

## *JESUS AND THE GOSPELS*

### COURSE SYLLABUS

**COLLEGE CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION: Background of the New Testament, formation of the Gospels, non-canonical traditions, and the ministry of Jesus with particular attention to his teachings.**

The course is part of the General Education requirement in the area of Ultimate Questions. Such courses consider questions, issues and responses basic to religious and philosophical traditions. The courses are designed to stress the relevance of such concerns to contemporary experience and self-understanding. The courses include the reading and analysis of original texts. One goal of the course is to enable students to think critically and intelligently - and to write clearly and effectively - about the matters covered in ways that demonstrate the student's understanding and skill in knowing about, responding to and expressing oneself so as to indicate that the student is able to evaluate and critique her/his own analysis and conclusions as well as those of others.

### **COURSE GOALS:**

1. to provide the student with a sound working knowledge of the material covered in class and the readings;
2. to acquaint the student with a range of views related to the course and the backgrounds of those views;
3. to provide the student with on-going incentives to continue the study of the questions, issues and responses raised in the course, and to be able to critique and evaluate positions that the student will encounter in the future;
4. to engage students in direct analysis and expression of materials covered through small group work and class reports; and
5. to encourage the student continually to examine and re-examine his/her own ultimate questions, nature of the issues, and developing responses.

**PERSPECTIVES: *This is a history course that will also deal with literary developments and interpretations.*** While none of us approaches "Ultimate Questions" and especially the subject matter of this course as a "neutral observer," or without "pre-understandings," the course is not intended to indoctrinate students either for or against any religious, social, or political tradition. Students will hear me speak in different "voices," such as **instructor of basic academic "stuff,"** sometimes **defender of a position,** and sometimes as **critic of the same position.** When I speak **knowingly in my own voice,** I will identify that voice, offer other views, and respect the views of students. It is important to understand that **we** will be pushed to present our own interpretations and views **in light of the basic "stuff," critically considered analysis, and mutual respect.** Any question that is asked honestly is not a "foolish question." I may respond with questions that are intended to clarify and sharpen the questioner's inquiry.

### **COLLEGE ADVISABLE STATEMENTS:**

1. Any student who wishes to disclose a disability and request accommodations under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) for this course first **MUST** meet with either Ms. Laurie Roth in the Office of learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities)."
2. Concerning Academic Honesty, please consult the relevant sections in the College Catalogue and the Student Handbook. Bottom Line: the work you do is to be your work. Essentially, by our being in the course together, you and I are in a covenant of trust with each other. Trust me to do my best with integrity and sound scholarship, and I trust you to do the same with the work that is submitted for a grade. I trust you. You may consult with one another, the internet, etc. - but woe to plagiarists and those who "lift papers" from the internet! **BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT INTERNET SOURCES IN RESEARCH!!** If you have any questions about a source's accuracy/integrity or the extent of using a source without attribution, please see me first.
3. While the syllabus includes a grading grid, I reserve the right to make a **one way qualitative judgment** in developing a final grade. That means, for example, if you have a disaster on a quiz

but do super work on most other factors, I **may** go beyond the end-term numerical grade. The qualitative judgment **will not reduce** the numerical total of graded factors in composing a final grade.

4. While the syllabus is intended to be similar to a contract between the student and the professor, there may be some changes or modifications, such as shifts of dates or changes in the anticipated subjects to be taken in class.
5. About Attendance. I intend to be on time at every class that the College is open, and I expect you to be there and on time, too. Legitimate reasons supported by credible evidence (from the Dean of Student's Office, etc.) will be acknowledged. If a religious holy day that you really observe and on which you are not to write or will be home for the observance, please inform me.
6. About "Participation." *Participation entails more than merely being present. It involves having done the readings, being able to respond to questions, and making thoughtful contributions to class discussion.*

**GRADING GRID:** Total of 100 points The results of which are:

A = 90-100,	Excellent, way beyond expectations, extra effort
B = 89-80,	Very good, better than expectations, competent
C = 79-70,	Average
D = 69-60,	Below average but passing
F = below 60,	Inadequate grasp of the material, failure

**THIS COURSE:**

Quiz 1	13 points
Mid-Semester	20 points
Experts' Panel	17 points
Quiz 2	13 points
Final Exam	27 points
Participation	10 points
TOTAL:	100 points

**ABOUT THE MID-SEMESTER AND FINAL EXAMS:**

1. **Essay-style Exams** should be learning experiences. By studying and then responding, a person makes connections and is able to express herself/himself more maturely (as well as accurately) than in "objective quizzes."
2. I look for three factors in grading essays:
  - a. what did the student say that is expected (**accuracy**);
  - b. what did the student not say that is expected (**completeness**); and
  - c. how did the student say it (**style, spelling, grammar**).
3. I will distribute **the essay question choices** of the mid-semester and final examinations at least two class sessions ahead of time. Short answers on each of these exams will not be distributed. The same essay choices will be on the exams. You may engage in conversations with each other, form study groups, and/or go it alone in preparing for the exams. But when exam times come, you do your own work without notes or open books.

**ABOUT THE "EXPERTS' PANELS":** The class will be formed into five panels. Panel members will seek to become experts on the Gospel(s) with which they are involved. I will furnish each with questions/issues to be addressed. Some research in the Library will be expected. Each panel will make a 15-minute presentation to the class (plus 10 minutes for discussion). Each member will send me via e-mail a 4-6-page paper on an issue or passage related to the Gospel, e.g., a parable, "miracle," view of Jesus, etc. The maximum grade for all members of the panel presentation will be 9 points, and the grade for the individual presentation will be 8 points (hence a total of 17 points). There are 4 "canonical" Gospel panels and one for the "other Gospels."

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

*HarperCollins Study Bible with Apocryphal/Deutero-Canonical Books*, New Revised Standard  
Version translation  
*The Other Gospels*, edited by Ron Cameron  
*Writings of the New Testament* by Luke Timothy Johnson

**SOMEWHAT RECOMMENDED:**

Gospel Parallels (available at a discount on-line. See me for access to the discount. Cost is less than  
\$7.00).

**VARIOUS DUE DATES:**

**Quiz #1: Wednesday, September 20.**

**Mid Term Exam: Wednesday, October 4**

**Quiz #2: Wednesday, November 15**

**Panels: December 1, December 4 and December 6**

**Final Exam: To be scheduled through the Dean's Office after December 11.**

**READING ROSTER**

**August 28-September 1: READ: *Bible*, Introduction; To the Reader; Exodus 12-17; Leviticus 19; 2  
Samuel 7; Psalm 2; Psalm 22; Psalm 107; Isaiah 7, 9, 40; 52-53; Daniel 7; Zechariah 9; 12;  
Malachi 3; Wisdom 1-3. These passages are among those were used by the early Christian  
communities and are reflected directly and indirectly in the canonical Gospels.**

September 5-September 8: **READ: *Bible***, The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Try one a day.

September 11-15: **Johnson**: Sample as supplementing and contrasting class lectures as much as possible,  
pages 1-157.

**SEPTEMBER 18-22 NOTE: QUIZ #1 ON SEPTEMBER 20.**

***Bible*: RE-READ the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.**

September 25-29: **READ: Johnson, 155-252**

**OCTOBER 2-6 NOTE: MIDTERM EXAM ON OCTOBER 4.**

October 11-13: ***Bible*: READ: The Gospel of John**

October 16-20: ***Bible*: RE-READ the Gospel of John; Johnson, 521-553**

October 23-27: **READ: Cameron: From Foreword through page 86**

October 30-November: 3 **READ: Cameron, pages 87-182**

November 6-10: **RE-READ the four canonical Gospels**

**NOVEMBER 13-17 NOTE: QUIZ #2 ON NOVEMBER 15.**

**READ: Johnson, pages 595-629**

Religion 114. Classroom: Comenius 114. Fall, 2006-07 Syllabus, Dr. Walter Wagner. College Office: Comenius 202, Office 4  
Hours: After class on Mondays and Fridays, and by appointment. Seminary contact: Bahnson Hall, 610-861-1516. Home:  
1802 Snyder Street, Bethlehem, PA 18017. e-mail: [wagner@enter.net](mailto:wagner@enter.net) and/or [mewhw01@moravian.edu](mailto:mewhw01@moravian.edu) Telephone: 610-  
974-8242

**NOVEMBER 20: CATCH UP BEFORE THANKSGIVING BREAK.**

**NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 1 NOTE: FIRST PANEL ON DECEMBER 1.**

Keep catching up. **RE-READ** the Gospels of Mark and John

**DECEMBER 4-8 NOTE: SECOND, THIRD FOURTH AND FIFTH PANELS THIS WEEK.**

**RE-READ:** the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Thomas and any other 2-3 works in *Cameron*.

**EXPERTS' PANELS**

At the beginning the second week of class, I will ask for class members' ranked preferences for inclusion on a panel. The panels will draw lots or otherwise "volunteer" for the order in which they will make their presentations.

**Panel #1: The Gospel of Mark**

**Panel #2: The Gospel of Matthew**

**Panel #3: The Gospel of Luke**

**Panel #4: The Gospel of John**

**Panel #5: The Gospels of Thomas, Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Acts of Pilate.**

Sorry about not including the recently publicized "Gospel of Judas," but there are too many lacunae in the text. We will discuss it in class.