the day's discussion.

CRITERIA FOR STUDENTS RECEIVING LETTER GRADES

- A take-home midterm exam, worth 20 percent of final grade.
- An in-class presentation of either your own artistic representation of Jesus or a pop-culture depiction of Jesus, worth 10 percent of final grade.
- A final reflection paper accompanied by an in-class presentation, worth 20 percent of final grade.

- Preparation and participation in class meetings, 50 percent of final grade. This element includes attending class, keeping up with the weekly readings and taking notes, participating actively in class discussions, and taking turns preparing summary handouts and proposing questions for class discussions. (The number of turns each student takes will depend upon the number of students in class, probably 4 or 5 turns.) Participation may also include bringing to class news or other items related to the materials we study, to share with classmates. Because participation is, in part, a subjective assessment, the instructor reserves the right to raise or lower your participation grade by one or two increments based on her sense of your engagement in and contributions to the class (e.g., from a B to a B- or C+, or from a B to a B+ or A-).

The midterm and final exams will be graded on a 100-point scale; other assignments will be graded on a 10-point scale, as follows.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D
96-100	91-95	86-90	81-85	76-80	71-75	66-70	61-65	56-60	51-55
10	9.5	9	8.5	8	7.5	7	6.5	6	5.5

COURSE POLICIES

Disabilities and Learning Differences: If you have a learning difference or a disability and need an accommodation to help you succeed in class, please let the professor know right away. All such information will be treated as confidential.

Religious Concerns: Students who need to miss class in order to participate in the religious observances of their own traditions may do so, but they must make arrangements with the professor *in advance* to make up any required work.

Athletes: Students who must miss class to participate in athletic events must notify the professor at the beginning of the semester *and* verbally or by e-mail at least one week before each class to be missed. You must make arrangements to submit assignments timely.

Academic or Other Difficulties: If you are having academic or other difficulties that affect your ability to do your work, and/or need information about support services available on campus, please see the professor right away. She will help you find appropriate resources on campus. Unfortunately, tutoring is not available for this class because it is a new course, but the instructor is very happy to help if you are having difficulty. *Ask early; don't wait.*

Lateness and Absences: You are expected to arrive in class on time and attend all class meetings. If unforeseen circumstances will make you late, please make every effort notify the professor *before* class, or ask a fellow student to do so.

If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, you must sing a song to the class. (But if you love to sing and keep showing up late in order to do so, you will erode your participation grade.) ☺

After the first week of class, you will be allowed *four* unexcused absences. For those four absences, you will not receive attendance points, but you will not be otherwise penalized. After that, each unexcused absence will *lower* your participation score by one point. If you know in advance that you must miss a class, notify the professor by phone or e-mail *before* you miss it. (For non-emergencies, please give 48 hours notice.) Prearranged absences will not affect your grade, unless you fail to inform yourself about class discussions and complete the assigned work timely.

You may make special arrangements with the instructor for the midterm if you expect to be away for an athletic event that day. Other assignment deadlines are firm, except in cases of illness or family emergency.

Illness: Given concerns about possible flu outbreaks, and out of respect for yourself and your classmates, *please do not come to class if you are ill*. Notify the professor by e-mail the night before class, or as early as possible before class. Prolonged illness (more than a week) may require verification from your doctor. These absences may be excused *if you communicate with the professor in advance of your absence*. Otherwise, your absence will be treated as unexcused.

Mobile Phones and Pagers: Turn them OFF before class begins. If you send text messages during class, the professor will collect and hold your phone until the end of class.

Reading Schedule: You should complete the assigned readings *before* we begin discussing them in class. Use online resources associated with the text to help you study. Check out recommended internet sites as your schedule and interests permit. *You are expected to spend 8-12 hours per week studying for this class*.

Conduct/Misconduct: The classroom must be a safe environment for everyone in the course. Participants hold a wide variety of religious, moral, and political beliefs. In both the academy and the world at large, our ability to learn and live together peacefully depends upon our ability to engage in respectful discussions about our differences. Therefore, insulting remarks about other's religious/moral/political beliefs or practices *will not be tolerated*. You are welcome, even encouraged, to question and disagree with the professor and one another, but you are expected to do so in a civil manner. If you cannot, you will be asked to leave the classroom, and you may be subject to other disciplinary action.

Because personal integrity is fundamental to both good scholarship and to good citizenship, you are also expected to uphold the university's standards for academic and personal integrity. You committed to doing so when you entered AU. Cheating, plagiarism, or harassment of any kind *will not be tolerated*. Violations of the student honor code will result in disciplinary action ranging from a failing grade on an assignment to a failing grade in the class. If you commit two serious violations during your career at AU, you will be expelled from the university. *You are expected to inform yourself about and abide by school policies regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, and harassment*. If you have questions about these policies, ask the professor right away.

Alfred's Student Code of Conduct may be viewed here:

http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/student_policies.code_of_conduct_0708.cfm

Alfred's policy on academic dishonesty is available in the Course Documents section of BlackBoard, and may also be viewed here:

http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/academic_policies.academic_regulation ug#700

Other campus policies and resources can be found here:

<http://my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/policies.menu.cfm>

TEXTS

Required:

Complete Gospels, Revised and Expanded

Author(s): Miller, Robert J.

ISBN: 0-944344-49-6

Edition / Copyright: 95 - Current Edition

Publisher: Polebridge Press

Book Type: Paperback, \$10-32

The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus

Author(s): Levine, Amy-Jill

ISBN: 0-06-113778-2

Edition / Copyright: 06 - Current Edition

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers

Book Type: Paperback, 256 pp., \$5-14

The Good Heart: A Buddhist Perspective on the Teachings of Jesus

Author(s): Dalai Lama / Kiely, Robert (Ed.)

ISBN: 0-86171-138-6

Edition / Copyright: 96 - Current Edition

Publisher: Perseus Distribution

Book Type: Paperback, 224 pp., \$1-15

Lost Christianities: Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew

Author(s): Ehrman, Bart D.

ISBN: 0-19-518249-9

Edition / Copyright: 03 - Current Edition

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Book Type: Paperback, 320 pp., \$10-20

American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon

Author(s): Prothero, Stephen

ISBN: 0-374-52956-6

Edition / Copyright: 03 - Current Edition

Publisher: MPS

Book Type: Paperback, 376 pp., \$6-15

Recommended:

Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal

Author(s): Moore, Christopher

ISBN: 0-380-81381-5

Edition / Copyright: 03 - Current Edition

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers

Book Type: Paperback, 444 pp.

\$5-14

INSTRUCTOR'S GOALS FOR COURSE:

To:

- Encourage students to reflect on how a person's social location affects his/her religious perspective.
- Introduce a variety of perspectives on Jesus, including primary texts in their historical contexts; secondary scholarly analyses of primary materials; films; and material objects.
- Introduce key events and people in early Christian history.
- Encourage students to analyze course materials critically and to make their own assessment of Jesus' life and teachings.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Produce summaries of primary texts or chapters of secondary sources, outlining key points and offering questions for in-class discussion.
- Define the Two-Source Theory of the Synoptic Gospels.
- Describe the presumed authors, the intended audiences, and the portrayals of Jesus found in each of the four canonical Gospels and several non-canonical Gospels.
- Analyze a Gospel story or parable by considering at least three interpretations of it by authors representing diverse readings, and making a case for one's own interpretation.
- Describe key events in early Christian history (until the time of Constantine).
- Describe how Jesus has been represented in American culture by different groups and in different historical periods.
- Design and/or analyze a material object representing Jesus, and present it in class.
- Produce a final paper reflecting on course content and reaching one's own conclusions about Jesus' life and teaching

Date		Topic	Read/Do for next class	Presenters
Week 1 Aug. 25	Tue	Introductions, syllabus	Summarize Ac. Dishonesty policy, 1 page. <i>Complete Gospels: Intro.</i> , begin Mark	
27	Thu	Ac. Dishonesty summary due. "From Jesus to Christ"	Finish Mark, Start Q	
Week 2 Sept. 1	Tue	Film: "From Jesus to Christ"	Finish Q	
3	Thu	Film: "From Jesus to Christ"	Prepare to discuss Mark & Q, start Matthew	
Week 3 Sept. 8	Tue	Mark, Q, Two-Source Theory	Finish Matthew, prepare to discuss. Gospel of Nazoreans, <i>Complete Gospels</i> 441-446	
10	Thu	Matthew	Read Luke-Acts, prepare to discuss it	
Week 4 Sept. 15	Tue	Luke-Acts	Read John, prepare to discuss it	
17	Thu	John	<i>The Good Heart</i> Intro, Ch. 1, Contexts (1-44, 131-192)	
Week 5 Sept. 22	Tue	Library Session	<i>The Good Heart</i> (your chapter)	
24	Thu	Basic Buddhism	<i>Prepare to present your assigned chapter</i>	
Week 6 Sept. 29	Tue	The Good Heart	Work on Midterm	
Oct. 1	Thu	The Good Heart	Work on Midterm	
Week 7 Oct. 6	Tue	Discuss midterm	Revise midterm	
8	Thu	Film, Midterm Due	Begin <i>Misunderstood Jew</i>	
Week 8 Oct. 13	Tue	BREAK	<i>Misunderstood Jew</i>	

Oct. 15	Thu	Misunderstood Jew 1-3	Misunderstood Jew	
Week 9 Oct. 20	Tue	Misunderstood Jew 4-6	<i>Lost Xnties</i> Intro, Ch. 1 (1-28); Gospel of Peter, C.G. 397-407;	
22	Thu	Finish Misunderstood Jew, Gospel of Peter, Paul	<i>Lost Xnties</i> Ch. 2 Paul & Thecla (29-46); Acts of Paul & Thecla; Galatians	
Week 10 Oct. 27	Tue	Acts of Paul & Thecla, Galatians	<i>Lost Xnties</i> Chs. 3 (Thomas) and 6 (Gnosticism); <i>Complete Gospels</i> 301-331	
29	Thu	Gospel of Thomas, Gnosticism	<i>Lost Xnties</i> 4 (Secret Mark), <i>Complete Gospels</i> 408-412; <i>Lost Xnties</i> 5 (Marcionites & Ebionites) C.G. 435-440	
Week 11 Nov. 3	Tue	Secret Mark, Ebionites & Marcionites	<i>Complete Gospels</i> 357-396: Gospel of Mary, Infancy Gospels of Thos & James	
5	Thu	Gospel of Mary, Infancy Gospels	<i>Lost Xnties</i> 7, 8, 9	
Week 12 Nov. 10	Tue	Class meets without Professor	Lost Xnties 10, 11, 12	
12	Thu	Proto-Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy	Prepare Jesus in Pop Culture Presentation	
Week 13 Nov. 17	Tue	Jesus in Pop Culture	<i>American Jesus</i> Intro, Chs. 1-3	
19	Thu	American Jesus	American Jesus Chs. 4-6	
Week 14 Nov. 24	Tue	American Jesus	<i>American Jesus</i> Chs. 7-8, Conclusion, Timeline	
26	Thu	THANKSGIVING		
Week 15 Dec. 1	Tue	American Jesus	Prepare report on final paper	
3	Thu	Reports on Final Papers, evaluations		