Religion 290: Jesus in Tradition and History
Tuesdays / Thursdays 1:30-2:45    OM 04
Dr. C.D. Elledge, Professor
933-6295
celledge@gustavus.edu
Office Hours: MWF 11:30-1:20, 2:30-4:00 and by appointment
This syllabus is available online at www.gustavus.edu/~celledge/Rel-290.htm
Email the class:  s-rel-290-001@gustavus.edu

(Jesus with Mary and John the Baptist; Mosaic in Hagia Sophia, 12th century; general use)

Description
An investigation of the life and mission of Jesus in the ancient historical context of first century Palestine. Extensive consideration will be devoted to the life of Jesus as portrayed in the New Testament and other ancient writings, and to the modern critical Quest(s) of the Historical Jesus from their origins to the present. Special topics sessions also include: Jesus within Judaism; Jesus and the politics of his day; the theology and ethics of Jesus; Jesus among ancient sages, prophets, and miracle workers; and related topics. Students should leave the course with a more comprehensive understanding of the historical, theological, and contemporary issues at stake in contemporary Jesus Research. Evaluation is based upon class presentation, writing, and examination. (HIPHI)

Objectives
This course has been designed with the following goals in view:
– to provide a comprehensive study of the life, message, and activity of Jesus within his own ancient historical context in first century Palestine.
– to initiate the participants of the course into the intermediate level of Gospel criticism, which will allow for a more sophisticated conception of Jesus as he appears in the earliest written testimonies to his life and mission.
– to read the most significant contributions to the Historical Jesus movement(s), from its origins to the present.
– to begin forming one’s own synthesis regarding the life and teachings of Jesus.

Evaluation
– Class Participation (20%): Students will be responsible for reading the assigned texts prior to the scheduled class day. They will also be responsible for commenting upon the assigned texts, asking critical questions, and completing in class exercises. This includes completion of the Topical Commentary assignment, explained on the first day of class.
– Special Presentations (20%): Students will complete and present before their peers one of the special topics Reports listed in the syllabus. The presentation will include: a) a ten-minute in class presentation; b) a five-page written report that summarizes the topic; c) addressing student (and instructor) questions regarding the topic of the presentation.
– Papers (40%): Students will compose one five-page Position Paper on a particular topic (for options, see below). The paper must critically utilize all relevant materials covered in the course, as it makes its claims. These may include material from the NT and apocryphal gospels, other ancient writings, and contemporary models of Historical Jesus Research. The due dates and topics of these papers are clearly listed on the syllabus.
– Final Examination (20%): A written examination (open resource), primarily in essay format, will judge students’ abilities to think in disciplined and creative ways, regarding the life of Jesus.

Absences
More than three absences from the course will affect grading.

Academic Honesty
The following code will be written and signed on every examination and graded paper: “On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others’ use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.” All written work is to be completed independently, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. Using the ideas and/or words of another writer and representing them as your own may constitute plagiarism. It is your responsibility to give credit to those whose ideas and language you utilize when you write.

Disability Services
“Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) work together to ensure ‘reasonable accommodation’ and non-discrimination for students with disabilities in higher education. A student who has a physical, psychiatric / emotional, medical, learning, or attentional disability that may have an effect on the student’s ability to complete assigned course work should contact the Disability Services Coordinator in the Advising Center, who will review the concerns and decide with the student what accommodations are necessary.”

Presentation Schedule: Click here to view your individual presentation topics and the dates when they are due.

Required Texts
Dawes, Gregory W., ed. The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History. Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 2000. [An anthology of some of the most important statements about the Historical Jesus]
Elledge, C.D. The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005. [A brief introduction to Qumran, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, and their significance for Jesus research]
A Bible with Apocrypha is required for the course and should be brought to all regular meetings of the class. Links to web resources are clearly indicated on the syllabus.

I. The Ancient Evidence for Jesus:
What is our early evidence for Jesus, both within and beyond the New Testament?

Feb 12
Introduction to the Course
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 1-12

Feb 14
Selection of Presentation Topics
Selection of Topical Commentary Topics
Selection of Position Paper Topics

The Ancient Evidence for Jesus: A Panoramic View
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 122-32, 135-51

Feb 19
Mark: Our Earliest Written Gospel
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 37-57

Feb 21
The Two-Source Gospel Hypothesis
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 13-36
1. Report: Mark and the “Messianic Secret” (Christine)

Feb 26
Matthew: Jesus, the Culmination of the Torah
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 58-78
2. Report: Matthew’s Portrayal of the Pharisees (Allison)

Feb 28
Luke: Jesus, the Prophet of Israel
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 79-96

Mar 4
The Q Source (link)
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 18-26

Mar 6
The Gospel of John
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 97-121

Mar 11
Gospel of Thomas
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 122-139; The Fifth Gospel (all)
5. Report: Some Authentic Sayings of Jesus in Thomas (Drew)

Mar 13
Other NT Apocrypha
Readings: Gospel of Peter (link); Infancy Gospel of Thomas (link)

Mar 18
Greco-Roman Testimonia and Jewish Sources
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 140-151
6. Report: Josephus on Jesus, James, and John the Baptist (Nick)

Please attend the lecture, “Discovering the Lost Tomb of Herod the Great” (Ehud Netzer, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) in Wallenberg Auditorium at 7:30pm.

Mar 20
***** Topical Commentary Due
Weighing the Evidence
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 164-177, 292-299

March 21-30
II. The World that Jesus Lived In: What is our evidence for understanding Palestine during the time of Jesus?

Apr 1
Jesus and His Contemporaries: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Fourth Philosophy, Sicarii, Zealots, John the Baptist, Miscellaneous Holy Men, Prophets, and Royal Pretenders
Readings: Josephus on the Jewish Sects (War book II chapter 8) (link); Gospels and Jesus, 178-189, 255-268; Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, 33-54
7.Report: What was the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist? (Mark)
8.Report: Who was Judas the Galilean? (Jake)

Apr 3
The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community
Rule of the Community; Some Works of the Torah
Readings: The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls (chs. 1-2, 4)

Apr 8
The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community
Readings: The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls (chs. 5-7)
9.Report: Some Messiahs from Qumran: Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521) and the “Son of God” Text (4Q246) (Matt)

Apr 10
The Temple and Its Priesthood
Roman Rule in Palestine
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 269-287
10.Report: Who were Herod the Great and Herod Antipas? (Todd)
11.Report: Who was Joseph Caiaphas? (Heidi)
12.Report: Who was Pontius Pilate? (Abby)

Apr 15
Jesus, the Galilee, and Archaeology
Readings: Gamla (link); Bethsaida (link); Sepphoris (link); Gospels and Jesus, 154-163

III. The Quest of the Historical Jesus: How have scholars used the evidence to make important claims about Jesus?

Apr 17
Reimarus, Strauss
Readings: Dawes, Historical Jesus Quest; Gospels and Jesus, 232-239
14.Report: Geza Vermes on Jesus

Apr 22
Schweitzer, Kähler
Readings: Dawes, Historical Jesus Quest
15.Report: E.P. Sanders on Jesus

Apr 24
Käsemann, Current Approaches
Link: Borg, “Portraits of Jesus”
Readings: Dawes, Historical Jesus Quest
16.Report: John Dominic Crossan on Jesus (Scott)
17.Report: Richard Horsley on Jesus (Dan)

IV. Position Papers: How do you use the available evidence to address the following questions in Jesus research?

Apr 29
***** Position Paper #1 Due: Did Jesus Believe He Was the Messiah?
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 240-254; Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, 123-128
In class discussions and debates

May 1
***** Position Paper #2 Due: What Did Jesus Mean by the Kingdom of God?
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 203-231; Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, 129-130
In class discussions and debates

May 6
***** Position Paper #3 Due: Why Was Jesus Crucified?
Readings: Gospels and Jesus, 269-291
In class discussions and debates
May 8
Jesus and Contemporary Conspiracy Theories
“The Jesus Tomb Controversy”
In class video and discussion

V. Jesus and World Religions:
How do the major religions of the world respond to Jesus today?

May 13
Buddhism and Hinduism
Readings: Jesus in the World’s Faiths, 1-46, 79-112
Assignment: Prepare a typed, one-page statement, comparing and contrasting your views about Jesus with those you find expressed in the readings.

May 15
Islam and Judaism
Readings: Jesus in the World’s Faiths, 113-182
Assignment: Prepare a typed, one-page statement, comparing and contrasting your views about Jesus with those you find expressed in the readings.

May 20
Jesus and Christianity
Readings: Jesus in the World’s Faiths, 47-78
Conclusion
Assignment: Prepare a typed, one-page statement, comparing and contrasting your views about Jesus with those you find expressed in the readings.

Final Examination:

Topical Commentary Assignment

Each member of the course will prepare a commentary on one of the five topics listed below. The commentary will provide programmatic reflection upon an important issue in Jesus research, by charting a single motif or issue throughout the ancient evidence for Jesus. By composing this index, each student will be prepared to serve as “class specialist” on the motif or issue in question. Individual entries in the Commentary need only be two to three complete sentences in length. The entire commentary is to be submitted in typed form.

Options for General Commentary Assignments (two to three sentences per entry)
1. What honorific titles and terms are used of Jesus in the Gospel?
2. What does Jesus say about the “kingdom” [of God, heaven, etc.]?
3. What miracles does Jesus perform? What do they mean?
4. What are the conflicts at stake in Jesus’ controversies / disagreements with other persons / groups?
5. What kinds of interactions does Jesus have with other persons and groups? What are their respective responses to him?

Example (for question 1 above):

Mk 1:1

Jesus is referred to as “son of God” in the first verse of the Gospel. This is the first honorific title used of him in the entire work. The meaning of this title, however, is not defined, and one must look forward to the definition of Jesus’ identity in the remainder of the Gospel to find its true meaning.

Position Papers

Each student will complete one of the three position papers assigned on the syllabus. Position papers are assigned in order to challenge students to state and defend their own opinion on a controversial or problematic question in the history of Jesus Research. The three position papers directly address the following questions:

* Did Jesus believe he was the Messiah?
* What did Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God?
* Why was Jesus crucified?

Students will begin to understand the deeper issues at stake in each question through a careful reading of all primary and secondary literature assigned on the syllabus. The individual position paper will (a) state the student’s own position in clear and concise terms, (b) affirm the student’s position with the most relevant evidence, and (c) draw attention to the larger implications of the student’s position for understanding Jesus, Early Judaism and Christianity, or Christian theology.

Bibliography for Projects and Research

In addition to the following works, you may wish to consult the Biblical Archaeology Society online archive (on campus use only), as well as the Anchor Bible Dictionary available in the reference section of the library.

Borg, Marcus J. 
Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus. 
_____.
Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship.
Bornkamm, Günther. 
Brown, Raymond E. 
The Death of the Messiah. 
Bultmann, Rudolf. 
Jesus and the Word. 
Cadbury, H.J. 
The Eclipse of the Historical Jesus. 
Cameron, Ron. 
The Other Gospels. 
Charlesworth, James H. 
Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls. 
The Anchor Bible Reference Library. 
Chilton, Bruce. 
Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography. 
Chilton, Bruce and Craig A. Evans. 
Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research. 
Crossan, John Dominic. 
The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant. 
_____.
Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography. 
Dahl, Nils Alstrup. 
Jesus and the Word. 
Dunn, James D.G. 
The Evidence for Jesus. 
Ehrman, Bart D. 
Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium. 
_____.
Evans, Craig A. 
Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography. 
_____.
Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies. 
Fredriksen, Paula.
Freyne, Séan. 
Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels. 
Funk, Robert W. and Roy W. Hoover.
The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus. 
Horsley, Richard A. 
Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine. 
_____.
Sociology and the Jesus Movement. 
Hultgren, Arland J. 
The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary. 
Jeremiاس, Joachim. 
The Parables of Jesus. 
The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation. 
Käsemann, Ernst. 
Kee, Howard Clark. 
Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels. 
Marcus, Joel. 
Meier, John P. 
“Dividing Lines in Jesus Research Today.” 
_____.
A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles. 
Perrin, Norman. 
Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus. 
Pelikan, Jaroslav. 
The Illustrated Jesus through the Centuries. 
New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997.
Perrin, Norman. 
Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus. 
Reimarus, Samuel. 
The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples. 
Trans. G.W. Buchanan. 
Robinson, James M. 
A New Quest of the Historical Jesus. 
Sanders, E.P. 
The Historical Figure of Jesus. 
Sandmel, Samuel. 
We Jews and Jesus. 
Schussler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 
In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins. 
Schweitzer, Albert. 
The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede. 
Albert Schweitzer Library. 
With a preface by F. Burkitt. 
_____.
The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus’ Messiahship and Passion. 
Scott, Bernard Brandon. 
Hear Then a Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus. 
Smith, D. Moody. 
John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research. 
Stegemann, Ekkehard. 
The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century. 


