

THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Rutgers University-Camden
Dept. of Philosophy and Religion
Fall, 2022
Course: 50:840:208:90 Index: 04450
Online Course-Using Canvas

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Officer Hours: By Appointment--(*Just Ask*)

Who was the Jewish teacher named Jesus? What were the circumstances surrounding his birth? Did he have brothers and sisters? Did they follow his movement? What was his relationship with Mary Magdalene? Was Jesus married? Did he have children? What was his relationship to John the Baptist? As the leader of a movement within early Judaism, what was Jesus trying to accomplish? What were his actual beliefs and teaching? Why was he executed? Have archaeologists found the real location of his tomb? Was Mary Magdalene buried there? What role did Jesus' family play in the movement after he died? This course will explore how scholars use historical method to reconstruct the life of an ancient figure as well as how ideas and beliefs about a religious leader develop over time. It will examine the original sources for the historical Jesus and the major issues under debate in current scholarship.

HERITAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

This course fulfills all five of the criteria for the new general education requirement in *Heritages and Civilizations* (HAC). Heritages and Civilizations offers students an introduction to cultures in existence before the 19th Century and the dynamics of continuity and change over a significant span of time. By the end of our course students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of key ideas and/or practices of these heritages, cultures or civilizations.

As a background for understanding the historical Jesus, the course will cover concepts and practices found in early Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. The central beliefs of the historical Jesus and early Christianity will also be considered.

2. Analyze processes of historical development and change in these heritages, cultures or civilizations.

The history covered in this course begins with Judaism in the Hellenistic period (ca 323 B.C.E. to 63 B.C.E.) to set the stage for the culture in which Jesus was born. It continues into the Roman period. It covers the historical Jesus and also how beliefs about him developed in the decades and centuries after his death.

3. Apply fundamental terms and concepts of one or more scholarly approaches to heritages, cultures or civilizations dating from before the 19th Century.

The course will demonstrate how scholars use the principles of Historical criticism to evaluate sources, consider evidence and reconstruct the lives of historical figures. Students will be introduced to major terms and concepts used in this discipline as well as those specific to historical Jesus studies.

4. Construct clear, coherent, and articulate interpretations of these heritages, cultures or civilizations.

In class discussions, the online forum and the term paper, students will be engaged in interpreting the texts and traditions about Jesus throughout the semester. A major question will be how Jesus, as a first century Jew, was a product of early Jewish culture and the religious roles that existed at the time. The term paper will require analyzing and evaluating a major work of scholarship against the historical evidence.

5. Make critical connections between these heritages, cultures, or civilizations and the present.

Students will compare the historical Jesus and early Christian views of Jesus with modern ideas about him.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2009, Paperback Edition--Note: NEW edition 2009) ISBN: 9780061800351

Robert J. Miller, *The Complete Gospels* (Polebridge/Westar, 2010, 4th Ed., Paperback) ISBN: 9781598150186

James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007--Revised Edition with a New Epilogue, Paperback)
ISBN: 9780743287241 (Note: Make sure your copy is the 2007 revised edition with the new epilogue)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Participation in the Online Discussion Forum for each unit. Students will be expected to read the discussions and post *a minimum of two messages per unit*. The new unit will begin each Tuesday at 12:00 AM and end each Monday night at 11:59 PM. This is a **weekly, per unit** assignment and will be graded on that basis. You **cannot** post messages in the discussion for a unit after the date the unit ends. **The first message should be posted during the first half of the week (Tuesday-Thursday)**. Discussion questions will be posted for each unit. For the first message of the week students should respond to **one** of these numbered questions. **The second message must be a response to one of the posts by the other students, analyzing the other student's post and taking the discussion further, so it will normally be posted during the second half of the week (Friday-Monday)**. See the document "Grading Criteria for the Discussion Forum" for more help with this assignment. You are expected to follow the grading criteria in this document exactly.

3) A term paper of 5-7 pages that represents your part of a three member team project. Specific directions for doing this paper are presented in the course term paper guide available on the opening/home page in Canvas.. **Your list of team members must be chosen and submitted through email by Monday, October 10. Failing to submit the list of team members by October 10 will result in an automatic reduction of the term paper grade for each team member by one full letter.** Please note that after turning in your list of team members you are not allowed to change your team without first receiving permission from the instructor. The due dates for the paper are as follows:

**Monday, Oct. 10 Submit list of team members by email to
banner@camden.rutgers.edu with subject line: "Jesus Project: Team Name"
Team Member #1: Name
Team Member #2: Name
Team Member #3: Name**

**The papers themselves must be submitted using the Paper Submission Link in the
Opening/Home Page on Canvas.**

**Monday, November 7 Team Member #1 Paper Due (Also send your paper to your other
team members by email by this due date.)**

Monday, November 21 Team Member #2 Paper Due

Monday, December 5 Team Member #3 Paper Due

4) A Mid-Term exam over the first seven units **to be completed sometime between 12:00 AM, Tuesday, October 25 and 11:59 PM, Monday, October 31**. A study guide will be available by October 18.

5) A Final Exam over units 8-14 **to be completed sometime between 12:00 AM, Tuesday, December 13 and 11:59 PM, Monday, December 19**. A study guide will be available by April 27.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Online Discussions	25%
Project Paper	25%
Mid-Term	25%
Final	25%
	100%

COURSE OUTLINE AND READING:

Canvas = articles that are linked in the "Readings" section for the unit on Canvas

Unit One—"Sorting History from Fiction"—Method: How Do Scholars Reconstruct Ancient History?

Tues., Sept 6-Mon., Sept 12

Introduction to the Course; The Complex Ways in Which Stories Develop

Urban Legends Reference Page: "Rolled Oaths" (Canvas)

Imagining History: "Jesus, the 21st Century Interview" (Canvas)

Unit Two—"Jesus' World"—The Background of Jewish, Greek and Roman Culture

Tues., Sept 13-Mon., Sept. 19

Source Focus: Early Non-Christian References to Jesus in the Ancient World

James Tabor, "The Christians as the Romans Saw them" (from Tabor's Blog-Linked on Canvas)

James Tabor, "Josephus on Jesus" (from Tabor's Blog-Linked on Canvas)

Article on Jewish Society in the First Century (Canvas)

Tabor, "6—A Kingdom of this World" 95-108

Tabor, "7—The Religion of Jesus the Jew" 109-121

Unit Three—"The Nature of the Sources"—Accounts of Jesus in the Ancient World

Tues., Sept. 20-Mon., Sept. 26

Mark, Matthew, Luke, John (Miller)

Analysis of Peter's Denial (Canvas)

Tabor, "2—A Son of David?" 48-58

Unit Four—"An Unmarried Mother"—The Circumstances Around Jesus' Birth

Tues., Sept. 26-Mon., Oct. 3

Source Focus: Infancy Gospel of James (Miller)

Article on Supernatural Births in the Ancient World (Canvas)

Tabor, "1—A Virgin Shall Conceive" 37-47

Tabor, "3—A Unnamed Father of Jesus?" 59-72

Unit Five—"Family Matters"—Jesus' "Forgotten" Brothers and Sisters

Tues., Oct. 4-Mon., Oct. 10 (**List of Team Members Due Mon., Oct. 10**)

Source Focus: Infancy Gospel of Thomas (Miller)

Tabor, "4—Children of a Different Father" 73-81

Tabor, "5—The Lost Years" 85-94

Ancient Sources on the Death of James (Canvas)

Unit Six—"Mary Who Comes from Magdala"—Was Jesus Married?

Tues., Oct. 11-Mon., Oct. 17

Articles on Mary of Magdala (Canvas)

Source Focus: Gospel of Mary of Magdala (Miller)

Unit Seven—"John the One Who Immerses"—Jesus as Disciple

Tues., Oct. 18-Mon., Oct. 24

Tabor, "8—Hearing the Voice" 125-137

Josephus on John the Baptist (Canvas)

Tabor, "9—A Crucial Missing Year" 138-152

Unit Eight—"Jesus and the Supernatural"—Healer, Exorcist and Visionary

Tues., Oct. 25-Mon., Oct. 31

MIDTERM EXAM over Units 1-7 must be completed by 11:59 PM, Mon., Oct. 31

Source Focus: The Egerton Gospel (Miller)

Article on Jesus and Miracles (Canvas)

Unit Nine—"Jesus the Jew"—Jesus and the Torah

Tues., Nov. 1-Mon., Nov. 7 (**Mon., Nov. 7 Team Member #1 Paper Due**)

Tabor, "15—Go to James the Just" 243-258

Imagining History: "James—A Computer Reconstructed Interview" (Canvas)

Tabor, "16—The Challenge of Paul" 259-273

Tabor, "17—The Legacy of the Jesus Dynasty" 272-283

Unit Ten—"Waiting for the Son of Man"—Apocalyptic, Jesus' Self-Identity and the Kingdom of God

Tues., Nov. 8-Mon., Nov. 14

Source Focus: Gospel of Thomas (in Miller); The "Q" Gospel (in Miller)

Tabor, "10—Ushering in the Kingdom" 153-167

Tabor, "11—Herod Strikes" 171-186

Unit Eleven—"Purifying the Temple"—Jesus' Death: Arrest, Trial and Crucifixion

Tues., Nov. 15-Mon., Nov. 21 (**Mon., Nov. 21 Team Member #2 Paper Due**)

Source Focus: Gospel of Peter (Miller)

Tabor, "12—Last Days in Jerusalem" 187-207

Tabor, "13—The King is Dead" 208-232

Unit Twelve—"Jesus Must Be Turning Over in His Grave"—The Empty Tomb and Resurrection Appearances

Tues., Nov. 22-Mon., Nov. 28

Tabor, "Introduction: A Tale of Two Tombs" 7-32

Tabor, "Epilogue" 319-334

Tabor, "14—Dead but Twice Buried" 223-240

Unit Thirteen—"Jesus Laughed"—The Development of Christianity in the Decades after Jesus' Death

Tues., Nov. 29-Mon., Dec. 5 (**Mon., Dec. 5 Team Member #3 Paper Due**)

Tabor, "18—The End of the Age" 284-304

Tabor, "Conclusion—Recovering Lost Treasures" 305-317

Source Focus: Gospel of Judas (Miller)

Unit Fourteen—"From Jesus to Christ"—Creating the "Official" View of Jesus in the 4th and 5th Centuries

Tues., Dec. 6-Mon., Dec. 12

Article on Constantine (Canvas)

Final Exam:

Must be taken between 12:00 AM, Tuesday, December 13 and 11:59 PM, Monday, December 19