

SYLLABUS - REL 3577 TPS: JESUS OF NAZARETH

Catawba College, Spring 2010

Dr. Barry R. Sang

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Course Description

Jesus of Nazareth is a course designed to introduce students to the different pictures of Jesus found in the New Testament and non-canonical gospels, and to acquaint students with the major issues in the modern quest for the historical Jesus. This course is about challenges—challenges to traditional understandings of Jesus; challenges facing scholars in their reconstruction of a “historical” picture of Jesus; challenges in unpacking both the reliability of and the interpretation of the ancient sources we have about Jesus.

After an introduction to the tools of modern biblical scholarship, the course will involve students in a hands-on investigation of the primary sources. The course's first part will provide a suitable historical and literary framework for understanding the variety of ways Jesus and his message were perceived and communicated in Early Christianity. The second part of the course will address the issues in modern interpretation. The *course goals* are that, at the end of the course, students will be able to:

- a) Describe verbally and in writing the Christologies dominant in the canonical and non-canonical gospels;
- b) Apply redaction and source criticisms to biblical and extra-biblical sources;
- c) Clearly articulate and defend verbally their interpretations of biblical and extra-biblical sources;
- d) Clearly articulate verbally and in writing the dominant positions in the modern debate about the "historical Jesus."

Textbooks

The following are required for responsible participation in this course:

Elliott, J.K., ed. *The Apocryphal Jesus*. Oxford University Press, 1996. ISBN: 0-19-826384-8.

Powell, Mark Allan. *Jesus as a Figure in History*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. ISBN: 0-664-25703-8

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, or, any New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Consult Dr. Sang for any exceptions.

I would encourage (though not require) you to purchase a copy of Kurt Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, English Edition. ISBN: 082670500-6

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be checked promptly each day at the beginning of class. Tardiness should be a rare exception; if it persists, each late arrival will be counted as an absence. **If you are late for class you MUST see me after class to insure that I mark you present; otherwise you will be marked absent.** Three absences are allowed during the semester, whether "justified" or not. **Each absence beyond the three permitted will result in a two-point reduction in your final grade for the course. Any student missing more than one fourth of the sessions will automatically be given an F or an I for the course, depending on the circumstances.** Papers turned in late without a justifiable and verifiable excuse will be penalized 10 points for each day they are late.

Paper Policy

The papers submitted in this course are expected to reflect those qualities epitomized by a liberal arts education. *Your grade will be directly affected by grammar, syntax and spelling. After determining your paper's grade, I will deduct 2 points for each grammatical error, and 1 point for each spelling and punctuation error. The greatest total penalty, however, can only reach 10 points (i.e., one letter grade).* The simplest way to avoid such penalties is to have a reliable peer proof-read your paper before submitting it for a grade. For further information on plagiarism and the Honor Code consult the appropriate pages in the *Catawba College Catalogue*. However, the following list of "don't do its" will give you some good, general wisdom:

Some of the Most Common Types of Plagiarism

1. Failing to identify direct or word-for-word quotations by use of appropriate symbols and reference to the source.
2. Restating in your own words the work (ideas, conclusions, words) of another without reference to the source.
3. Presenting as your own the creative work (for instance, music or photographs or, of course, written work) of another without proper acknowledgment.

The Writing Center

The Catawba College Writing Center provides free, one-on-one consultations to all Catawba students. Our tutors have been intensely trained, and while they won't rewrite students' papers for them, they will give students feedback and encouragement at all stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing). Students who use the writing center should be prepared to discuss the assignment

they are working on and to begin making revisions, with the tutor's guidance, during the session. **All** students are encouraged to use the Writing Center which is open afternoons (in ADMN 211) and evenings (in the Library, Study Room #5). Walk-ins are welcome, but we honor appointments first. For more information or to make an appointment, call 704-645-4819 or stop by ADMN 211.

Summary of Grade Distribution

Class Participation:	30%
Class Papers:	40%
Papers #1-2:	(10% each)
Paper #3:	(20%)
Final Examination:	30%

Grading Scale:

100-92:	A	Clearly superior college-level performance
91-90:	A-	
89-87:	B+	
86-83:	B	Good college-level performance
82-80:	B-	
79-77:	C+	
76-73:	C	Acceptable college-level performance
72-70:	C-	
69-67:	D+	
66-63:	D	Minimally-acceptable college-level performance
62-60:	D-	
≤ 59:	F	Failure to achieve college-level performance

TOPICS AND PREPARATIONS

PLEASE NOTE: The following dates are approximate. It is your responsibility to follow the course closely so that you will be prepared to contribute to each session.

I. Introduction

1/14 A. Our Goals and Approach
Preparation: Borg, 174-179 (handout)

1/19 B. Research Tools: Dr. Sang

II. **1/21** History of the Scholarly Investigation: From Reimarus to the Present

Preparation: Read the following link:

http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/religious_studies/NTBib/quest.html

III. The Sources

A. **1/26** Josephus

Preparation: Powell, pp. 31-34; Meier, Ch. 3 (handout). What may we learn from Josephus about who Jesus was, and what are the major issues in using Josephus as a source for the historical Jesus? Are there any other sources for knowledge of Jesus beyond Josephus and the canonical gospels?

B. **1/28** Gospel and Gospels

Preparation: Charles Talbert, *What Is a Gospel?*, pp. 92-96, 133-135 (reserve); Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, pp. 9-14, 24-29, 43-47 (reserve). As you read this material, don't become bogged down in the minutiae, but try to discover the major questions in the debate about what constitutes "gospel."

C. **2/2,4** Historical Critical Analysis and the Synoptic Problem: An In-Depth Review

Preparation: Powell, pp. 35-43. Read an **excellent** summary of the synoptic problem found in the following website: <http://www.hypotyposesis.org/synoptic-problem/#Tuckett%201992>. Read the following links: "Synoptic Problem FAQ;" "Synopsis;" "Synoptic Theories & Hypotheses" (especially the Two Source Hypothesis and the Griesbach Hypothesis). **ALSO READ** Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament*, Chs. 6 & 8 (two copies of the book are on reserve).

D. **2/9,11** The Canonical Gospels: Composition and Redaction Themes: *From Jesus to Christ*, film #3.

Preparation: Read Sang, "Jesus in the Canonical Gospels," (Course Documents); Meier, Ch. 2 (handout).

E. **2/16** What Have We Learned So Far? And, Criteria for Evaluating Historical Authenticity

Preparation: Powell, 46-50

- F. 2/18,23 The Apocryphal (i.e., Non-Canonical) Gospels: Composition and Themes

Preparation: Elliott, pp. 1-5; Powell, 43-46

IV. Jesus of Nazareth: Life Fragments

2/25 *From Jesus to Christ, film #1*

A. Infancy and Childhood

3/2 1. Canonical Versions

Preparation: Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 25-38(reserve).

Compare and contrast Matthew's and Luke's infancy narratives, and be ready to discuss how their content and arrangement support their redactional interests.

Do you agree with Brown's analysis? Also, read Luke 2:21-52. What is Jesus like in these pericopes?

3/4,16 2. Apocryphal Versions

Preparation: Elliott, Chs. 1-3.

Paper Assignment #1: As you read these "banned substances," compare and contrast them with the canonical pictures. To what factors might you attribute the differences and the emphases? What circumstances in the Early Church might have given rise to these pictures of Jesus? Prepare an approximately 3-4 page paper describing your response to these questions. *Your paper will be read and defended in class. Please note that your paper needs to conform to the paper guidelines found in your syllabus, and that it will be graded accordingly. Due on 3/4.*

B. Jesus as Teacher: Jesus of the Parables and Apocrypha

3/18,23,25 1. The Canonical Parables: Form and Function

Preparation: *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, "Parable" (Skim this article by Dominic Crossan to learn about the different types of NT parables and possible clues for interpretation. This source is found in the Reference Section of the Library.)

Paper Assignment #2: You will be assigned a parable and then must analyze it according to the criteria listed below. Prepare an approximately 3-4 page paper (typed) describing your response to these questions. *Your paper will be read and defended in class. Please note that your paper needs to conform to the paper*

guidelines found in your syllabus, and that it will be graded accordingly. Due on 3/18.

- (1). Where does the parable begin and end? Does some part of the parable represent redaction by the gospel author?
- (2). What is the main point? What is the "surface idea;" i.e., the major theme without interpretation? With whom does Jesus expect the listener to identify?
- (3). Which of Crossan's types of parables does this represent?
- (4). What is the context/place of the parable within the author's flow of thought?
- (5). What role does the parable play in the evangelist's picture of Jesus?
- (6). What are the implications of our conclusions for our picture of Jesus and of the Early Church?

I would encourage you to research your parable in the commentaries and topical holdings in the library to assist you in your analysis. You may use online resources, but only from academic institutions, or from those approved by Dr. Sang in writing.

3/30

2. The Apocryphal Materials

Preparation: Elliott, Ch. 4. How are the pictures of Jesus here similar to and different from the canonical pictures? Be prepared to defend your claims with specifics.

4/1

3. Torah Obedience vs. Torah Denial in the Canonical Jesus

Preparation: Analyze the following pericopes from Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* according to their authenticity and according to the picture of Jesus' attitude toward the Law they present:

Pericopes 54-56, 59; Luke 7.33-35; Mark 2.27; pars. 150, 252; Mt. 19.16-23

4/6,8

4. The Canonical Jesus as Miracle Worker

Preparation: The following pericopes in Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* will be divided among groups for analysis: 35-38, 41, 42-43, 47-48, 85-86, 90-91, 95, 97, 147-148, 152, 156, 163, 233, 264.

Answer for each pericope the following questions, noting variations among the parallels, and be prepared to lead class discussion of your results:

- a). What action does Jesus perform?
- b). What reason (if any) does Jesus give for his action?
- c). How does the healed person behave?
- d). What is the reaction of the spectators?

- e). Do you recall any apocryphal parallels?
- f). What image of Jesus as miracle worker is portrayed here?

V. **The Debate Over the Historical Jesus:**

4/13

A. Jesus Scholarship in the 1980s and the Jesus Seminar

Preparation: Powell, Ch. 4. I strongly recommend that you read this first. Then, read *Introduction to the Five Gospels*, Robert Funk *et al.*, pp. 1-38 (found in Course Documents on Blackboard). *Come to class prepared to discuss the major points in Powell and Funk, as well as your reaction to the Jesus Seminar's work.*

4/15-27

B. Contemporary Images of Jesus

Preparation: Powell, Chs. 3, 5-9. Everyone in the class must read these chapters. However, pairs of you will be assigned responsibility for giving a 30-min. class presentation on one of the scholars represented in the readings. (Your scholar will be assigned you by the course's benevolent dictator.) In your presentation you will do the following: 1) Describe your scholar's method for studying Jesus; 2) Describe your scholar's portrait of Jesus; 3) Evaluate your scholar's methodology and portrait; 4) Lead the class in discussing your scholar's position and its evaluation.

Paper Assignment #3: Due on 4/15, a paper in which you describe the results of your deliberations regarding parts 1-3 of your presentation. Your paper should be 5-6 pages long, and properly documented according to either MLA or APA style. As always, it must adhere to the Paper Policy requirements as described in your Syllabus.

VI. **Who Was the Historical Jesus, and does the Historical Jesus Matter? (Final Exam: Thursday, April 29, 1:30-2:45 p.m.; Thursday, May 6, 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.)**

Your final exam for this course will have two parts: the paper you will prepare for class, and the class presentation and discussion of your positions during the last class day of class and the scheduled final exam period. Your paper itself will have two parts as well. Please comply with the following directions:

Part I: (Who was the historical Jesus?) Carefully read **both** of the two assignments listed at the end of this paragraph. Levine and Ehrman represent different views of the historical Jesus. Decide which of the two authors you personally agree with and very, very carefully explain why. You must also explain why you reject the other author's view of the historical Jesus. Of course, you may decide to agree with both scholars on some point or another but, in any case, you must explain your reasoning. This is part of a final examination, so you must use what you have learned in this course to help justify

your position. Both of these readings are available under Course Documents on Blackboard.

Bart Ehrman,
Amy-Jill Levine

Part II: (Does recovering the historical Jesus matter?) A good portion of this course has been about the challenges faced during the attempts to recover the historical Jesus. Now is your chance to defend whether you think scholars should be doing this. Should it matter to Christianity whether the “Jesus of history” is known? This is part of a final examination, so you must use what you have learned in this course to help justify your position. Also, this question may be answered either by a believer or a non-believer. To help “jump start” you on the topic, read Ch. 10 in Powell’s book.

Final Examination Format (Remember that this will take place over two sessions):

The paper must conform to the Paper Policy stated earlier in this syllabus, and it will be graded for grammar as well. It **MUST** be properly documented, using either the MLA or APA style. The paper should be approximately 6-8 pages long, not counting the Works Cited page. **You must bring enough stapled and double-sided copies of your paper to distribute to each member of the seminar.**

You will receive two grades for this assignment: the grade for the paper itself (75%) and the grade for your presentation and defense (25%).

