

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES 450 SEMINAR
PROPHETS, MESSIAHS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
SPRING 2009**

Dr. John Huddlestun

4-B Glebe, Rm. 203 (use sidewalk entrance)

Office Hours: MW 1:30 - 3:30, Th 3:30 - 4:30 or by appointment

Office Phone: 953-4996 (Dept. of Religious Studies, 953-0895)

E-mail: Huddlestunj@cofc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this seminar, we delve into some pivotal scholarly issues in the ongoing debates, past and present, surrounding the founding figures, and origins generally, of at least three religious traditions: Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Our focus is less on what these figures may or may not have taught per se, although this is certainly relevant, and more concerned with matters of sources, historiography, presentation, and legitimacy within their respective tradition. Any detailed examination of such figures raises a host of questions, the answers to which at times depend on who one asks: What types of sources do we possess and how far removed chronologically are they from the putative historical figure they describe? Who is responsible for these sources and how are we to assess their credibility? What, if any, do they tell us about their subject, as opposed to the later views and needs of the communities that produced them? Do these figures bring something new or unique to the tradition, or are they simply reformers of the status quo? To what extent are their teachings or actions explainable with their times? How do we account for the success and spread of these movements? Does the figure possess a certain charisma or personality trait, or should we look elsewhere for an explanation? Are there common or universal elements in each of these figures; do they confirm to an ideal type, or must we consider each unique in their situation and appeal? Moreover, how might we account for the very notion of, or need for, a founding figure and how are they important in the creation of so-called religions today? Lastly, given the vast majority of pious followers know nothing about such academic quests, why bother with the painstaking process of finding the "real Jesus" or Buddha or Muhammad? Would dubious or outright fabricated sources change a loyal adherent's view of the tradition? Why muddy the waters with our obsession with origins? In the words of the famous west coast theologian, Rodney King, why can't we all just get along?

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- 1) E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Penguin Press, 1993.
- 2) John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*. HarperCollins, 1994.
- 3) F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*. SUNY Press, 1994.
- 4) M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford University Press, 2004.
- 5) John S. Strong, *The Buddha: A Short Biography*. Oneworld Publications, 2001.

6) A Biblical text. My preference is the New Revised Standard Version, available in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. 3rd edition. Ed. Michael Coogan et al., (Oxford University Press, 2001). Other translations are acceptable, although a few do contain significant differences in some cases.

7) Readings on Electronic Reserves (designated as ER) at the library. These are available through the college library home page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) *Class presentations (10%)*. Over the course of the term, students will give brief presentations on TWO readings, designated by me as presentation material. These need be no more than 10-12 minutes in length and should provide a useful summary of the key points or arguments of the reading, and offer some critical analysis where appropriate (a one page outline is recommended). Also, presenters should submit discussion questions for the class generally. Following each presentation, I will call on individual students to ask questions (critical or otherwise) in order to initiate classroom discussion of the material. If you miss your presentation without an incredibly good excuse (dead or dying), you will receive a failing grade on it. **All students are required to read the material relative to each presentation and submit informed, nay even intelligent, questions for discussion at the beginning of class.**

2) *Paper on Crossan book (20%)*. As we progress (or regress) through the readings on Jesus and early Christianity, you should be reading the Crossan volume alongside that of Sanders. Prior to spring break, you will submit a paper (6-7 pages) in response to a series of questions distributed by me. These will deal with Crossan's own arguments and motivations, as well as some comparison with the presentation of the historical Jesus by Sanders.

3) *Take-home midterm exam (20%)*. This midterm will of a series of questions over the first portion of the term. Students may not consult one another or otherwise work together on this exam. Any indication of such will be considered plagiarism (following college guidelines).

4) *A Research paper (30%)*. Students are required to turn in a research paper in order to pass this course. The paper will be at least 12-15 pages in length (not counting endnotes or bibliography) and must be comparative in orientation, encompassing at least two separate traditions. Also, subject to my approval, you may include figures and traditions not dealt with in this course. Specific guidelines for the paper (choosing a topic, style, timeline for submission, etc.) will be distributed after the beginning of the term.

5) *Attendance/Participation (20%)*. This is a seminar, not a lecture class, although I will most likely do some lecturing at times. Because of this, and the small class size, it is imperative that you attend class and participate in discussions. You are permitted a total of **THREE** absences, for whatever reason, over the course of the term. Any number greater than this could result in a lowered or failing grade for the course. As for reading assignments and participation in class, **I will assume that you have read the texts before coming to class** and I will not summarize the points or arguments. Students should expect to be called upon to respond to questions about the readings. Languid, lethargic, and otherwise listless students will be noted in my black book and singled out for public flogging (ok, just kidding, but you get the point). In addition, I reserve the right to assign other writing assignments and/or to give unannounced quizzes if students are not keeping up with the material; these will also count in my determination of your grade.

GRADING SCALE: Final grades are determined in accordance with the following scale:

A = 100-94	C = 75-73
A- = 93-90	C- = 72-70
B+ = 89-86	D+ = 69-66
B = 85-83	D = 65-62
B- = 82-80	D- = 61-59
C+ = 79-76	F = 58-

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

This schedule is subject to revision. Please bring all relevant materials (along with engaged cerebral matter) to class!

I. Introduction (Jan. 12)

The Idea of a Founding Figure

II. Jesus of Nazareth in History and Tradition

Jan. 14 - Setting the Stage

Readings:

Sanders, pp. 15-32, 33-48, 98-106

Murphy, "Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Sanhedrin" (ER #1)

Murphy, "Roman Rule" (ER #2)

Saldarini, "Pluralism of Practice and Belief in 1st Century Judaism" (ER #3)

Cotter, "Miracle Stories..." (ER #4)

***Jan. 19 - Martin Luther King Day ***

Jan. 21 - Setting con't.; Sources (Classical, Christian, Jewish)

Sanders, 49-56

Meier, "Josephus" and "Other Pagan and Jewish Writings" (ER #5)

Sanders, 57-77

Fredriksen, "Gospel Truth and Historical Innocence" (ER #5a)

Jan. 26 - The Modern Quest, The Synoptic Problem and Some Criteria

History of the Quest (ER #6)

Meier, "How Do We Decide What Comes from Jesus?" (ER #7)

The Jesus Seminar (ER #8)

Jan. 28 - Gospel of Mark and Gospel of Thomas

Gospel of Mark (read all)

Gospel of Thomas (ER #9)

Some other Gospels (ER #10)

Feb. 2/4/9 - Selected biblical passages: birth, baptism, temptation, divorce, and Passion narratives

New Testament (Gospel of Mark and handout)

Sanders, pp. 112-117, 198-201, 249-75

Talbert, "Miraculous Conceptions and Births..." (ER #11)

Raymond Brown on the genealogies and trial of Jesus (ER #12)

Feb. 11 - Jesus as Galilean Charismatic Prophet/Sage

Vermes, "Jesus and Charismatic Judaism" (ER #13)

Avery-Peck, "The Galilean Charismatic and Rabbinic Piety" (ER #14)

Feb. 16 - Jesus and Jewish Law

New Testament (handout)

Sanders, pp. 205-224

 " "Jesus and the First Table of the Jewish Law" (ER #15)

Frederiksen, "Did Jesus Oppose the Purity Laws" (ER #16)

Saldarini, "Understanding Matthew's Vitriol" (ER #17)

Feb. 18 - Varying Perspectives on the Search and Origins

Schüssler Fiorenza, "In Search of the 'Real' Jesus: The Social-Scientific Quest" (ER #18)

Gager, "The End of Time and the Rise of Community" (ER #19)

Crossley, "Peasant Unrest and the Emergence of Jesus' Specific View of the Law" (ER #20)

Feb. 23 - Crossan paper due/discussion of his book

III. Muhammad in History and Tradition

Feb. 25 - Setting the Stage

Peters, 105-132

Kennedy, "The Birth of the Islamic State" (ER 21)

Watt, "Belief in a High God in Pre-Islamic Mecca" (ER 21a)

Hawting, "Religion in the *jahiliyya*: Theories and Evidence" (ER 22)

****March 2-4 Spring Break****

March 9/11- Sources and Traditional Life of Muhammad

Rubin, "The Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic Sources" (ER 23)

Peters, 101-104, 133-179, 213-222, 235-256

Selections from Quran, commentators, Hadiths, Ibn Ishaq, al-Tabari, etc. (ER 24)

March 11 - Take-home midterm due in class

March 16 - The Quest for the Historical Muhammad: Tradition vrs. Revisionists
Peters, "Appendix" (original fuller article may be found online via JSTOR)
Koren and Nevo, "Methodological Approaches to Islamic Studies" (ER 25)

March 18 - Chronology in Life of Muhammad
Rubin, "The Chronology of Muhammad's Life" (ER 26)

March 23 - The "Satanic Verses"
Rubin, "Isolation: The Satanic Verses" (ER 27)
Hawting, "The Daughters of God" (ER 28)

March 25 - Muhammad in Later Tradition
Horovitz, "The Growth of the Mohammad Legend" (ER 29)
Schimmel, "Muhammad the Beautiful Model" and "Legends and Miracles" (ER 30)

March 30 - Muhammad, Judaism, and Christianity
Wensnick, "Muhammad and the Prophets" (ER 31)
Hoyland, "The Earliest Christian Writings on Muhammad: An Appraisal" (ER 32)

April 1 - The Origins of Islam: An Alternative View
Crone, "The Rise of Islam" (ER 33)

IV. Gaining Theoretical Perspectives

April 6 - Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority" and "The Prophet" (ER 34)
Wallace, "Revitalization Movements" (ER 34a)
Miyahara, "Charisma: From Weber to Contemporary Sociology" (ER 34b)

April 8 - Wallis, "Charisma and Explanation" (ER 35)
Piovanelli, "Jesus' Charismatic Authority: On the Historical Applicability of a Sociological Model" (ER 35a)

V. The Buddha in History and Tradition

April 13 - Setting the Stage
Strong, "Introduction"
Prebish and Keown, "Background to Buddhism" (ER 36)
Lopez, "The Universe" (ER 37)

April 15 - The Traditional Life of the Buddha according to (Some) Sources

Selection of texts on the life of the Buddha (ER 38)

Strong, chaps. 2-3 and 6

Strong, "A Family Quest" (ER 39)

April 20 - Buddhas, Past, Present, and Future

Strong, 15-34

Sadakata, "The Cosmos and Time" and "Buddhist Deities" (ER 40)

April 22 - Wither the Historical Buddha?

Cohen, "Shakyamuni: Buddhism's Founder in Ten Acts" (ER 41)

April 22 - Saving Weberian Face

McClymond, "Prophet or Loss? Reassessing Max Weber's Theory of Religion" (ER 42)

Responses to McClymond (ER 43)

April 27 - Summing up