

JESUS AND THE GOSPELS, Religion 114

COURSE SYLLABUS

The purposes of 100-level courses. From College Statement:

- Introduce students to basic vocabulary/concepts, methodologies, and applications of the discipline(s) relevant to the course.
- Explore the broad subject matter of a given field (generally a survey course).
- Encourage development of strategies/skills (and tools) that could be applied across disciplines (ex.: writing, computing, speaking, reading).
- Encourage critical thinking and advancing/acknowledging different ways of knowing.
- Deliberately prepare students for relevant 200 level courses in the discipline(s) relevant to the course
- Generally 100 level courses have no prerequisites.

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; 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 From Dr. Wagner (often hereinafter referred to as WW):

*This course deal with history, philosophy, literary developments and interpretations. **Please keep in mind that the field of Religious Studies is an academic discipline.** 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/or theory,** and sometimes as **critic of the same position and/or theory.** When I speak **knowingly in my own voice,** I will identify that voice, offer other views, and respect the views of students. **We will be pushed to present our own interpretations and views in light of the basic “stuff,” considered analysis, and mutual respect.** Any question that is asked honestly is not a “foolish question.” I may respond in ways intended to clarify and sharpen the questioner’s inquiry. *As the course is designed to raise and think about “Ultimate Questions,” I will raise some of these and we will probe how the Gospels, 1st Century societies and our times have responded to the questions.**

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) of 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. 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 test 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. **More than 2 unexcused "cuts" will reduce the "Participation" factor in the final grade.** 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 being present, plus keeping awake, alert, doing 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:

First Short Answer Test	15 points, Emphasis on Basic Terms. October 1
First Essay Exam	20 points, Emphasis on Synoptic Theories & Mark. October 15
Second Essay Exam	25 points, Emphasis on Matthew and Luke. November 20
Final Exam	30 points, Cumulative. December 15
Participation	10 points
TOTAL:	100 points

ABOUT THE 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:

- what did the student say that is expected (**accuracy**);
- what did the student not say that is expected (**completeness**); and
- how did the student say it (**style, spelling, grammar**).

3. I will distribute **the essay question choices** (including the Final Exam Essays) ahead of time. The same essay choices will be on the exams. I will provide review sessions in class prior to the essay exams' due dates. 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. The three essay exams will be "take homes" with the exam that you write posted on the Blackboard computer program in the "Digital Drop Box" *by midnight of the Due Dates indicated.*

Due Dates For Tests:

First Short Answer Test: In Class, 15-20 minutes. **October 1.**

First Essay Exam: Due via Blackboard Thursday, **October 15**

Second Essay Exam: Due via Blackboard, Friday, **November 20**

Final Exam: In classroom, **December 15, 8:30 AM**

There will be in class reviews for the 2 essay exams and the final exam. See appended reading-schedule roster.

REQUIRED TEXTS: WE WILL REALLY USE THESE!

HarperCollins Study Bible with Apocryphal/Deutero-Canonical Books, New Revised Standard Version translation. The Student Edition is in the Bookstore. This is the book we will use. Please do not substitute other translations or “Study Bibles.”

The Writings of the New Testament by Luke Timothy Johnson, Fortress Press (with CD)

ABOUT THE TEXT BOOKS

The course deals with “Jesus and the Gospels.” That will include biblical scholarship, various interpretations of the “canonical Gospels,” and Gospels that were not accepted by the Christian community.

1. The translation and edition of the Bible

a. to keep us together, we will use the New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha-Deuterocanonicals. **NO EXCEPTIONS, PLEASE.**

b. **The HarperCollins Study edition is required.** Again, it will keep us together. Plus, it contains introductory and supplementary essays, charts, maps and notes that will be important and helpful.

2. The book by Luke Timothy Johnson (LTJ) is a survey of the New Testament widely used in undergraduate courses. LTJ has certain themes that run through his work, yet is a thorough scholar who usually provides alternate positions. His is “another voice” in the class (in addition to and sometimes in contrast to mine). The introductory chapters and the sections on the Gospels will be the reading focus for our class. The book is a good reference work and I suggest you keep it. The CD contains the text, maps and other materials. I suggest that you download it on to your computers.

ABOUT HANDOUTS, ARTICLES AND BLACKBOARD COURSE DOCUMENTS

1. Some handouts and Blackboard Course Documents are straight-forward academic materials.

2. Some handouts are articles related to “Jesus in the News” or similar items (e.g., the alleged Jesus Family Bone Box).

3. Some handouts and Blackboard Course Documents are articles that deal with matters related to “Ultimate Questions.” These are provided not because I accept or do not accept the positions taken (when positions are taken) but to stimulate thinking and discussion.

4. Because there versions of Jesus apart from the four Gospels in the New Testament, I will address those versions in early Christianity (including some clearly novelistic items; some Gnostic writings such as the Gospel of Thomas), the Muslim Qur'an and Hadith, and the Book of Mormon.

SOME “ULTIMATE QUESTIONS” IN LIGHT OF THE COURSE

1. What does it mean to be human in general and to be:

- a. a human female
- b. a human male

2. What is the value of a human life? Who decides? On what basis? At what cost? To whom?

3. What is the role of death? Is there an “afterlife”?

4. What is evil, its sources, power, purpose and disposition – if evil “exists” (includes devils, demons, etc.)

5. Do humans have the power and ability to make, sustain, fulfill life: yes, no, maybe and sometimes?

6. What/Who/ for What is God – or not

7. What is the role of government in the above questions?

Questions such as these are part of the course as we consider how “Jesus and the Gospels” may be part of our responses and from persons (past and present) beyond our society. The questions may lead to even more questions and be recycled through our lives.

READING and EXAMS ROSTER

MATERIAL DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS AND ON THE COURSE’S BLACKBOARD SITE ARE TO BE READ AS IF THEY ARE CLASS PRESENTATIONS UNLESS WW INDICATES OTHERWISE

DATE READ FOR THIS CLASS
September 1: Getting Started. No assignment yet

September 3: READ: Bible, Introduction; To the Reader; Exodus 12-17; Leviticus 19; Wisdom 1-3. Blackboard Document: “Some Important Testimonia.” *These passages are among those were used by the early Christian communities and are reflected directly and indirectly in the canonical Gospels.*

September 8-10 : READ: Bible, Gospels of Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Try one a day. LTJ pages xi-65

September 15-17: READ: Bible, MARK again. LTJ: 73-149

September 22-24: READ: Bible, Mark again! LTJ, 155-179

September: 29-October 1: Catch up on reading for September 29. **15 minute quiz on October 1!**

OCTOBER 1: Text of First Essay Exam distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.

OCTOBER 6: IN CLASS REVIEW OF ESSAY EXAM. EXAM MAY BE SUBMITTED ANY TIME BEFORE 11:59 PM, OCTOBER 15.

October 8: READ: Bible: Matthew. LTJ: 187-207

October 10-14: NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

OCTOBER 15: @ 11:59 pm ON October 15: **ABSOLUTE DEADLINE FOR SENDING WW THE ESSAYS VIA BLACKBOARD OR EMAIL.**

October 15: Bible: Matthew

October 20-22: READ: Bible: Matthew and Luke Acts. LTJ: 213-252

October 27-29: READ: Bible: Luke and Acts. LTJ: 213-252

November 3-5: READ Bible: Luke and Acts. Catch-Up on readings

November 10 READ Bible: John and 1, 2, 3 John. LTJ: 521-571.

Text of Second Essay Exam distributed in class and posted on Blackboard.

November 12: IN CLASS REVIEW OF ESSAY EXAM. EXAM MAY BE SUBMITTED ANY TIME BEFORE 11:59 PM, NOVEMBER 20

November 17-19: READ Bible: John, and 1, 2, 3 John. LTJ: 521-571.

November 20: @ 11:59 pm: ABSOLUTE DEADLINE FOR SENDING WW THE ESSAYS VIA BLACKBOARD OR EMAIL.

NOVEMBER 24: READ: JOHN, AND 1, 2, 3 JOHN. LTJ: 521-571.

NOVEMBER 26: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING

December 1-3: Other Views of Jesus, Other Gospels. LTJ: 595-629.

December 8: LAST CLASS. REVIEW FOR THE FINAL EXAM

DECEMBER 15: FINAL EXAM AT 8:30 AM