Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Course Profile

Course # and Title: RHS 301A Jesus within Judaism
Instructor: Eunyung Lim          Semester/Year: Spring 2021

Short Description: This course offers a historical and literary introduction to the Jesus traditions, particularly situating ancient gospels within the historical context of Judaism and ancient Mediterranean cultures. It also explores theologically diverse understandings of Jesus that the gospels offer and their implications for our ministry and cultural life.

Delivery Mode: Synchronous Zoom sessions (every Wednesday, 1:00–2:30 pm), asynchronous weekly activities, and small group in-person meetings when needed. A ‘Meet and Greet’ (i.e., first class meeting) to be offered in person in room 201 on Feb. 3rd while accommodating remote students.

Course Rationale and Description:

Rationale
As an orienting (i.e., required) course for master’s degree programs, this course enables students to learn about who Jesus was in history and how the communities of early Christ-followers understood him in the first few centuries CE. This academic understanding of Jesus and the gospels will encourage students to reflect on the meaning of Jesus in today’s church and society. This course is also designed to introduce essential interpretive approaches to the gospels, helping students develop exegetical “skills for visionary Christian leadership in the public sphere” (LSTC mission statement). Therefore, students are expected to meet several learning competencies, such as: Scripture, Ministry Arts and Public Leadership, Cultural Context, Preaching, and Leadership for Mission.

Description
Who was Jesus of Nazareth? How can we know who he was? What do the gospels tell us about Jesus’s life, mission, and legacy? This course offers a historical and literary introduction to the Jesus traditions, particularly situating both canonical and non-canonical gospels within the historical context of Judaism and ancient Mediterranean cultures. Reading the gospels in light of first-century-CE Jewish beliefs and practices, we will explore how the early believers of Jesus shaped the traditions about him within their own contexts.

Special emphasis will be placed on theologically diverse understandings of Jesus that the gospels offer and their implications for our ministry and cultural life. We will also engage critically with the theoretical presuppositions underlying the scholarly attempts to reconstruct Jesus's life. In so doing, we will ultimately ask: How does the historical Jesus at a Jew matter (and for whom)? From what social, cultural, and political Sitz im Leben are people looking for their Jesus-es? Which Christianity or ideology do we normalize when engaging with historical Jesus research?

Course Learning Outcomes:

By completing this course, learners will be able to
1) Read biblical texts closely and critically for academic, ministerial, and spiritual purposes
2) Identify key historical events and geographical locations that are crucial to understanding Jewish communities in Palestine under the Roman imperial rule
3) Understand the gospel sayings and narratives about Jesus in light of the Hebrew Bible and first-century-CE Judaism
4) Explain the variety of gospels in terms of the complexities of canon formation
5) Analyze the similarities and differences between the gospels in terms of their sources, literary styles, historical situations, and theological emphases
6) Compare various portraits of the historical Jesus offered by scholars in modern biblical scholarship
7) Learn, apply, and evaluate a set of exegetical methods and hermeneutical paradigms for preaching, Bible study, and public debate
8) Navigate ways to foster an ethically responsible and culturally sensitive biblical interpretation at personal, ministerial, and public levels

**Strategies for Learning:**

This course acknowledges that all participants, both students and teaching staff, are full members of a small, democratic academic community, in which the members share both freedom and responsibility with one another. Each member’s active and engaged participation in each class session is key to making all successful in this course.

In particular, students should make a weekly time commitment to each class session, read the assigned readings carefully, both biblical texts and scholarly writings, before coming to each Zoom class, and work closely with peers for collaborative projects. There are many assignments offered in diverse and creative formats, so it is also important for students to plan ahead and allow enough time to write papers or work on group projects. Most of all, students are encouraged to share any insight emerging from their social location and cultural backgrounds. Using inclusive language and showing respect to others are also essential components for successful learning in this course.

**Assessment:**

In addition to punctual and regular attendance, careful listening, and engagement in both synchronous and asynchronous conversations, students’ achievements of the learning outcomes will be evaluated through various types of assignments and multi-sensory activities (i.e., exegesis paper, sermon synopsis, journal, midterm, group performance, and social media project). The following areas are emphasized when students’ work is assessed: writing with clarity and grace, clear and creative presentation of ideas, making a deep and critical reflection on class subjects, diligent and responsible collaboration with others, and responsive and respectful communication.

**Bibliography:**

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