285-01 The Historical Jesus

Lisa Monast

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The Historical Jesus: Course Syllabus
Fall 2014
Lisa Monast, instructor
monastl@xavier.edu

Office Hours: by appointment; please contact Lisa to schedule

This syllabus is subject to change. I will communicate all changes in a timely manner. It is imperative that students check their email daily for course updates on assignments.

Course Description
This course is an introduction to the study of the historical Jesus – a quest for locating the authentic voice of Jesus in his historical setting and in subsequent historical settings. Because the quest requires seekers to notice and identify the strata of the historical terrain, we will learn about and utilize the analytical tools used in current scholarly biblical scholarship to identify the layers of meaning and experience that make up the tradition. To better understand the direction of more recent scholarship, we will also touch on past methodologies. Finally, we will place our findings in conversation with the varied and often disparate images of Jesus in our world today as well as in the world(s) throughout the last two millennia.

Required Texts
1. A Bible – any will do; bring this to every class session
2. All other readings will be provided online. Print these, and bring the hardcopy to class.

Grading Policy
It is expected that students submit their work in class on the day that it is due. In the event the student is absent that day, it is expected that the student submit the work electronically no later than the start of class time.

If a student is unable to meet this requirement, he or she should discuss the situation with the instructor on the day the work is due. Students submitting late work will lose percentage points on the late assignment, up to 5 points per day late. The percentage of points lost for late work is directly related to the level and quality of the student’s communication with the instructor regarding the work in question.

This course will follow the Theology Department Grading Guidelines (posted below.)

Students will receive a zero for any work they miss due to absence.

Attendance Policy
Regular attendance is each student’s responsibility. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class. If you arrive late, it is up to you to get with the instructor to have your status changed from absent to late. Excessive tardiness will equate to a missed class.

Because this course only meets 7 times, rather than the typical 8 times for CAPS courses (due to Fall Holiday), any absence for any reason will result in a loss of points for the course grade, as follows:
1 absence = 8 points deducted from course grade
2 absences = 20 points deducted from course grade (which will almost certainly result in a failing grade)

When a student is absent, it is the student’s responsibility to keep up with the class. In the case of absence, students should not ask the instructor for missed notes; rather, they should ask a fellow student.

Exchange contact information with three students. Make sure you ask for the best way to reach them.

_________________________
_________________________
_________________________

**Participation**

This class is a partnership. What students bring to it will in part determine what they receive from it. In this light, each student is responsible for every other student’s class experience. Students are therefore encouraged to make the class meaningful for one another by actively engaging the material and one another with questions and discussions.

**Technology**

No cell phones, no laptops, no e-readers/ipads/etc. (If you have to charge it or plug it in, don’t have it out in class.) Students can check in with their technology during the breaks.

**Formatting Written Work**

All written work must be formatted as follows: Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double-spaced. Hard copies are preferred and expected for submission of all written work.

Electronic submission is permitted in the event of extenuating circumstances, in which case the student must communicate their situation to the instructor. Written work submitted electronically must be in MS Office Word format only.

**Assignments and Grade Distribution**

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All assignments will be announced in class and via email and will be posted to the course page on Canvas. It is imperative that you check your email regularly for assignment updates. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out if any assignments were given.
Reading Questions
These are assigned in order to assess and facilitate comprehension and to ready students for the group work and discussion in class. Students should bring their completed reading question assignments with them to class for use and reference during class discussion. They will be collected at the end of class.

Class Group Assignments
These assignments vary in style and format. Clear instructions will be given each class.

Final Paper
A final essay will be required near the end of the course. The instructor reserves the right to return essays to students for re-work until students achieve adequate progress. The goal for this paper is to think, articulate, and learn. When the instructor feels this has transpired to an acceptable degree, the assignment will be considered complete.

Exam
There will be 1 take home exam. It will be largely an essay exam.

Theology Department Grading Policy
Grades indicate a professor’s assessment of a student’s academic performance and not a student’s effort. In accordance with University policy, letter grades in undergraduate theology courses mean the following:

A = Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination)

B = Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard)

C = Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline)

D = Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass

F = Failure

A=94-100; A-=92-93; B+=90-91; B=87-89; B-=84-86; C+=82-83; C=79-81; C-=76-78; D+=74-75; D=71-73; D-=68-70.

The Grading of Objective and Essay Tests
Grades reflect the accuracy, coherence, clarity and completeness of answers and essays.

The Grading of Participation
A = The student is consistently well prepared for class, actively listens and contributes thought-provoking insights.
B = The student is prepared for class and demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the material.
C = The student is inconsistently prepared for class and is infrequently engaged with the material.
D = The student is minimally prepared for class and shows a lack of interest in the course material.
F = The student shows lack of interest in the course, is frequently late or absent, and regularly demonstrates a lack of commitment to the class.

The Grading of Writing Assignments

Writing assignments are evaluated according to content, use of theological sources/resources and expression of ideas.
Sources and/or resources in theological work include the following: scripture, Christian tradition (theological and spiritual writings of the past, documents from church councils, papal encyclicals, bishops’ pastoral letters, contemporary theological writing), human experience/knowledge/reasoning and the “sense of the faithful” within the Christian community. The sources/resources should be used with critical intelligence, historical sensitivity and imagination.

Content

A = The essay clearly states a thesis, develops it with careful analysis, insight, and originality; and supports and defends the argument substantially and concretely with appropriate reference to and reflection on sources/resources.
B = The essay adequately defines a thesis and supports it sufficiently and consistently; it defends the argument, is accurate, and exhibits familiarity with sources/resources and reflection on them.
C = The essay lacks a clear thesis, may contain inaccuracies, and/or fails to exhibit familiarity with or reflection on the sources/resources.
D = The essay lacks a thesis, contains inaccuracies, and/or does not refer to appropriate sources/resources.
F = The essay is dishonest or bears little or no relation to the assignment.

Interpretation

A = Demonstrates keen understanding of the cultural and historical context of the sources/resources used in the essay and a parallel understanding of the situation to which they are being applied. When appropriate, assesses well other interpretative options, explains interpretive choices made in the essay and exhibits creativity or originality.
B = Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the cultural and historical context of the sources/resources used in the essay and a parallel understanding of the situation to which they are being applied. When appropriate, makes reference to other interpretive options.
C = Analysis is inadequate or lacking in one of the two aspects above. Does not consider other interpretative options.
D = Analysis is inadequate in both aspects above.
F = Little to no interpretation given.

Organization

A = Essay progresses in carefully ordered stages; transitions effective; paragraphs and sentences coherent.
B = Essay’s purpose generally clear; transitions usually coherent; paragraphs and sentences usually coherent.
C = Essay’s purpose apparent, but incompletely carried out; or paragraphs ineffectively developed; or transitions too abrupt; sentences sometimes incoherent.
D = Purpose not always apparent; paragraphs poorly developed; transitions abrupt or unclear; sentences sometimes incoherent.
F = Purpose not apparent; paragraphs incoherent, or undeveloped; transitions lacking; sentences incoherent.

Mechanics/Expression

A = Conforms to standard usage or rarely diverges from it in respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Creative and precise word choice.
B = Infrequently diverges from standard usage in respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Appropriate word choice.
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<th>Week 1 - 8/28</th>
<th>Syllabus Review</th>
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<td>Snack Sign Up</td>
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<td>Group Work: Round Table</td>
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<td>Introduction to Scripture</td>
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<td>Assignment due next week: Read Davies ch 1 &amp; 2, including the Mark passages referenced in the reading, and read Luke-Acts; complete reading questions #1</td>
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<td>Focus: Religion and Society in the Roman World</td>
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<td>Assignment due next week: Read White ch 9 and the Gospel of Mark; complete reading questions #2</td>
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<th>Week 3 - 9/11</th>
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<td>From Jesus to Christ: Gospels</td>
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<td>Group work: from Mark to John, exploring some comparisons</td>
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<td>Parables and Aphorisms</td>
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<td>Assignment due next week: Read White ch 10 and the Gospel of Matthew; complete reading questions #3</td>
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<th>Week 4 – 9/18</th>
<th>Group work: more gospel parallels</th>
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<td>The Task: so which Jesus is the real Jesus?</td>
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<td>Overview: methodologies, approaches, conclusions</td>
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<td>Our criteria</td>
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<td>Introduction to a voiceprint: Love of enemies, Samaritan</td>
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<td>Assignment due next week: Read Borg ch 7; complete reading questions #4</td>
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<th>Week 5 – 9/25</th>
<th>The Invisible Realm…Side Doors, Wardrobes, and Fleeting Glimpses</th>
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<td>Trust and Other Curiosities</td>
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<td>A word about miracles</td>
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Assignment due next week: Read Borg ch. 8; complete reading questions #5

Week 6 – 10/2
Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outhouses
  Jesus and Power
  Group work: power paradigms
  Jesus and Women
  Jesus and Table Fellowship

Assignment due by 5:00 PM Thursday, 10/9: Final Paper

Week 7 – 10/9
No Class - Fall Holiday

Take Home Exam posted, due last day of class;
Read Borg chapter 9 (it’s on the exam)

Week 8 – 10/16
Birth and Death: a further exploration of meaning making
Legacy: the voiceprint of Rome
  • The Revelation of John: Blessing, honor, glory and power
    be unto him that sits upon the throne!
  • The Pastoral Epistles: know your place, enact your role, fall in line. (see also, Cartman, South Park, “Respect my authoritay!”)
  • The Acts of Paul and Thecla: a vivid snapshot of two very different visions / an ancient illustration of conflicting impulses

Group work: Now what?

Exam due in class