Instructor: Prof. Eunyung Lim ([eunyung.lim@lstc.edu; 773.256.0758)

Course 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 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 as 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?

Objectives (Course Learning Outcomes):

This course is designed to help students develop exegetical “skills for visionary Christian leadership in the public sphere” (LSTC mission statement). In particular, this course allows students to meet the following learning competencies:

• **#2 Scripture** (M.Div., M.A.T.S., M.A.M.): The student draws the wisdom of our forebears in the faith in Scripture into active engagement with emerging challenges.

• **#4 Ministry Arts and Public Leadership** (M.Div., M.A.M.): The student articulates and models embodiment of the gospel or other religious convictions in ways that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and responsive to the personal and public dimensions of people’s sorrows and hopes.

• **#5 Cultural Context** (M.Div., M.A.M.) and **#4 (M.A.T.S.)**: The student manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of the Christian or another religious heritage and broadly cultural-historical traditions.
• #2 Preaching (Ministry Arts and Public Leadership skills): The student interprets Scripture in ways that generate new insights into text and context.
• #5 Leadership for Mission (Ministry Arts and Public Leadership skills): The student embodies graciousness in welcoming and including strangers and commits to hospitality and the diversity of their context.

Specifically, this course will allow students to do the following:

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 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

Assessment (please read carefully)

1) Participation (30%): Attendance (20%) + Individual Portfolio (10%)
   • Punctual and regular attendance, careful listening, and engaging in conversation during class.
   • Portfolio: Minimum four entries, max. 400 words per each (e.g., exegetical notes, sermon ideas, scholarly reflection, response to a biblical passage quoted in public debate, etc.). More detailed prompts will follow.

2) Midterm (20%): ID questions and one exegetical essay. A pool of gospel passages to be given in advance. In-class, closed-book exam.

3) Group Performance (20%): Acting out a scene from a non-canonical gospel through a critical interpretive lens. 10~15 minute in-class performance per each group followed by a Q & A session. Each group of students should see the instructor at least one week prior to their performance date.

4) Final Project (30%): Group Assignment via Social Media (20%) + Reflection Paper (10%)
   • Creating an Instagram account for the historical Jesus based on one of the contemporary scholars’ reconstructions.
   • Individual reflection paper (3 pages, double pace, font size 11–12): Who is Jesus to you?
   • Detailed instructions to be distributed in advance.
Strategies for Learning

Please know that we are full members of our small, democratic academic community, in which we share both freedom and responsibility with one another. Your active and engaged participation in each class session is key to making all of us successful in this course. Therefore, I ask the following of you.

• Please read the assigned readings carefully, both biblical texts and scholarly writings, before coming to each class.
• I would love to see your face each and every time. So would your classmates. Unexcused absences from class will incur grade penalty: your participation grade will be lowered by a third of a letter for each class missed.
• Work closely with your peers for collaborative projects. Please participate actively in preparatory sessions for group performance and social media assignments (more to follow).
• Be vocal during class discussions. Please do not hesitate to share any insight emerging from your social location. If you prefer or if you miss the chance to speak up in class, feel free to bring up your questions and concerns in office hours.
• Please use inclusive language. As a diverse community of people preparing for Christian leadership, LSTC acknowledges that language has the power to convey facts, attitudes, and values. Recognizing that we all suffer when exclusive, prejudicial, and/or ethnocentric language is used, LSTC calls on its faculty, staff, and students, in written and spoken communication, to use inclusive language that affirms the full humanity of all people. Resources to assist the LSTC community are available through the Pastor to the Community/Director of Worship and the JKM Library. See 2019-2020 LSTC All-Students Handbook, p. 66.
• When you respond to fellow students or the instructor in class, please show respect. It is equally as important to listen well as to speak well.
• Plan ahead and allow enough time to write papers. Our writing requirements are not extremely long, and papers written with clarity (and grace) will be deeply appreciated.

Required Texts


* For other journal articles and book chapters assigned to each class, please see course schedule.
Recommended Texts


