It is impossible to understate the importance of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. But what do we really know about him? Do the sources [both the Gospels included in the New Testament and those not included] provide a consistent and clear picture of Jesus? What other sources can we turn to? A problem that must be confronted immediately has to do with the non-historical nature of the sources we depend on.

Everyone interested in the historical Jesus agrees that he was a Jew. What do we know about first century Judaism and how might that help us in describing the religion and religious experiences of Jesus? Who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he did is often inseparable from the theological convictions and literary conventions of those who write about him. And despite what they say, many New Testament students and scholars often fall back on their own theological biases and predispositions when research allows for competing interpretations.

One main objective of this course is to sort through the many issues related to discovering the historical Jesus and to stimulate critical thinking and meaningful dialogue about history, theology, and faith as complementary ways of retelling and re-imagining the complicated and storied past of Jesus.

Another main objective is to encourage and equip students to formulate, test, explore and defend their own historical reconstruction and understanding of Jesus.

**REQUIRED BOOKS**

- E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, Penguin Books, 1993, paperback

[These books are only available at the Panther Book Store on Downer and Hampshire]

The New Testament [I recommend a Study Bible, the Oxford Study Bible or the HarperCollins Study Bible [at the Panther Book Store], but you can use your favorite or whatever is available to you]

**GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

--Regular attendance is very important. Sometimes missing class is unavoidable, but if you miss more than three classes, it is your responsibility to contact me to arrange to make up a missed class (typically a two or three page paper or written version of a class activity). Absences that are not made up will affect your final grade.

--Students are expected to have read all assignments before coming to class.

--Students with special needs of any kind should contact me at the beginning of the course so appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

--Feel free to contact me, by phone or email, for any reason; if necessary, we can arrange to meet before or after class. I do not use my UWM email address. Use only the address above.

**GRADING**

- Two Reflection Papers (about four pages each): 25%
- Essay Presentations, beginning **Week #3**: 25%
- Oral Presentation of Critical Review of Assigned Book beginning **Week #4**: 25%
- Critical Review, about eight pages in length, due last week of class: 25%
CLASS SCHEDULE, READING, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Weeks #1 & #2
9/2 & 9/9 – Intro & Logistics/Disclaimers and Goals—NO CLASS MONDAY, 9/7
   Reflection Papers, grading, assignments, format, etc.
   Reading: The Historical Figure of Jesus [hereafter HFI], Chapters 1 and 2
   The Historical Jesus in Context [hereafter HJC], Introduction
   Handouts [Segal and Ludemann]

Weeks #3 & #4
9/14 thru 9/23 – What We Know About Jesus’ World and How We Know it
   Reading: HFJ, Chapters 3, 4, and 5
   HJC, Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 18
   Matthew, Chapters 1 and 2
   Handouts [Borg and articles]
   Essay Presentation #1—Week #3—Wednesday, September 16
   Essay Presentation #2—Week #4—Monday, September 21
   Essay Presentation #3—Week #4—Wednesday, September 23
   First Critical Book Review—Week #4—Wednesday, September 23

Weeks #5, #6 & #7
9/30 thru 10/14 – The Gospels and Jesus NO CLASS MONDAY, 9/28
   Reading: JN, pp 74-154
   HFJ, Chapters 6 and 7
   HJC, Chapters 14 and 17
   Gospel of Thomas
   Matthew, Chapters 3 and 4
   FIRST REFLECTION PAPER DUE WEEK #5 [9/30]
   Essay Presentation #4—Week #5—Wednesday, September 30
   Essay Presentation #5—Week #6—Wednesday, September 30
   Essay Presentation #6—Week #7—Wednesday, September 30
   Second Critical Book Review—Week #5—Monday, October 5
   Third Critical Book Review—Week #6—Wednesday, October 7
   Essay Presentation #6—Week #7—Monday, October 12
   Fourth Critical Book Review—Week #7—Wednesday, October 14

Week #8
10/19 & 10/21 – Jesus’ Calling
   Reading: HFJ, Chapters 8 and 9
   HJC, Chapter 7
   Matthew, Chapter 5
   Essay Presentation #7—Week #8—Monday, October 19
   Fifth Critical Book Review—Week #8—Wednesday, October 21

Week #9
10/26 & 10/28—Parables
   Reading: HJC, Chapter 12
   HFJ, Chapter 13
   Matthew, Chapters 6 & 7
   Essay Presentation #8—Week #9—Monday, October 26
   Sixth Critical Book Review—Week #9—Wednesday, October 28

Week #10
11/2 & 11/4 – Miracles
   Reading: HFJ, Chapter 10
HJC, Chapter 9
Matthew, Chapter 8

Essay Presentation #9—Week #10—Monday, November 2

Seventh Critical Book Review—Week #10—Wednesday, November 4

Week #11
11/9 & 11/11 – The Kingdom of God
  Reading: HFJ, Chapters 11 and 12
  Matthew, Chapter 9

Eighth Critical Book Review—Week #11—Wednesday, November 11
SECOND REFLECTION PAPER DUE WEEK #11 [11/9 or 11/11]

Week #12
11/16 & 11/18 – The Galilean Charismatic
  Reading: HFJ, Chapter 14
  HJC, Chapter 8
  Matthew, Chapter 10

Essay Presentation #10—Week #12—Monday, November 16

Ninth Critical Book Review—Week #12—Wednesday, November 18

Week #13
11/23—What Jesus Said and Thought About Himself NO CLASS WED, 11/25
  Reading: HFJ, Chapter 15
  HJC, Chapter 6
  Matthew, Chapter 11

Essay Presentation #11—Week #13—Monday, November 23

Tenth Critical Book Review—Week #13—Monday, November 23

Week #14
11/30 & 12/2—Jesus’ Miraculous Birth and Death
  Reading: HFJ, Chapters 16 and 17
  HJC, Chapters 4 and 25, 26, and 27
  Matthew, Chapter 12

Essay Presentation #12—Week #14—Monday, November 30
Essay Presentation #13—Week #14—Wednesday, December 2

Eleventh Critical Book Review—Week #14—Wednesday, December 2

Week #15
12/7 & 12/9 – Final Thoughts and Conclusions
  Reading: HFJ, Appendix 1, Chronology
  Matthew, Chapters 13 and 14

Twelfth Critical Book Review—Week #15—Monday, December 7

Final Paper Due Wednesday, December 9 [Last Day of Class]

Major/Minor in Jewish Studies This course is part of the Jewish Studies major and minor. The major offers two tracks: Hebrew Studies and Jewish Cultural Studies (which does not require Hebrew language). With its combination of core courses and electives, the Jewish Studies program allows students to create a course of study that can focus on religion, culture, Israel, Holocaust, media, or immigration. A dynamic and innovative major, Jewish Studies prepares students to work in our multicultural world. For more information on the Jewish Studies major and minor, please the coordinator, Dr. Rachel N. Baum, rbaum@uwm.edu; 229-5156.

SEARCHING FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS
SCHEDULE FOR ESSAY PRESENTATIONS

All are Chapters in THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN CONTEXT except for the Gospel of Thomas

Essay Presentation #1: Wednesday, September 16—Josephus on John the Baptist and Other Jewish Prophets of Deliverance

Essay Presentation #2: Monday, September 21—First and Second Enoch: A Cry against Oppression and the Promise of Deliverance

Essay Presentation #3: Wednesday, September 23—Philo of Alexandria

Essay Presentation #4: Wednesday, September 30—Targum, Jesus, and the Gospels

Essay Presentation #5: Monday, October 5—Gospel and Talmud

Essay Presentation #6: Monday, October 12—GOSPEL OF THOMAS

Essay Presentation #7: Monday, October 19—The Chreia

Essay Presentation #8: Monday, October 26—The Parable in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic Literature and Chapter 13 in HFJ

Essay Presentation #9: Monday, November 2—Miracle Stories: The God Asclepius, the Pythagorean Philosophers, and the Roman Rulers

Essay Presentation #10: Monday, November 16—The Galilean Charismatic and Rabbinic Piety: The Holy Man in the Talmudic Literature

Essay Presentation #11: Monday, November 23—Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Essay Presentation #12: Monday, November 30—Miraculous Conceptions and Births in Mediterranean Antiquity

Essay Presentation #13: Wednesday, December 2—Imitations of Greek Epic in the Gospels, Narratives of Noble Death, and Isaiah 53:1-12 (Septuagint)

SEARCHING FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS
SCHEDULE FOR CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW ORAL PRESENTATIONS
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**SEARCHING FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS**
POSSIBLE BOOKS FOR ORAL AND WRITTEN CRITICAL REVIEW

An eight page essay (written in class) on your critical study of the sources and a 10 page paper (written out of class) will be due on December 9, 2009. Students will choose a book from the following books: Scandal of the Jewish Jesus or Jesus and the Victory of God.

Paula Fredriksen, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews or From Jesus to Christ


A. Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus

W. W. Willoughby, Jesus and the Victory of God

A. Schweitzer, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews

The Misunderstood Jew: The Scandal of the Jewish Jesus

Amy-Jill Levine, The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus

Every one will also be giving an oral presentation of the text you select, highlighting the author’s particular perception of Jesus and interpretation of sources.
A. Roy Eckardt, Reclaiming the Jesus of History: A Christology

Today

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide
Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*