

The Historical Jesus

RELI 3230A (Winter 2012)

Mon 11:30am-2:30pm; UC 280
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Course Objective

- This course is less about Jesus than it is about the search for the Historical Jesus. We will consider the nature of the sources that are used to reconstruct the life and teachings of Jesus and touch on some of the methodological challenges that these sources pose for the modern (and post-modern) historian. We will also consider how early Christian writers developed/alterd the image of Jesus.

Evaluation

20% Participation
4 x 5% (20% total) for 300 word precis of each discussion article
30% Term Paper
30% Final Exam

Text Books

Anthony Le Donne, *Historical Jesus: What Can We Know and How Can We Know It?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

Course Pack of Readings

On Reserve at the Library, or still in your collection of textbooks (wishful thinking?)

- Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (4th or 5th edition only).

Weekly Lecture and Reading Schedule

Date	Lecture Topic	Reading/Discussion
Jan 9	Mechanics of the Course and Why Jesus Matters	
Jan 16	History and Historiography: The Challenge of Miracles	Discussion: Meier Article
Jan 23	Textual Criticism: Do we have access to the words of Jesus?	Reading: Le Donne Part I
Jan 30	Synoptic Problem: The Question of Sources I	Discussion: Tuckett Article
Feb 6	Canons: The Question of Sources II	Reading: Le Donne Part II
Feb 13	Social Locations	Discussion: Horsely Article

Feb 20	Reading Week	
Feb 27	The Earliest Gospel: Q1 (text of Q1 provided)	Q1
Mar 5	Israel and its Messiahs	Reading: Le Donne Part III
Mar 12	Parables	Discussion: Hultgren Article
Mar 19	Birth Narratives and Trial Narratives	No Reading
Mar 26	No Class	
April 2	Whose Historical Jesus?	Discussion: Marsh Article

Email Communication

- Carleton Connect is the official mode of email communication for all matters having to do with the university and with this course. All communications sent to your Connect account are considered official by the university, and you are expected to get them. It is not an option to claim you did not get some announcement or request because you have another email address. You can configure your Connect account to forward university emails to another address, but you must be reachable through your connect account. Also, I am forbidden to put into an email any information which could be deemed personal unless it is addressed to a Connect account (because hotmail etc. accounts are not secure, whereas Connect is secure).

Articles Précis (4 précis exercises, worth 5% each; due at the beginning of relevant class)

- Write a 300 word précis on 4/5 of the articles in the course pack.
- I like the description found here of a précis:
http://www.architecture.uwaterloo.ca/faculty_projects/terri/precis2.html
- It goes without saying that economy of language is key here, since you must accurately summarize papers that are about 10,000 words in 300 words at most.
- Please include a word-count at the bottom of your précis. You need only to count the words in the précis itself, not your name or any title information you might provide.

Participation (20%)

- Based mostly on the discussions of the reading, not questions asked during lectures.
- Your participation mark will be an assessment of the *quality* of your participation, not the quantity. By “quality” I mean: did others in the class benefit from your participation, because, for example, you raised excellent points that made for enriching discussion. It is conceivable, therefore, that one person could speak three times in the whole course and get high participation marks and another could speak several times a class and get low participation marks.

Research Essay Topics (30%; due April 2)

- Page limit: 10 pages (**not including** bibliography or title page, **but including** end/footnotes).

Topics

- Choose a general topic from below.
- For any topic you choose, please come see me as many times as you can: before choosing a topic, before starting research, before writing a full draft. Consultations with me can save you a lot of wasted effort and disappointment; students who come to my office at least once to talk

about their papers **always** do better than they do alone, and unless I've already been cleaned out leave with some of my books too.

1) Choose any story from the gospels, whether found in one, two, three or all of them. Write an essay with any of the following foci: 1) Assess the historicity of the story; 2) If a story is present in more than one source, assess the differences among the stories; attempt to answer the question: Why did the gospel writers change the story? The successful paper will be well-researched, grounded in examples from and analysis of primary texts, and reflect familiarity with the relevant criteria in the search for the historical Jesus.

2) Was Jesus an apocalyptic prophet who believed the end of the world was immanent, or was he a teacher of subversive wisdom (like the Cynics)? The successful paper will be well-researched, grounded in examples from primary texts, and reflect familiarity with the relevant criteria in the search for the historical Jesus.

3) Read any one of the following modern novels about Jesus and write an essay on it:

- Anthony Burgess, *Man of Nazareth* (1979)
- Norman Mailer, *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997)
- Christopher Moore, *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal* (2003)
- Nino Ricci, *Testament* (2002)
 - Any of these novels can be very inexpensively purchased at www.abebooks.com
- To give your paper the appropriate focus (Biblical Studies, not Eng Lit) focus your essay on ONE of the following areas:
 - 1) the novelist's use of early Christian sources;
 - 2) meaningful differences or similarities in the way an episode from the gospels has been depicted;
 - NB. This topic should probably be limited to students with experience in literary analysis.

4) Offer an analysis of a film treatment of the life of Jesus.

- To give your paper the appropriate focus (Biblical Studies, not Film Studies) focus your essay on ONE of the following areas:
 - 1) the novelist's use of early Christian sources in the making of the film;
 - 2) how episodes from the gospels have been depicted, and the affect;
 - Be sure to consult some of the recent scholarly writing on Jesus and Film.
 - NB. This topic should probably be limited to students in Film Studies.

5) Discuss the historical value of the Gospel of John. Focus either on a specific passage from John that you want to argue is particularly historical or unhistorical, or on a general explanation for John's different itinerary for Jesus. The successful essay will be well-researched and reflect a very close reading of the gospels in question.

Other Advice for your essays:

- I will read as many versions of your outline and early drafts as you want. I'll read outlines at any time (even the night before the essay is due) but I will not read rough drafts after March 25.

Send those to me by email is best (keep in mind the version you hand in for marking must come only in hardcopy).

- The most important feature of your paper is that **you must generate a thesis statement** which you set out in the paper to prove or defend by referring to the extensive research you have done. This is a research essay, not a mini-commentary; do not simply rephrase what the passage says; it is also not a “fishing expedition” to find out what something means. Argue a point, and make that point very clear in your introduction.
- For example, a paper on Luke’s Special Songs cannot simply talk about what is in them, or where they come from, or why you like them, etc. etc.. The paper must make an argument about the material (i.e., “Luke inherited the songs that appear in his opening chapters, though he edited them slightly”).
- Your thesis does not have to be original in the field of historical Jesus studies, but the more interesting and strong it is the better your paper will be. *Weak Thesis*: The author of the Gospel of Matthew is unknown to us (weak because it’s too obvious); *Strong Thesis*: The author of the gospel of Matthew was a Jew undergoing a contest over identity with other Jews (strong because it’s pointed, and will require a close analysis of the data and presentation of evidence, as well as a strong argument).
- This is a historical class that presupposes a willingness to engage the material critically and dispassionately – I am not interested in hearing what you believe, and statements of faith in this paper will seriously undermine your work as an historian (which is what you are aspiring to be in this class). Please be very clear that there are places for statements of faith and for approaching these texts in a way that is faithful to a religious tradition, but the university classroom is NOT that place.
- You are expected to consult **a lot** of material in order to draw a responsible conclusion, and one that is in dialogue with the research that has been done (this also means consulting material other than introductory encyclopedia entries, etc.). Writing research papers is about proving what you want to say, and doing research is how you get to do that, or by doing the research you find out that you cannot make the claim you were hoping to.
- You may not under any circumstances use information taken from the World Wide Web (WWW). You are required to use traditional articles, books, encyclopedias, etc. **However**, there is a difference between WWW material and electronic resources. Some encyclopedias now come on CDROM; some journals offer their articles electronically because Carleton Library subscribes to them in electronic form. You can access these on your computer from home or in the library. But just because you’re seeing them on your computer, or just because you downloaded them from/through the library website, does not make them WWW sources; it makes them electronic resources. Electronic resources are fine; WWW sources are not; feel free to ask me for clarification at any time.
- **Back up what you say**; you will be penalized for making unsubstantiated statements, *especially* if they are false, and even more so if they are false *and* theologically motivated. You are not, by any means, expected to know everything – that’s why we do research, so that we can learn.

- In terms of research, you are expected to consult **at least** 10 items. These items can include a **variety** of articles/essays, books and commentaries. You can also consult dictionary or encyclopedia entries to get you started and to introduce you to a topic, but these cannot form the backbone of your paper. Since commentaries only require you to read a few pages on your given passage, they count for less; be sure to include all the commentaries possible. Failure to consult adequate material will affect your mark.

General Rules for Papers

*Papers cannot be submitted electronically.

All written assignments must come close to the page limit, must be double spaced (not 1 or 1.5), must have default margins (usually 2.5cm), must not appear in a font size smaller than 12 point, and **must include** page numbers. The manipulation of any of these things in order to make a shorter paper appear longer or a longer paper appear shorter will be noticed. Efficiency of language and focus on a task are required for working within assigned page or word limitations.

The Religion Program has adopted the Chicago Manual of Style (16th Ed) for all papers in Religious Studies. There is an on-line guide here: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. Please use the Notes and Bibliography style, not the Author-Date style. Your ability to reproduce this proper style will factor into the marking of your written work.

Papers that venture too far from these requirements and limitations may be returned unread and ungraded for resubmission; late penalties are retroactive to the due date, regardless of when I discover the problem.

Late Penalties: **Written assignments are due on the specified date.** There will be a penalty of 2% per day (including weekends) which builds until the penalty reaches 100%. Extensions will only be granted for personal medical and family emergencies (for which documentation must be provided); extensions are not granted because of essay conflicts, work schedules, or the like. Late papers can be brought to me directly or they can be placed in the Religion and Classics Drop Box (beside the door of 2a39 Paterson Hall). Do not slip papers under my door. Do not hand them to anyone else. Late papers will not necessarily be marked in an expeditious manner (depending on my schedule).

Proofread your work several times carefully before handing it in, or ask someone whose writing skills are strong do it. Needless and countless errors of spelling, grammar, and syntax are a serious impediment to effective writing and communication, and these *will* affect your grade.

Always keep a copy of your paper in multiple computers if you can (emailing it to yourself is an excellent way of backing something up that is almost totally secure).

Final Exam

The Final Exam will consist of 2 essays in three hours on themes, information and skills drawn from the lectures. Much more will be said about the exam as the exam period approaches.

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSE

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 5, 2011**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 5, 2012**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov.11, 2011 for the Fall term and March 7, 2012 for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment.

If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of assignments must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor
Library	
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor
Library	