

## Religion 114

### Jesus and the Gospels

Spring 2006

Dr. Gordy

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Class will convene at 7:50 a.m. each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You should be seated and ready to begin our work together promptly at the beginning of the period. **As I am never late for class, there is no good reason for you to be late either.** Please plan accordingly.

### GENERAL EDUCATION

Ultimate Questions courses consider questions and answers fundamental to religious and philosophical traditions. They emphasize the relevance of these questions to contemporary experience and self-understanding, and include the reading and analysis of original texts. Examples of “ultimate questions” that orient such courses are: What is really real? Who are we? How should we live? What is of value? What are our origins and destiny? How is knowledge possible?

Such courses provide students with the ability to think and write about “ultimate questions” in ways that demonstrate both an understanding of the questions’ importance to individuals and to society, and the ability to critically evaluate their own and others’ answers.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is—in the first place and above all—a history course. It is designed to introduce students to the following several related subject matters, conceived and studied from a historical perspective:

The contents of the four canonical gospels (the texts contained in the New Testament under the rubric “the Gospel” according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, and according to John).

The literary and theological abilities of the “evangelists” (the authors of the canonical gospels that, by tradition, are named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

The contents of several other ancient texts which purport to tell readers something about the life and/or message of Jesus.

The circumstances of the Christian communities in which these texts were composed.

The historical person known to us as Jesus of Nazareth.

The history and culture of the ancient world in which Jesus conducted his ministry and in which the Christian movement originated.

Several of the historical methods by which the preceding subject matters are studied.

If this looks to be an overwhelming “lot of stuff” to study in one semester, then you will be surprised to discover that it isn’t. These subject matters are so closely interrelated that we can move easily and coherently from one to the other and back again.

If you apply yourself as you should then, by the end of the semester, you should have gained a useful knowledge of the canonical gospels, of issues relating to Jesus of Nazareth, of the pieties and theologies of early Christians, and of the thought processes in play in the discipline of historical studies.

Along the way, of course, and as it is appropriate to do so, we will also consider issues of later church history and of contemporary faith and Christian life. Some of you, at least, will serve as the primary resource for such issues. You must raise them as they occur to you—we will always take the time to consider them, regardless of where we are in the syllabus. This is, of necessity, a lecture course. I am most happy, however, to put a lecture on hold in order to address questions and comments from students. There are not “bad” or “dumb” questions, and any issue of concern to you is an issue worthy of the class’ consideration. Speak up, then, when you are inclined to do so. Your initiative will only serve to make this a better learning experience for everyone, including me.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings*

Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., ed., *Gospel Parallels*

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ETC.

1. Class attendance and participation.

Students are expected to attend all classes, although “roll” will not be taken after the final registration list is established. I will treat you as mature and responsible adults, and I assume that you will conduct yourselves in just that manner. Excessive absences will be noted, and my concern might be expressed, but no penalty to the final grade will be assigned on that account.

2. Reading assignments.

It is expected that the reading assigned for a particular date will be done prior to class on that date, as the classroom work for that day will build upon that assigned reading.

3. Examinations.

There will be a mid-term examination and a final examination. The mid-term exam will be worth 100 points. The final exam will be worth 150 points. The date of the mid-term is noted in the course outline and is not subject to change. The registrar will establish the date and time of the final exam.

4. Quizzes.

Twenty 10-point quizzes will be given during the semester.

(1) If you are absent on the day of a quiz, then that quiz is scored a "0." The only exception to this policy is absence on account of a field trip for another course at the College.

(2) With the exception noted above, there will be no make-up quiz offered during the first fifteen weeks of the semester. A single make-up quiz will be offered during the final week of the semester for anyone who has missed a quiz. There will be no exception to this policy so don't bother seeking for one.

(3) Quizzes will begin promptly at the beginning of the period. If you arrive at class after the quiz has started, then you simply miss the questions that have already been assigned for the quiz but you may answer the remaining questions that you are present for. No exceptions, so don't ask.

5. Grading.

A final grade will be assigned according to the following points-earned out of the 450 points possible:

	396+=B+	351+=C+	306+=D+	
419+=A	374+=B	329+=C	284+=D	
405+=A-	360+=B-	315+=C-	270+=D-	>270=F

6. Office hours.

MTWRF 9:00-10:00 or by appointment

## SYLLABUS OF ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 16	Introduction to the course
Jan. 18	Introduction, continued
Jan. 20	*READ <i>Introduction 2</i>
Jan. 23	READ “The Gospel According To Mark”
Jan. 25	*READ Mk.8.22-10.52
Jan. 27	*READ Mk.13
Jan. 30	READ <i>Introduction 3</i>
Feb. 1	*READ <i>Introduction 4</i> – “gospel” as genre
Feb. 3	READ <i>Introduction 6</i> – the “2 document hypothesis”
Feb. 6	Form criticism
Feb. 8	*READ <i>Gospel Parallels</i> – Mk.1.40-45 pars., Mk.11.1-10 pars., Mk.15.33 pars.
Feb.10	*READ <i>Gospel Parallels</i> – Mk.10.17-31 par. Mt.22-1-14 par, Lk.15.11-32
Feb. 13	Parables
Feb. 15	*READ <i>Gospel Parallels</i> – Mk.4 and all parallel traditions
Feb. 17	*Narrative tradition, READ <i>Gospel Parallels</i> – Mk.2.1-12 pars., Mk.6.30-52 pars.
Feb. 20	READ “The Gospel According to Matthew”
Feb. 22	*READ Mt.4.23-7.29
Feb. 24	*READ <i>Introduction 7</i>
Feb. 27	READ “The Gospel According to Luke”
Mar. 1	*READ <i>Introduction 8</i>
Mar. 3	**Mid-term Examination**
March 6-10	Spring Break
Mar. 13	*READ <i>Introduction 9</i>
Mar. 15	READ “The Gospel According to John”
Mar. 17	*READ Jn.18-19 <u>and</u> Mk.14-16 pars.
Mar. 20	READ <i>Introduction 10</i>
Mar. 22	Johannine Christianity
Mar. 24	Johannine Christianity
Mar. 27	*READ <i>Introduction 24</i>
Mar. 29	Christianity and Judaism
Mar. 31	*READ “The Letter of Barnabus”

Apr. 3 READ *Introduction 25*  
Apr. 5 Gnosticism  
Apr. 7 \*READ “The Gospel of Thomas” and synoptic pars.

Apr. 10 \*READ “The Gospel of Mary” (handout)  
Apr. 12 \*READ “The Didache”

Apr. 14 and 17 Easter Break

Apr. 19 \*READ “The Infancy Gospel of Thomas”  
Apr. 21 \*READ “The Infancy Gospel of James” (handout)

Apr. 24 Mary  
Apr. 26 \*READ “The Gospel of Peter”  
Apr. 28 optional review day

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\*\*\*Final Examination\*\*\* (day and time to be determined by the Registrar)