



Religion 290: Jesus in Tradition and History

Tuesdays / Thursdays 1:30-2:45 OM 04

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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 Jesus controversies. 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

- Barker, Gregory, ed. *Jesus in the World's Faiths: Leading Thinkers from Five Religions Reflect on His Meaning*. Orbis: Maryknoll, New York, 2005.
- 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]
- Patterson, Stephen J., Hans-Gebhard Bethge, James M. Robinson. *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age*. Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International,

1998. [A recently discovered apocryphal gospel of Jesus' sayings]

Stanton, Graham. *The Gospels and Jesus*. Second edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. [The main textbook for the course]

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

3.Report: Luke's Portrayal of Women (David)

Mar 4

[The Q Source](#) (link)

Readings: *Gospels and Jesus*, 18-26

Mar 6

The Gospel of John

Readings: *Gospels and Jesus*, 97-121

4.Report: "The Jews" in John's Gospel (Amanda)

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

13.Report: [Crucifixion: The Archaeological Evidence \(Veronica\)](#)

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.

Braaten, Carl E and Roy A. Harrisville. *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*. New York: Abingdon, 1964.

- Borg, Marcus J. *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*. Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1998.
- _____. *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*. Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Bornkamm, Günther. *Jesus of Nazareth*. Trans. I and F. McLuskey with J. Robinson. New York: Harper, 1960.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Death of the Messiah*. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Jesus and the Word*. New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1958.
- Cadbury, H.J. *The Eclipse of the Historical Jesus*. Wallingford, Penn.: Pendle Hill Publications, 1964.
- Cameron, Ron. *The Other Gospels*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.
- Charlesworth, James H. *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Chilton, Bruce. *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography*. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Chilton, Bruce and Craig A. Evans. *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.
- _____. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.
- Dahl, Nils Alstrup. *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Dunn, James D.G. *The Evidence for Jesus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985.
- Ehrman, Bart D. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- _____. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Evans, Craig A. *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*. Leiden: Brill, 1989.
- _____. *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.
- Fredriksen, Paula. *From Jesus to Christ: The Origin of the New Testament Images of Jesus*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988.
- Freyne, Séan. *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.
- Funk, Robert W. and Roy W. Hoover. *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. The Jesus Seminar. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.
- Horsley, Richard A. *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- _____. *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*. New York: Crossroad, 1989.
- Hultgren, Arland J. *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Parables of Jesus*. Trans. S.H. Hooke. New York: Scribner, 1963.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.
- Käsemann, Ernst. *Essays on New Testament Themes*. London: SCM Press, 1964.
- Kee, Howard Clark. *Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970.
- Marcus, Joel. *Mark I-VIII*. Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Meier, John P. "Dividing Lines in Jesus Research Today." *Interpretation* 50 (1996): 355-69.
- _____. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles*. New York: Doubleday, 1994. And other volumes.
- Perrin, Norman. *Rediscovering the Teachings of Jesus*. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Illustrated Jesus through the Centuries*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Perrin, Norman. *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*. London, SCM Press, 1967.
- Reimarus, Samuel. *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples*. Trans. G.W. Buchanan. Leiden: Brill, 1970.
- Robinson, James M. *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*. SBT 25. London: SCM, 1959.
- Sanders, E.P. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. London: Penguin Press, 1993.
- Sandmel, Samuel. *We Jews and Jesus*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Schussler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad, 1994.
- 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. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins, 1998.
- *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1985.
- Scott, Bernard Brandon. *Hear Then a Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989.
- Smith, D. Moody. *John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Stegemann, Ekkehard. *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.

- Stendahl, Krister. *The School of St. Matthew, and Its Use of the Old Testament*. ASNU 20. Uppsala: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954.
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- _____. *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*. Ed. P. Hodgson. Trans. G. Eliot. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972.
- Theissen, Gerd. *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978.
- Vermes, Geza. *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*. London: SCM, 2001.
- Wright, N.T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume 2. London: SPCK, 1996.