Jesus: Teachings, History, and Interpretation (REL 3223.27869), Spring 2023

Matthew J. Pereira, Ph.D.
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Email: matthew.j.pereira@okstate.edu
Class Location: AGH 108
Days and Time: M, W, F 10:30-11:20 AM;
Office Hours: W & F: 2:30-3:15, TH 3:00-4:30 PM, OR BY APPOINTMENT

General Education: (H) Humanities
Prerequisites: None

Course Description: From the four gospels to the Apostle Paul’s letters and other writings of the New Testament, to the Apostolic Fathers and Church Fathers through the Middle Ages and the European Reformation of the 16th century, and onwards to the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the various quests for the historical Jesus, the Christian traditions, in all of their complexity, continuity and diversity, has continually returned to that crucial question first posed by Jesus of Nazareth to his disciples in the Gospel according to Mark: “Who do you say that I am?” There is no question more important to the Christian faith and tradition than that of the identity, nature, and mission of Jesus. In addition to an introduction to the historical introduction of Jesus within the Christian traditions, we will read and discuss the varied perspectives of two eminent scholars of the New Testament, Marcus J. Borg and N.T. Wright. Lastly, we will explore representations of Jesus outside of the classically understood Christian tradition within other religious traditions, cultures, and within popular culture. The underlying goal of this introductory course is to introduce students to the rich and diverse theological approaches to Christology in the Christian traditions, two variant scholarly interpretations of the meaning of Jesus as attested to within the New Testament, and representations of Jesus within non-Christian religious traditions and across cultural locations up to the present.

Required Textbooks


All other additional readings will be provided on Canvas in the Modules and the Files folder.
**Learning Objectives:** Upon successfully completing this course, the following objectives will have been met by the students in collaboration with the instructor:

1. We will gain a deeper and broader understanding of the various ways by which the identity and meaning of Jesus of Nazareth has been articulated within and across the New Testament, the Christian traditions, other religious traditions, and popular contemporary culture;
2. We will acquire a broad historical understanding of the key issues, councils, and controversies that have shaped Christological reflections on the question of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth;
3. We will improve upon our analytical reading skills and comprehension of select historical writings related to the interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth;
4. We will acquire a greater appreciation of the importance connected to historical and social contexts that have and do shape the reception of the teachings, identity, and meaning of Jesus of Nazareth;
5. We will be encouraged to practice a reflective approach to developing greater self-awareness of how our social, cultural, and geographical locations shape our approach to understanding Jesus of Nazareth.

**Attendance and Participation (100 Points)**

Ten percent of the overall grade is based on attendance, which includes participation during in-class discussions. Excused absences are provided at my discretion depending on circumstances (e.g., athletics, academic commitments and emergencies). The final grade for attendance/participation will be calculated by beginning with the percentage of attended classes serving as the base and then additional points will be added for notable participation by the discretion of the professor. Generally, if students are attentive and regular (e.g., once every week) contributor within the contest of class discussions, they will be rewarded 7–15 points on top of the attendance percentage. For example, if a student showed up to 83% of the classes, their base score would be 83/100, then if they were an attentive and regular contributor, the attendance/participation grade would be between 90–93 points. If they were an exceptional contributor (e.g., once or more times in nearly every class verbally participating in the class discussions), the student would earn 15–25 points of participation credit on top of the attendance base. Students who rarely/never participate in class discussions will not earn additional points, at the same time, they will not be docked any points from their attendance grade.

**How to Download and Use I-Clicker for Attendance**

We will use I-Clicker to record attendance throughout the semester. Each student is responsible for registering themselves for the class on I-Clicker and marking themselves as present during the class time. If a student has any issue with I-Clicker, there will be 48 hours afforded from the day of the class to notify the professor of the problem so that it may be rectified. To use this program, download the app entitled "iClicker Student" and create an account using your Student ID & OKEY credentials on the app. Here is the link: [https://www.iclicker.com/](https://www.iclicker.com/). Once this is done, you can search for this class: "Jesus: Teachings, History, Interpretation," and join. I have also entered the Course ID (REL 3223.27869), my last name (Pereira), and semester (Spring 2023), as other possible pathways to locate and ensure you have signed up for the correct course. Students will use their cell phones to mark them as present during each class (usually, at the beginning of class). If a student does not register for this course on I-Clicker, they will receive absences for all classes not accounted for on the app. If you have issues, please contact me immediately.
**Reading Quizzes (30 points each / 300 Points Total)**

Thirty percent of the overall grade is based on reading quizzes. There will be 13 quizzes provided throughout the semester. Of these 13 quizzes, the lowest 3 scores will be dropped, and the remaining 10 quizzes will count for 30 points each. Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple choice questions which will be directly connected to the readings covered from the past Wednesday to Monday. Quizzes will be posted by 11:59 pm on the Friday before the Monday it is due. Quizzes must be completed by 5 pm on the Monday assigned. If a student chooses not to take a quiz for whatever reason, the first three missed quizzes will be dropped as lowest scores, thereafter a score of zero will be entered into Canvas. These quizzes will be open book, open notes, and open Keynotes. From the moment the quiz is opened on Canvas, students will be afforded 90 minutes to complete it.

**Response to the Friday Discussion Questions (50 Points Each / 100 Points Total)**

Friday classes include a discussion question intended to encourage varied perspectives, reflections, and arguments by each of us. On Fridays, we will have in-class discussions that affords space for articulating our perspectives and eloquently listening to the viewpoints of our classmates. Students are required to write 2 responses that engage two of the Friday Discussion Questions, placed at the conclusion of each Friday in the syllabus. Student responses should be between 2 full pages and no more than 4 pages. These two response essays should demonstrate the following three things: [1] skilled engagement with the course reading(s) that relate to the Friday Discussion Question by demonstrating a clear understanding of the key arguments advanced by the given author; the student may agree, disagree, nuance, and/or problematize the views advanced by the author, but first, students need to provide a summary of the viewpoints advanced within the assigned reading; [2] provide a summary/reflection on perspectives offered by fellow students; [3] then, the student should share their perspective on the discussion question. In addition, students must do the following: [1] clearly indicate what response question they are addressing by providing the question at the top of the essay; [2] turn in their first response in the Assignment titled Response 1 on Canvas; turn in their second response in the Assignment titled Response 2; [3] turn in the essay by midnight on the Monday after the given Friday Discussion Question. Thank you for your careful attention to all of the above details.

**Essay on the Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions (250 Points)**

Students will be invited to write a five-page essay that demonstrates a clear understanding of our course textbook by Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright by summarizing, explaining, and analyzing select chapters. Here are the basic guidelines: 5 pages; 12 point Times New Roman; double-spaced; one-inch margins all around. Complete details will be provided at least two week prior to the due date of the assignment. **Due date:** March 10th, 2023

**Essay on Christ in the Christian Traditions (250 Points)**

Students will be invited to write a five-page essay that offers a summary with moments of analysis focused on one moment and/or primary source document that was discussed within the course as part of the unfolding story of Christ in the Christian tradition. Here are the basic guidelines: 5 pages; 12 point Times New Roman; double-spaced; one-inch margins all around. Complete details will be provided at least two week prior to the **due date:** May 12th, 2023

**Submit All Assignments on Canvas**

Unless otherwise instructed by the professor, please submit the assignments, including the final exam, on Canvas on the assigned due dates. Exceptions could be made by my discretion depending on the circumstances.
**Late Work Policy**

It is important that we do our best to manage our time and turn our coursework in on time when possible. I understand that this may not always be possible, so, we will accept late work up to one week after due dates without any penalty. I am willing to accept late work up to the last day of classwork, however, there may be up to a 50% automatic deduction if late work reaches two weeks overdue.

**Grade Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(100 Points Total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Quizzes</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>(10 Quizzes / 300 Points Total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to Friday Questions</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(2 Responses / 100 Points Total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay on The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions:</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>(250 Points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay on Christ in the Christian Tradition:</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>(Two Essays / 250 Points Total)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Grade Scale**

- 90–100: A = Exceptional
- 80–89.99: B = Very Good / Good
- 70–79.99: C = Satisfactory
- 60–69.99: D = Poor
- 59.99 and below: F = Unsatisfactory

**Electronic Device Policy**

Thank you in advance for turning off and placing out of sight your cell phones, laptops and all other electronic devices prior to the beginning of class. Unless you are a designated note taker, the use of all electronic devices during class is strictly prohibited. The use of cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices may result in an unexcused absence. I am grateful for your attention during our time together.

**Academic Integrity:** OSU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and altering academic records) will result in an official academic sanction. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. To appeal any charge: 101 Whitehurst Phone (405) 744-5627

[http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu](http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu)
**STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL OR LEARNING DISABILITIES:** If you need special accommodations the University will try to make appropriate arrangements. These arrangements will need to be made ahead of time through the Student Disability Services Office 315 Student Union | telephone: (405) 744–7116 |
Website: https://sds.okstate.edu/

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**CALENDAR | OVERVIEW OF LECTURES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The assigned readings should be completed prior to class on the assigned dates provided below. Other than the textbooks, readings are available on Canvas, which is noted after readings by this symbol: [C].

**WEEK 1 | ON THE GENRE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPEL**

**Class 1 (1/18)**
Introduction to the Course | Review of the Course Syllabus

**Class 2 (1/20)**

**Question 1:** What is one interesting thing you learned about the nature and/or study of the New Testament Gospels? Did the readings challenge, nuance, or confirm your current understanding of the New Testament Gospels?

**WEEK 2 | JESUS AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS**

**Class 3 (1/23)**

**Optional Primary Source:** The Gospel according to Mark (https://www.biblegateway.com/)

**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz One (Course Readings from Classes 2–3)

**Class 4 (1/25)**

**Optional Primary Source:** The Gospel according to Matthew (https://www.biblegateway.com/)

**Class 5 (1/27)**

**Optional Primary Source:** The Gospel according to Luke (https://www.biblegateway.com/)
Question 2: What are some of the notable differences between the three synoptic Gospels? What are some of the explanations provided to explain both the similarities and differences between the three synoptic Gospels?

WEEK 3

THE JOHANNINE JESUS AND ADDITIONAL NOTES ON JESUS AND THE GOSPELS


Optional Primary Source: The Gospel according to John (https://www.biblegateway.com/)

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Two (Course Readings from Classes 4–6)

Class 7 (2/1)  Graham N. Stanton, Chapter 8: “What do we know about Jesus of Nazareth;” Chapter 11: “Prophet and Teacher;” and “The Kingdom of God,” pp. 139–149; 177–188; 189–203 [C]


WEEK 4

MARCUS BORG AND N.T WRIGHT, THE MEANING OF JESUS: TWO VISIONS


Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Three (Course Readings from Classes 7–9)


Marcus Borg, “Chapter 4: Jesus Before and After Easter: Jewish Mystic and Christian Messiah,” The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions

Class 11 (2/10)  Online Class Lecture


Question 4: What are some of the more compelling arguments and interpretations of the Gospels advanced by Marcus Borg and/or N.T. Wright?

Week 5

Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions

Class 12 (2/13)


Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Four (Course Readings from Classes 10–12)

Class 13 (2/15)


Class 14 (2/17)


Question 5: In what ways do Borg and Wright differ when it comes to their understanding of the nature/true identity of Jesus? What are some of their similarities? What would you suggest or some of the strengths and/or weaknesses in Borg and Wright’s arguments?

Week 6

Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright, The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions

Class 15 (2/20)

Class 16 (2/22)  

Class 17 (2/24)  

**Question 6:** In what ways do Borg and Wright connect Christian living with the Gospels and Jesus of Nazareth? What are some of your reflections on the ways by which they connect the Christian life to the Gospels and Jesus of Nazareth?

**Week 7**  
**Jesus in the Gnostic Gospels and Traditions**

Class 18 (2/27)  

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Six (Course Readings from Classes 16–18)

Class 19 (3/1)  

Class 20 (3/3)  

**Question 7:** In what ways do the so-called Gnostic writings complement the Jesus of the New Testament Gospels? How do these Gnostic writings challenge the New Testament Gospels? If the Gnostic writings were included in the New Testament canon, do you think that they would have shaped classic Christian teaching in any way?

**Week 8**  
**Jaroslav Pelikan’s Jesus Through the Centuries (Chapters 1–5)**

Class 21 (3/6)  
**Jaroslav Pelikan** “Introduction: The Good, the True, and the Beautiful, in Jesus through the Centuries;” and “Chapter 1: The Rabbi, in Jesus through the Centuries,” in Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (Yale University Press, 1985)

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Seven (Course Readings from Classes 19–21)
Class 22 (3/8)  

Class 23 (3/10)  
Online Class Lecture/Discussion:

Assignment Due: Essay on *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*

Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 4: The Kings of Kings;” and “Chapter 5: The Cosmic Christ;” in *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press, 1985)

Question 8: Identify one thing you learned and found compelling interesting about the interpretation of Christ in the Christian traditions?

**WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK (3/13 – 3/17)**

WEEK 10:  
**JAROSLAV PELIKAN’S JESUS THROUGH THE CENTURIES (CHAPTERS 6–9)**

Class 24 (3/20)  
Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 6: The Son of Man;” and “Chapter 7: The True Image;” in *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press, 1985)

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Eight (Course Readings from Classes 22–24)

Class 25 (3/22)  
Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 8: Christ Crucified” in *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press, 1985)

Class 26 (3/24)  

Question 9: Identify one compelling thing you learned about the interpretation of Christ in the Christian traditions from the week ten readings?

WEEK 11:  
**JAROSLAV PELIKAN’S JESUS THROUGH THE CENTURIES (CHAPTERS 11–15)**

Class 27 (3/27)  
Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 11: The Divine and Human Model;” and “Chapter 12: The Universal Man,” in *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (Yale University Press, 1985)

Assignment Due: Reading Quiz Nine (Course Readings from Classes 25–27)

Class 29 (3/31) Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 15: The Teacher of Common Sense” in Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (Yale University Press, 1985)

**Question 10:** Identify one compelling thing you learned about the interpretation of Christ in the Christian traditions from the week ten readings? Explain what is significant about this particular interpretation of Christ?

**Week 12:** Jaroslav Pelikan’s Jesus Through the Centuries (Chapters 16–18)

Class 30 (4/3) Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 16: The Poet of the Spirit,” in Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (Yale University Press, 1985)

**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz Ten (Course Readings from Classes 28–30)

Class 31 (4/5) Jaroslav Pelikan, “Chapter 17: The Liberator,” in Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture (Yale University Press, 1985)


**Question 11:** What is one compelling thing you learned about the interpretation of Christ in the Christian traditions from week eleven readings? Explain what is significant about this particular interpretation of Christ?

**Week 13:** Narratives and Teachings about Jesus across Various Religious Traditions


**Optional Primary Source:** The Heliand, see following link for an English translation: http://www.hieronymus.us.com/latinweb/Mediaevum/Heliand.htm#X01

**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz Eleven (Course Readings from Classes 31–33)


**Question 12:** What are some of the different ways that Jesus is remembered and understood within the course readings for week 13?

**Week 14:** **Feminine and Masculine Interpretations of Jesus of Nazareth**


**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz Twelve (Course Readings from Classes 34–36)


**Question 13:** What are your impressions regarding the various ways that gendered locations shape the interpretations of Jesus within the week 14 readings?

**Week 15:** **Virgilio Elizondo’s Mestizo Christ and James Cone’s Black Christ**


**Assignment Due:** Reading Quiz Thirteen (Course Readings from Classes 37–39)


**Question 14:** In what ways do the Mestizo Christ (of Elizondo) and Black Christ (of Cone) connect the Gospel to the lived experience of people in the 20th century? What are your thoughts and reflections on the contextualization of Jesus within and across cultures?
**WEEK 16: PRE-FINALS WEEK**

5/1 – 5/5

TBD (Open space for if time is needed to catch up on the last couple of lectures or other course material)

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**FINALS WEEK**

Final Exam (Christ in the Christian Tradition): Due date: May 12th, 2023