

RS 4020: Jesus of Nazareth (Fall 2023)
Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:40 pm - 4:05 pm
PECK HALL 312

Dr. Rebekka King

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Office: 304B James Union Building, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Student Meeting Hours (aka Office Hours):

- Tuesdays: 10 AM - 11 AM ("Tea at Ten on Tuesdays" – group drop-in hours in JUB 304)
 - Tuesdays/Thursdays: 1 PM - 2 PM (Traditional one-on-one drop-in hours in JUB 304B)
 - Fridays: 1 PM - 3 PM (Online Only via Zoom):
 - You must sign-up in advance for the online hours: <https://tinyurl.com/4hn25nwm>
 - After you have signed up, the link is <https://mtsu.zoom.us/my/rebekka.king>
 - Or by appointment (email Dr. King to set up a time)
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Course Description

This course surveys the diverse portraits of Jesus reflected in the socio-cultural interface of the first century CE, early Christian literature, the modern scholarly quest for the historical Jesus, and in light of recent discussions, movements, films, and books.

This course is divided into four units. The first quarter orients us to the study of Jesus by thinking about practices of study and the context of the first century CE. The second section explores what eventually became the canonical ancient sources available about Jesus and the third explores ancient sources excluded from canon. In addition to familiarizing students with the contents of these texts, this portion of the course introduces students to the methods for identifying Christian myth-making and data for determining the historical Jesus. The fourth part of this course critically examines several of the most prominent modern debates and theories about the historical Jesus. Through engagement with these debates, this portion of the course further develops students' familiarity with the principal sources and methods in the field. In addition, through a series of four interruptions, the class explores the implications of interpretive practices and discourses about Jesus in the contemporary era.

Students should leave the course with a strong understanding of the ancient sources for Jesus, the debates about the historical Jesus, the methodologies employed by historical Jesus scholars, and the possibilities for representation that the figure of Jesus carries in the contemporary era.

A Note about Sensitivity

Many people have strong and personal views when it comes to the topic of religion. In this class, you are encouraged to hold strong opinions and to share these opinions with your classmates in a respectful manner. You are expected to listen politely to (and offer your own analysis of) perspectives about doctrines/traditions/practices/beliefs you may not share. In many cases, we will look for cultural logic within a viewpoint that may seem utterly foreign or appalling. Students who disrupt this process by being intolerant, dismissive, or unfair in their criticism will be asked to leave. If you are offended by something that is discussed in class, please speak to the professor about it. When dealing with "hot" topics, it is best to keep communication lines open rather than allow hurt feelings to stew.

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase or rent in the bookstore, they are also widely available through online bookstores and available for use in the library from the course reserves desk.

- Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha.
- James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy (Eds.). *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2009).

Recommended Text

- Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., *Gospel Parallels: A Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels*, New Revised Standard Version. (Thomas Nelson, 1992).

All other required readings (see syllabus) will be posted on Direct 2 Learn (<https://elearn.mtsu.edu/>). Please bring these readings with you to class. Please notify me immediately if there are any problems with the pdf files. If you object to printing these readings because of environmental or economic concerns, take extensive notes (with quotes and page numbers) to bring with you to class. If you experience difficulty with D2L please contact the MTSU Helpdesk at 615-898-5345 or help@mtsu.edu.

Course Expectations, Policies, and Common Courtesy

Participation and Attendance: Attendance is absolutely necessary in order to do well in this course. Two absences are permitted. Please consider these as an employer's "sick days" or "personal days"—you can use them for whatever reason you wish, but you only have two, so you should use them wisely. Further absences will result in a considerable reduction of your overall grade and may result in a failing grade for the course. Should you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed from one of your colleagues in the class; Prof. King will not provide notes or an overview.

Punctuality: Please arrive on time and plan to remain for the entire class. We will start the class promptly and cover important classroom material at the beginning of class. Unless you become ill, do not begin packing up your books because this is distracting to everyone. If you know in advance that you cannot stay for the entire class, please sit next to the door and exit quietly. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to notify the professor after class has ended so that I can mark you as late, rather than absent, on the attendance sheet. Students who regularly arrive late to class will have points deducted from their grades.

Readings: My expectation is that you will complete the readings before the class for which they are assigned. I also expect that you will ask questions for clarification about the readings either at the beginning of class or during my office hours. Lecture material will begin where the readings end: I will not be offering an overview of the readings during class but rather will use them as a "jumping off point" for a more advanced (and, I hope, more intellectually intriguing) conversation. You will be responsible for knowing both materials from the readings and from lectures for tests and written assignments. If this sounds hard, that's a good thing, it's supposed to be challenging!

Recording Class Sessions: Due to the sensitive nature of our course content and to ensure free and open discussion of ideas, video or audio recordings of class sessions are not permissible.

Courtesy in Class: Other than responding to or asking a question, please do not converse during lectures. Even quiet whispering distracts and disrespects your fellow students and your professor. Please turn off (or silence) all cell phones before the class begins. You are not permitted to wear earphones or headsets (even if you are not explicitly listening to audio, they must be removed from your ears). Students who plan to spend the lecture time checking TikTok, Instagram, or texting are invited to sit at the back of the classroom or leave. Students are encouraged to limit their use of technology in the classroom and take notes the 'old-fashioned' way with a pen and paper. Studies have shown that the use of computers and other technologies distracts students and alienates them from their learning environment.

Email, D2L, and Other Online Communication: Students are expected to write courteously and clearly (no text-messaging abbreviations or slang). All individual communication with the professor should be through her mtsu.edu email address (I do not respond to messages sent through D2L, Gmail, or social media). Always use your mtsu.edu email address and include an appropriate email topic summary along with the course code in the subject line. Once I have received an email from a student, I will gauge the urgency of the email and reply appropriately. I generally do not check email on weekends and keep regular business hours. You can expect a reply within two business days.

Submission of Work: See the assignment guidelines for submission times. Most assignments in this class are due by 8 AM on the class day in order to give Dr. King a chance to review them before her first class of the day.

All assignments will be submitted to Dropbox through D2L. Grades are linked to Dropbox, so I cannot assign a grade if an assignment is not in Dropbox. In some cases, you will also be asked to bring copies of your assignments to class and/or post your assignment to a Discussion Board in order to participate in conversations with classmates (be sure to check the assignment guidelines for details).

To Submit to D2L Dropbox:

- 1) Save your assignment as a doc, docx, or pdf file. If you do not do this, I cannot open the file, and the assignment will be considered late.
- 2) Enter the D2L system (using <https://elearn.mtsu.edu>) and select our course. Do NOT enter through Pipeline (it has a tendency to time out while you are working).
- 3) On the "Content" page, click on "Assignments" and select the assignment "Dropbox." You can also locate the assignment Dropboxes by clicking on "Assessment" and selecting "Dropbox" from the pull-down menu.
- 4) Click Browse to select a file to attach as your submission.
- 5) Click Submit.
- 6) Double-check to make sure you see your assignment in Dropbox. It is your responsibility to make sure the assignment is submitted correctly.

Discussing Grades: You are welcome to discuss your grades with Prof. King a minimum of 24 hours after you have received work back. Please note that I put great effort into grading fairly and consistently. Mistakes in calculation do happen, but I take pride in grading well. This means that you must consider very carefully any urge you have to seek to change a grade. Do not think that "it never hurts to ask," as in this case, your request is, in fact, an affront to my academic integrity. If, however, you feel that a genuine mistake has been made or you wish for an explanation for the grade you have received, you are always welcome to make an appointment or come to my office hours. You can expect a two-week turnaround from submitting a test, paper, or assignment to the date it will be returned.

Policy on Late Work and Extensions: Late assignments will be penalized 5 percent initially and an additional 2 percent per day, up to 25 percent. When work is submitted late (even with a valid excuse), I will return the assignment to the student with only the grade and no additional comments or suggestions.

If you have a problem with the due date, please see Prof. King in advance (two weeks). If there is an emergency, I will be understanding. Students who miss an assignment due to illness must present me with a formal letter of petition and a doctor's note within one week of returning to school. In the case of a death in your family, documentation (such as an obituary) must be presented.

Finally, we live in a technological age. Unless a student was born yesterday,¹ they are aware that technology has the potential to fail and that the likelihood of such an event doubles the night before a paper is due. With this in mind, students are encouraged to back up assignments regularly; computer failure and other technological mishaps do not qualify for an extension.

MTSU's Academic Misconduct Policy

Middle Tennessee State University takes a strong stance against academic misconduct. Academic Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and fabrication.

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply.

Plagiarism: The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgment. This includes self-plagiarism, which occurs when an author submits material or research from a previous academic exercise to satisfy the requirements of another exercise and uses it without proper citation of its reuse. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts.

A student can avoid being charged with plagiarism by acknowledging sources used. Sources must be acknowledged whenever:

- a) one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
- b) one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
- c) one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials – unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult your instructor in advance. In addition, it is considered to be plagiarism when you submit as your own any academic exercise (for example, written work) prepared totally or in part by another.

¹ Students born yesterday are not permitted to enroll in RS 4020: Jesus of Nazareth.

Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in an academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours. Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that they have mastered information on an academic exercise that they have not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise. This includes unapproved collaboration, which occurs when a student works with others on an academic exercise without the express permission of the professor.

Fabrication: The intentional use of information that the author has invented when they state or imply otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include citing information not taken from the source indicated, listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise, and inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercise.

Facilitation: Helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic misconduct.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a) letting another individual copy your homework, test answer, etc.;
- b) giving your assignment, paper, homework, etc., to another student for any reason without the permission of the instructor;
- c) giving test questions to another individual that has not yet taken the exam.

To be clear: going online and taking information without proper citations, copying parts of other students' work, creating information for the purposes of making your paper seem more official, or anything involving taking someone else's thoughts or ideas without proper attribution is **academic misconduct**. If you work together on an assignment when it is not allowed, it is **academic misconduct**. If you hand in a paper (or part of a paper) to more than one class, it is **academic misconduct**. If you have a question about an assignment, please come see me to clarify. Any student suspected of committing academic misconduct will be required to meet with me to discuss the situation. I do not allow any "do-overs." All cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs for violating the academic honesty requirements in the student handbook. They will also result in failure in the course. Remember – ignorance is NOT a defense.

Grading Scale

A → 90% or above
B+ → 86% to 89%
B → 81% to 85%
B- → 77% to 80%

C+ → 73% to 76%
C → 68% to 72%
C- → 63% to 67%

D+ → 59% to 62%
D → 54% to 58%
D- → 50% to 53%
F → 49% or below

MTSU Student Resources

MTSU Tutoring:

Free tutoring is available in study skills and learning strategies in several courses such as biology, physics, history, computer information systems, math, psychology, economics, recording industry, and many more. Further information about the Religious Studies Tutor and their hours will be posted on D2L when available.

Tennessee Lottery Scholarship Holders:

Do you have a lottery scholarship? To retain the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, FA, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. If you drop this class, withdraw, or if you stop attending this class, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship, and you will not be able to regain eligibility at a later time. For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your [Lottery Statement of Understanding Form](#) or contact your [MT One Stop Enrollment Coordinator](#).

Accommodations for Students with Accessibility Needs:

ADA accommodation requests (temporary or permanent) are determined only by Disability & Access Center. Students are responsible for contacting the Disability & Access Center Office at 615.898.2783 to obtain ADA accommodations and provide the instructor with the accommodation letter from Disability & Access Center.

Accessibility concerns affect many of us, and I want you to know that I care deeply about equality, justice, and making your learning experience one in which we can all participate fully. Please do not delay contacting the Disability and Access Center to obtain your accommodation letter; ideally, you should get these letters to me within the first two weeks of class for known issues.

Options for Veterans:

MTSU is nationally recognized as a Veteran Friendly Campus. I understand that veterans and family members returning to school constitute a unique demographic and it is my goal to treat veterans fairly and with respect in this course. I also strongly encourage veterans to utilize the facilities, faculty, and staff at MTSU to help ensure academic success. Some of the services offered to veterans include the Veterans and Military Family Center on the 1st Floor of the KUC - Suite 124, BRAVO (A veteran student organization), and the veteran faculty committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have specific needs or concerns.²

Basic Needs Security:

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact their college advisor or the dean's office in the college of their major for support. Information about emergency aid for students can be found on the [MTSU Office of Student Success website](#). Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable with doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.

² Note: Accommodations for service-related injuries (temporary or permanent) are determined only by the Disability & Access Center (see above). Again, please do not hesitate to contact me if you need assistance.

Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

I wish to acknowledge that this course will take place on land, which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples. In Middle Tennessee, we are on the traditional territory of the Cherokee, Shawnee, and Yuchi Indigenous peoples. We thank them for their past, present, and future contributions as caretakers of this land, and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work and study in their midst.

An important goal of land acknowledgments is increasing support for local Indigenous communities and connecting people with resources for broadening their knowledge and involvement. If you want to explore MTSU courses with Indigenous content, please see the course listings for our [interdisciplinary minor in Native American Studies](#). If you are interested in getting involved with local tribes, please visit the [Native American Indian Association of Tennessee](#), which hosts a Pow Wow each October outside of Nashville, and [Yuchi tribe](#) site. You can also visit the [MTSU Center for Historic Preservation](#), which works to preserve the Trail of Tears that [cut through Middle Tennessee](#).

Please visit the Tennessee State Museum for a [brief history](#) of colonization in Middle Tennessee. Information on Indigenous land boundaries can be found at [Native Land Digital](#). You can learn more about land acknowledgments through the [Native Governance Center](#) and the [U.S. Department of Arts and Culture](#).

This statement was created in collaboration with members of the Yuchi and Cherokee tribes, including an alumna from MTSU. It may change over time as our relationship develops with these and other local Indigenous organizations.

The True Blue Pledge

I am True Blue As a member of this diverse community, I am a valuable contributor to its progress and success. I am engaged in the life of this community. I am a recipient and a giver. I am a listener and a speaker. I am honest in word and deed. I am committed to reason, not violence. I am a learner now and forever. I am a BLUE RAIDER. True Blue!

Course Requirements and Assessment

1 - 10% for Participation

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings in a thoughtful and lively manner. Attendance is only a necessary pre-condition for participation, not a measure of it. The participation grade is not based on attendance but rather on preparation and engagement with assigned readings, as evidenced by asking questions and actively participating in class discussions.

2 – 30% for Jesus Madness Presentation and Bracket Competition

"In addition to the four canonical gospels, we have four complete noncanonicals, seven fragmentary, four known from quotations and two hypothetically recovered for a total of 21 gospels from the first two centuries, and we know that others existed in the early period. I am confident more of them will be found."³

This course examines several pertinent texts (canonical and non-canonical) that provide insight into the historical Jesus and the context of early Christianity. However, there are many additional documents that we have not had the time to examine. For this assignment, students will offer evidence for the inclusion of a different text the next time this course is offered at MTSU.

Working individually or in pairs, students will choose one of the alternative texts (see below) and give an oral presentation (10 minutes) concerning its importance and relevance to the academic study of Jesus. Along with your oral presentation, you will provide a written report (5-6 pages) outlining your research and arguments. This document will be made available to students on the opposing team in the class on the day of your presentation.

Your presentation/report should contain the following elements:

- 1) an overview of the text's historical context and discovery;
- 2) an overview of the content of the text (its plotline, major themes, and other relevant information);
- 3) a discussion of relevant academic analysis pertaining to the text;
- 4) your own scholarly evaluation of the historical significance of the text to the study of Jesus;
- 5) a persuasive argument as to why this text (over all others) should be included in future versions of this course at MTSU.

Over several weeks, students will present their arguments in a bracket-style competition consisting of four rounds (we will draw for slots). The class as a whole will vote on which text moves forward to each subsequent round. If you are eliminated in the first or second round, you will join the side of the team that eliminated you during the final competition. A winner will be selected during the final round, which will take place during the scheduled exam slot for this course (Tuesday, December 12, 2023 from 3:30 PM – 5:30 PM).

Possible Texts:

1 and 2 Clement
Acts of Paul and Thecla
Acts of Peter
Acts of Thomas
Acts of Thomas and His Wonderworking Skin
Apocalypse of Adam
Apocalypse of Peter (aka Revelation of Peter)
The Dialogue of the Saviour
Early Jewish Christian Gospels:
(Gospel of the Ebionites; Gospel of the Hebrews;
Gospel of the Nazarenes, extant)
Egerton Gospel (fragment)
Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans

Epistle of Barnabas
Gospel of Barnabas
Gospel of Judas
Gospel of Nicodemus (aka Acts of Pilate)
Gospel of Peter
Gospel of Truth
History of Joseph the Carpenter
Letter of Abgar
Secret Book of James (aka Apocryphon of James)
Secret Mark (extant)
Sophia of Jesus Christ
Syriac Infancy Gospel (aka Arabic Infancy Gospel)

³ Charles W. Hedrick (2002) "The 34 Gospels: Diversity and Division among the Earliest Christians," *Bible Review* 18(3): 20-31.

The Bracket Competitions will take place on the following dates:

- Sweet Sixteen – Thursday, October 19, 2023 - Thursday, November 9, 2023
 - Elite Eight – Tuesday, November 14 – Tuesday, December 5, 2023
 - Final Four & Championship – Exam Slot: Tuesday, December 12 (3:30 PM – 5:30 PM)
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3 – 30% for Historical Jesus Scholarly Critiques, Responses, and Seminar Discussion

- 15 percent for chapter critique
- 10 percent for response papers (2.5 percent each)
- 5 percent for seminar discussion leadership

Students will write a scholarly chapter critique of one chapter in James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy's *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*. This book is a compilation of perspectives from five historical Jesus scholars who hold radically different views about the state of the field and associated methodologies. Each chapter comprises an article written by one of these scholars about a particular issue related to the study of Jesus as well as brief responses from the remaining four scholars. Students are to engage both the article and the four subsequent responses.

Chapter Critique – 15 percent

This assignment is due: Tuesday, October 31, 2023.

At the beginning of the term, students will sign up to review one of these chapters. Reviews should be 5-6 pages in length and should consist of the following:

- 1) a brief summary of the scholar's overall argument;
- 2) a discussion of the responses;
- 3) your own evaluation of the academic merit of the scholar's thesis;
- 4) questions you wish to raise based on your reading of the article and relevant data.

The chapter critiques will be posted to D2L as assigned readings for the rest of your classmates.

Responses to Classmates' Paper – 10 percent (4 x 2.5%)

Each week, students will write a 2–3-page response to one of the student papers posted. These responses must incorporate insight from both the assigned chapter and your classmate's chapter critique.

These responses are due to D2L at 8 AM on the day the reading will be covered. You must submit it before class in order to earn points, no late submissions will be accepted.

Note: the students assigned to the main chapters are not required to write a response on the day that their chapter is covered.

Seminar Presentation – 5 percent

On the day students' chapters are assigned, they will lead the discussion in that class with contributions from everyone else.

4 – 30% for Contemporary Jesus Critical Analysis Assignment

- 10 percent for Jesus for our Times Assessment Assignments (2.5 percent each)
- 20 percent for Contemporary Jesus critical analysis paper

For this assignment, you will examine cultural and ideological assumptions behind contemporary, popular narratives about Jesus. The purpose of this assignment is not to ascertain whether these contemporary Jesuses are accurate but rather how they work within their own cultural milieu.

Jesus for Our Times Assessment Assignment – 10 percent (4 x 2.5%)

First, on four occasions for the Jesus for our Times readings, you'll be asked to assess a scholarly discussion of contemporary representations of Jesus. These smaller assignments (2-3 pages) will prepare you to undertake your own analysis of a contemporary Jesus artifact.

Due Dates:

- Jesus in Popular Imaginary: Tuesday, September 19, 2023 (due by 8 AM)
- Jesus in Film: Thursday, October 19, 2023 (due by 8 AM)
- Jesus in TV: Thursday, November 16, 2023 (due by 8 AM)
- Jesus in Music: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 (due by 8 AM)

Contemporary Jesus Critical Analysis Paper – 20 percent

Second, you will be asked to analyze a contemporary Jesus. You will be evaluated on both your analysis and selection of an example revealing the types of representational practices examined in the readings and class discussions. These 5-6 page papers should be organized around the questions of identity representation, ideological projections, and reader reception.

Critical Analysis Paper Due: Friday, December 8, 2023 at 8 AM.

The cultural artifact you choose is up to you (but it should be approved by Dr. King), below is a list of possibilities to get you thinking:

Films

Dogma
Jesus of Montreal
The Passion of the Christ
Jesus Christ, Vampire Hunter
Ultrachrist!
The Last Hangover
Corpus Christi: Playing with Redemption*

TV Shows/Specials

Tyler Perry's The Passion: New Orleans
Family Guy's "I Dream of Jesus"
The Rising Son
Messiah
The Chosen

Musicals

Book of Mormon
Jesus Christ Superstar
Lana Del Rey's Tropic
Jesus Christ: The Musical
SPEARS: The Gospel According to Britney
*Consider either the play by Terrance McNally
or the documentary about the Queer Jesus.

Popular Books – Non-Fiction

John Spong, *Jesus for the Non-Religious*
Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ*
Shane Claiborne, *Jesus for President*
Thich Nhat Hahn, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*
Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*
Bill O'Reilly, *Killing Jesus*

Books – Fiction

Christopher Moore, *Lamb*
Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows*
Robert Koertge, *Coal Town Jesus*
Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*
William P Young, *The Shack*
Jonny Cash, *Man in White*
Elizabeth George Speare, *The Bronze Bow*
Anne Rice, *Christ Our Lord*

Cultural Phenomena

Buddy Jesus
Woody Guthrie, 'Jesus Christ for President'
John Prine, 'Jesus the Missing Years'
Janet McKenzie, Jesus of the People (art)
AI Chat with Jesus

Course Schedule and Readings

This course is designed to foster participation and dialogue. It is my hope that in this course, you will learn as much about the learning process as you do about the subject matter. With this in mind, the course adopts what is known as a “learner-centered” pedagogy. You will be expected to be an active participant in your own learning experience, as well as that of the other students in the class.

Please Note: you should complete the assigned readings before class.

Students are required to use an NRSV translation of the bible and must bring their bibles with them to every class. You are welcome to bring additional translations if you wish.

UNIT 1: SETTING THE STAGE FOR JESUS AS OBJECT AND SUBJECT OF STUDY

Tuesday, August 29, 2023 – Introductions

- Syllabus
- Discussion: Who Studies Jesus? When? Where? And how? What will the study of Jesus look like for us as scholars at a public university?

Thursday, August 31, 2023 – Thinking Historically: Jesus as an Academic Venture

- Powell, Mark Allan (1998). “Historians Discover Jesus” and “Sources and Criteria” pp. 12-50 in *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press).
- Eddy, Paul Rhodes and James K. Beilby (2009). “The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Introduction,” pp. 9-54 in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*.

Tuesday, September 5, 2023 – Jesus in Context I: Hellenistic Judaism in Palestine and Beyond

- Levine, Amy-Jill and Marc Zvi Brettler (eds). (2011). *Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation*. New York: Oxford. Read the various entries on the following:
“Jewish History” (507-13), “The Law” (515-18), “The Synagogue” (519-21), “Ioudaios” (524-26), “Jewish Movements of the New Testament Period” (526-30), “Messianic Movements” (530-35), “Jewish Miracle Workers” (536-37), “Jewish Family” (537-40), “Divine Beings” (544-46), “Afterlife and Resurrection” (549-51).
- Read one of the following: Damascus Document, Peshar Habakkuk, or 2 Maccabees.

Thursday, September 7, 2023 – Jesus in Context II: Greco-Roman World

- Fredriksen, Paula (2000) “The Legacy of Alexander,” pp. 9-17 in *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- Talbert, Charles (2006) “Miraculous Conceptions and Births in Mediterranean Antiquity” pp.79-86 in Amy Jill Levine, Dale Allison Jr., and John Dominic Crossan (eds.), *The Historical Jesus in Context* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 – Paul and Early Christianities I

- Thessalonians (NRSV)
- Akenson, Donald Harman (2000) “The Wounded Magus,” pp.9-14 and “Saul’s Life and Letters” pp. 121-145 in *Saint Saul: A Skeleton Key to the Historical Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Rollens, Sarah (2017) “Inventing Tradition in Thessalonica: The Appropriation of the Past in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 46(3): 123-132.

Thursday, September 14, 2023 – Paul and Early Christianities II

- Romans (NRSV)
- Holloway, Paul (2003) "The Rhetoric of Romans," *Review and Expositor* 100(1): 113-127.
- Johnson, Lee A. (2017) "Paul's Letters as Artifacts: The Value of the Written Text among Non-Literate People," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 46 (1): 25-34.

JESUS FOR OUR TIMES I

Tuesday, September 19, 2023 – Popular Imaginaries

- Martin, Craig (2009) "How to Read an Interpretation: Interpretive Strategies and the Maintenance of Authority," *Bible and Critical Theory* 5(1): 1-26.
- Robert Myles (2016) "The Fetish for a Subversive Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 14(1): 52-70.

UNIT 2: ANCIENT SOURCES ABOUT JESUS

Thursday, September 21, 2023 – Mark

- Gospel of Mark (NRSV)
- Fredriksen, Paula (2000) "Mark: The Secret Messiah" pp.44-52 in *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press).
- Morgan, Robert (2017) "How did Mark End his Narrative?" *The Expository Times* 128 (9): 417-426.

Tuesday, September 26, 2023 – Mark

- Swartley, Willard M. (1997) "The Role of Women in Mark's Gospel: A Narrative Analysis," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* (27)1: 16-22.
- Goodacre, Mark (2021) "How Empty Was the Tomb?" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 44(1): 134-148.
- Synoptic Problem Pericopes.

Thursday, September 28, 2023 – Q

- Q
- Kloppenborg, John S. (2008) "What is Q?" pp. 1-40 in *Q - The Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus*.

Tuesday, October 3, 2023 - Matthew

- Gospel of Matthew (NRSV)
- Marsh, Clive and Steve Moyise (2015). "Matthew's Gospel," pp.27-40 in *Jesus and the Gospels*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Zaas, Peter (2009) "Matthew's Birth Story: An Early Milepost in the History of Jewish Marriage Law," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39(3): 125-128.

Thursday, October 5, 2023 – Matthew

- Callon, Callie (2006) "Pilate the Villain: An Alternative Reading of Matthew's Portrayal of Pilate," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36(2): 62-71.
- Esler, Philip F. (2015). "Intergroup Conflict and Matthew 23: Towards Responsible Historical Interpretation of a Challenging Text." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 45(1): 38-59.
- Copeland, Rebecca L. (2023) "The Perils of Premature Judgment: Reading Matthew 21.18-22.14 with the Fig Tree." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 45(3): 264-283.

Tuesday, October 10, 2023 – Luke

- Gospel of Luke (NRSV)
- Marsh, Clive and Steve Moyise (2015). "Luke's Gospel," pp.43-56 in *Jesus and the Gospels*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Nelson, Richard D. (1988) "David: A Model for Mary in Luke?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 18(4): 138-142.

Thursday, October 12, 2023 – Luke

- Frein, Brigid Curtin (2008) "Genre and Point of View in Luke's Gospel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 38(1): 4-13.
- Rindge, Matthew S. (2014) "Luke's Artistic Parables: Narratives of Subversion, Imagination, and Transformation," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 68(4): 403-415.
- Cuany, Monique (2017) "Jesus, Barabbas and the People: The Climax of Luke's Trial Narrative and Lukan Christology (Luke 23.13-25)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 39(4): 441-458.

Tuesday, October 17, 2023 – Fall Break

JESUS FOR OUR TIMES II

Thursday, October 19, 2023 – Jesus in Film: Life of Brian

- Clanton, Dan W. (2010). "'Here, There, and Everywhere': Images of Jesus in American Popular Culture," pp. 41-60 in *Bible In/And Popular Culture: Creative Encounter*. Philip Culbertson and Elaine M. Wainwright (eds.). Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature.
- Crossley, James (2011) "Life of Brian or Life of Jesus?: Uses of Critical Biblical Scholarship and Non-Orthodox Views of Jesus in Monty Python's Life of Brian," *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 1(1): 93-114.
- Watch (Film) – Monty Python's *Life of Brian* (Available on Netflix)

UNIT 3: OTHER EARLY JESUSES

Tuesday, October 24, 2023 – Thomas

- Gospel of Thomas
- DeConick, April (2007) "The Gospel of Thomas," *The Expository Times* 118(10): 469-479.
- Cwikla, Anna (2019). "There is Nothing About Mary: The Insignificance of Mary in the Gospel of Thomas 114." *Journal for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies* 1(1): 95-112.

Thursday, October 26, 2023 – Mary

- Gospel of Mary
- Tuckett, Christopher (2007) "The Gospel of Mary," *Expository Times* 118(8): 365-371.
- Hartenstein, Judith (2020). "Why Mary?: The Gospel of Mary and Its Heroine," pp.39-46 in Mary Ann Beavis and Ally Kateusz, eds., *Rediscovering the Marys: Maria, Mariamne, Miriam* (New York: T&T Clark).

Tuesday, October 31, 2023 – Chapter Summary Due by 8 AM!

Thursday, November 2, 2023 – Infancy Gospels

- The Infancy Gospel of Thomas
- Protevangelium of James (aka The Infancy Gospel of James)
- Burke, Tony (2012) "Depictions of Children in the Apocryphal Infancy Gospels," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 41(3): 388-400.
- Whinton, Michael R. (2015) "The Moral Character Development of the Boy Jesus in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38(2): 219-240.

Tuesday, November 7, 2023 – Previous Jesus Madness Winner: Didache

- Didache
- Drapper, Jonathan A. "The Apostolic Fathers: The Didache." *The Expository Times* 117(5): 177-181.

UNIT 4: THE HISTORICAL JESUS: METHODS AND THEORIES

Thursday, November 9, 2023 – Price

- Price, Robert M. (2009) "Jesus at the Vanishing Point," pp. 55-103 in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*.
- Discussion Leader(s): _____

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 – Crossan

- Crossan, John Dominic (2009) "Jesus and the Challenge of Collaborative Eschatology," pp. 105-152 in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*.
- Discussion Leader(s): _____

JESUS FOR OUR TIMES III

Thursday, November 16, 2023 – Jesus on the Small Screen: Black Jesus

**Class does not meet in person today; Dr. King is away at a conference (see D2L for instructions).*

- Thurman, Eric. (2020). "Jesus and Postsoul Satire on the Small Screen," pp.105-106 in Dan W. Clanton and Terry R. Clark (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible and American Popular Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Black Jesus – Season 1, Episode 1 (available TBD)

JESUS FOR OUR TIMES IV

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 – Personal Jesus and Performativity: Jesus in Popular Music

**Class does not meet in person today; Dr. King is away at a conference (see D2L for instructions).*

- Choose one of the following:
 - 1) Hodge, Daniel White (2019) "Yeezus Is Jesus: Examining the Socio-Hermeneutical Transmediated Images of Jesus Employed by Kanye West," *Journal of Hip Hop Studies*: 6(1): 2-25.
Kanye, "Jesus Walks" (explicit) - <https://youtu.be/1fpkdSfPzio>
Kanye, Yezuz Full Album (explicit) - https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzMq4yH_FvVaV0uPkc_Qui3PaXnpouNld
 - 2) Boer, Roland (2010). "Jesus of the Moon: Nick Cave's Christology" pp.127-139 in *Bible In/And Popular Culture: Creative Encounter*. Philip Culbertson and Elaine M. Wainwright (eds.). Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature.
Nick Cave, "Jesus of the Moon" - <https://youtu.be/YIEyRJ84VgA>
Nick Cave, "Messiah Ward" - <https://youtu.be/v0bdjP7hUZE>
Nick Cave, "Dig! Lazarus Dig!!!" - <https://youtu.be/nuxdMQsAgJI>
 - 3) Shouse, Eric and Todd Fraley (2010). "Hater Jesus: Blasphemous Humor and Numinous Awe: (An Antidote for) Hatred in Jesus' Name?" *Journal of Media and Religion* 9: 202-215.
Everclear, "Hater" - <https://youtu.be/MdytII-OzUc>

Thursday, November 23, 2023 – American Thanksgiving (no class)

Tuesday, November 28, 2023 – Johnson

- Johnson, Luke Timothy (2009) "Learning the Historical Jesus: Historical Criticism and Literary Criticism," pp. 153-197 in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*.
- Discussion Leader(s): _____

Thursday, November 30, 2023 – Dunn

- Dunn, James D. G. (2009) "Remembering Jesus: How the Quest for the Historical Jesus Lost Its Way," pp. 199-248 in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*.
- Discussion Leader(s): _____

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 – Bock

- Bock, Darrell L. (2009) "The Historical Jesus: An Evangelical View," pp.249-300 in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*.
- Discussion Leader(s): _____

Friday, December 8, 2023 - Contemporary Jesus Paper is due at 8 AM.

Tuesday, December 12, 2023 (3:30 PM – 5:30 PM) - FINAL EXAM

- There will be assigned readings to help you prepare for the final exam, see the course announcements page for details.