JESUS

Professor: Matthew Ketchum
Email: matthew.ketchum@rutgers.edu
Telephone: (848) 932-9641 (Main Religion department number; leave message with administrative assistant)

Chat Times: Thursdays, 4PM or 5PM
Office Location: Loree Building, 134
Office Hours: Tuesdays, by appointment



Course Description

A 1965 Hollywood film about the life of Jesus of Nazareth is titled "The Greatest Story Ever Told." This is a bold claim for a movie about a Jewish peasant who lived 2000 years ago. However, the film's boisterous title is reflective of the formative role this Jesus has played in Western history up to our present day. The figure of Jesus has haunted the early formations of the Christian movement, theological controversies hundreds of years later, and countless wars fought in recent centuries. No matter one's own personal beliefs about Jesus, it is impossible to deny his historical importance.

This course is a study of the many varied constructions of Jesus of Nazareth that have occurred throughout history, both in the New Testament and elsewhere. The class will examine how Jesus' earliest followers made sense of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in ways that resulted in a diverse array of gospels and other ancient texts. We will also examine depictions of Jesus in other media (literature, art, film, etc.) and the complex ways they do and do not engage with these early sources.

Throughout the course, we will discuss and analyze the political stakes of these many manifestations of Jesus. What can we learn about the authors and/or communities that produced and then read the earliest stories of Jesus' life and teachings? Why might one text portray Jesus as very human, while another portrays him as more divine? Why do scholarly reconstructions of the historical person of Jesus differ so widely? What roles have these varying portraits of Jesus played in different social, ethical, and political movements throughout history? We will explore these questions and more as we discover no portrayal of Jesus is neutral, that his legacy has been and always be an ever-changing element of Western society.

Course Goals

After completing this course, students should have gained:
Familiarity with the many diverse depictions of Jesus of Nazareth, both found in the New Testament and elsewhere (in religious texts outside the canon, in art, literature, films, scholarship, pop culture, etc.).
The ability to compare, contrast, and analyze different portrayals of Jesus (how these portrayals intersect with issues of history, politics, ethics, theology, gender, race, etc.).
Understanding of the contents, arguments, and stakes of critical gospel and Historical Jesus scholarship.
Understanding the role that context and social location play not only in the production of depictions of Jesus, but also in interpretations of these depictions.

Instructional Methods

The teaching of this course will be done primarily through:
Assigned Offline Readings
Assigned Online Readings
Recorded Lectures
Additional Online Media
Weekly Discussions in Forums
Weekly Discussions in Chat Sessions
Weekly Quizzes
All of the above is accessible on Sakai.

Required Textbooks

- Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus*. New York: HarperOne. 2006. ISBN 9780061137785
- Prothero, Stephen. *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2003. ISBN 9780374529567
- *Harper Collins Study Bible – New Revised Standard Edition*. New York: HarperOne. 2006. ISBN 9780060786847

Course Requirements

Complete all assigned readings.

Students should complete all of a week's assigned readings (from the textbooks and any additional readings posted to the course website) before the posting deadline for that week.

Compose and participate in all assigned postings

Students are expected to make a post in the forums as instructed, based on the videos and course readings, when their group is assigned to do so. These must be posted by noon on Wednesday. Another group of students who do not compose an initial post will be required to respond to at least one of their colleague's posts before the chats on Thursday.

Attend and participate in all assigned chats.

Each week students will attend a one-hour chat session where they will discuss the readings and themes of the course with the professor. The guidelines for chat discussions and students' assigned times will be posted on Sakai.

Complete each of the weekly quizzes.

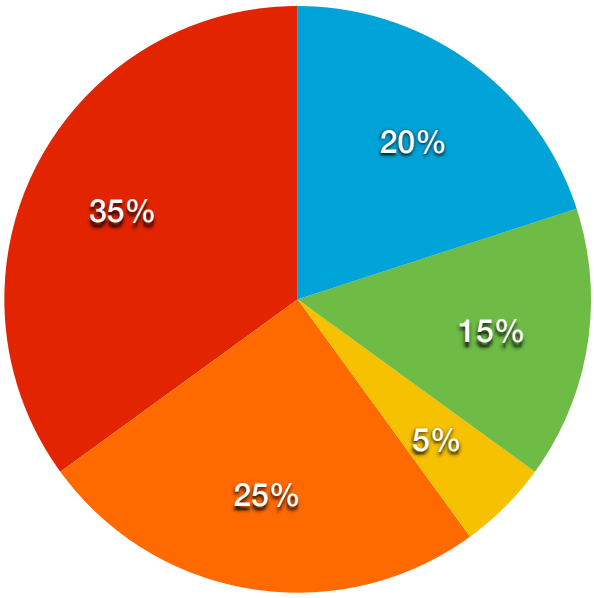
Most lessons will include one or two short quizzes that cover the readings and videos. Students must complete these quizzes, and are allowed to take them multiple times until they get all questions correct.

Complete all assigned writing assignments

Throughout the course, there will be two required writing assignments. 1) An obituary of Jesus of Nazareth. 2) An analysis of a "Jesus Object." The details of these assignments will be available on Sakai.

Grade Distribution

- Forum Postings (20%)
- Chat Sessions (15%)
- Quizzes (5%)
- Writing Assignment One (25%)
- Writing Assignment Two (35%)



Course Schedule

Every week will have the following format: Complete all readings. Follow the instructions on Sakai every week for watching videos, doing quizzes, and composing postings [see instructions above] by **noon on Wednesday**. Read and respond to your colleagues' postings as assigned before our chat sessions **the following day (Thursday)**. Chat sessions are then held on Thursdays as assigned.

Week One - January 17-20 - Introduction to the Course

- Read: N/A

Week Two - January 23-27 - Contexts Ancient and Modern

- Read:
  - (Online) Harold Attridge and L. Michael White, "Hellenistic Culture"
  - (Online) Marianne Palmer Bonz, "Religion in the Roman World"
  - Levine 1-52

Week Three - January 30-February 3 - Jesus in the Letters of Paul

- READ:
  - (Online) Selections from the writings of the Apostle Paul

- Prothero 1-42
- Levine 53-86

Week Four - February 6-10 - Jesus in the Gospels (Mark)

- READ:
  - The Gospel of Mark
  - (Online) Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ*, New York: New Press, pp. 25-70.

Week Five - February 13–17 - Jesus in the Gospels (Matthew)

- ***SELECTION OF JESUS OBJECT DUE ON FRIDAY, February 17***
- READ:
  - The Gospel of Matthew
  - Levine 87-117

Week Six - February 20-24 - Jesus in the Gospels (Luke)

- READ:
  - The Gospel of Luke
  - (Online) Coleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 127-142.

Week Seven - February 27-March 3 - Jesus in the Gospels (John)

- READ:
  - The Gospel of John
  - Levine 119-166

Week Eight - March 6-10 - The Cosmic Jesus (Revelation)

- READ:
  - The Revelation of John
  - (Online) Moore, Stephen D. *God's Beauty Parlor: And Other Queer Spaces in and Around the Bible*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 173-200.

SPRING BREAK - MARCH 13-17 - NO CLASS

Week Nine - March 20-24 - Jesus in Other Gospels (Thomas and Mary)

- ***OBITUARY DUE MONDAY March 20***

- READ:
  - The Gospel of Thomas
  - The Gospel of Mary
  - Prothero 56-64, 87-123
  - (Online) Jane Schaberg with Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene Understood*. Continuum, 2006, pp. 98-126.

Week Ten - March 27-31 - Jesus in the Talmud and Qur'an

- ***ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, March 31***
- READ:
  - (Online) Selections from the Talmud
  - (Online) Selections from the Qur'an
  - (Online) Peter Schafer, *Jesus in the Talmud*. Princeton University Press, 2007, pp. 95-129.
  - (Online) Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*. Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 3-17.

Week Eleven - April 3-7 - Jesus, Gender, and Sexuality

- READ:
  - (Online) Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Christology and Feminism: Can a Male Saviour Save Women?"
  - (Online) Dale Martin, "Sex and the Single Savior," *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006, pp. 91-102.

Week Twelve - April 10-14 - Jesus and Race

- ***THESIS AND OUTLINE FOR FINAL PAPER DUE ON MONDAY, April 14***
- READ:
  - Prothero 200-228
  - (Online) James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 1-29.
  - (Online) Chandra Johnson, "Should Christians Boycott 'Black Jesus' or Try to Learn from it?"

Week Thirteen - April 17-21 - Jesus at the Movies (no chat, only forum)

- READ:
  - Prothero 124-157
  - (Online) Adele Reinharz, *Jesus of Hollywood*, New York: Oxford, 2007, pp. 1-20, 251-256.

Week Fourteen - April 24-21 - Wrap Up

- READ:
  - Prothero 291-304
  - Levine 215-228

FINAL PAPER DUE - Wednesday, May 3

Policies

Religious Holidays:

It is University policy (University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, 2.47B, formerly 60.14f) to excuse without penalty students who are absent from class because of religious observance, and to allow the make-up of work missed because of such absence. Examinations and special required out-of-class activities shall ordinarily not be scheduled on those days when religiously observant students refrain from participating in secular activities. Absences for reasons of religious obligation shall not be counted for purposes of reporting. *Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule*.

Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 mandate that reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities. If a student has a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact the instructor early in the semester so that she can provide or facilitate in providing necessary accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. The student must register with the Office of Disability Services. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Academic Integrity:

Students will be expected to adhere to the University policy on Academic Integrity (available online here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf), regarding plagiarism, cheating, academic sabotage, etc.

Student-Wellness Services:

Just In Case Web App

http://codu.co/cee05e

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / https://ods.rutgers.edu/

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / http://www.scarletlisteners.com/

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.