Course Profile

Course # and Title: RHS 301: Jesus Within Judaism (Online)
Instructor: The Rev. Dr. Andrew Guffey
Semester/Year: Spring 2019

Course Rationale and Description
(Why do we offer this course? Which of LSTC’s degree program learning outcomes does it address?):

The New Testament Gospels tell the story of Jesus, a Jewish teacher, healer, and prophet, who came to be acknowledged by his followers as the Messiah and worshiped as God among those who came to be called Christians. Jesus was Jewish, but the Gospel writers as they told their stories, and Christians throughout the centuries as they have heard and read their stories, have not always acknowledged the Jewishness of their Christ. This online course introduces course participants to the critical, academic study of Jesus and the Gospels within the context of first-century Jewish history, society, and religion. Course participants will learn about the Jewish context out of which Christianity arose and will study the Gospels in their historical contexts. The course highlights the Gospel genre, the literary relationships between the canonical Gospels (and key non-canonical Gospels), and the narrative and theological shaping of each of the Gospels. As a result, the course will orient students to a basic understanding of who Jesus was, and who each of the Evangelists understood Jesus to be, so that we might begin to approach the question of who Jesus is for us today. Along the way we will also read selections from interpreters from “marginal” perspectives to help us consider how we might read the Gospels for the demands of a public church. As an examination of the public figure of Jesus and his legacy, the course is foundational for forming “visionary leaders to bear witness to the good news of Jesus Christ” (LSTC Mission Statement).

The course has three principle aims:

- To introduce students to the critical, academic study of the writings of the Bible in their historical, cultural environments;
- To foster habits of thought, analysis, and criticism sensitive to social, economic, and cultural contexts; and
- To ground students’ approach to the theology and practice of ministry in the Church’s memory of Jesus and his ministry, particularly as narrated by the four canonical Gospels.

In addition, as an online course, this course will seek to develop the digital skills of course participants.

The course therefore seeks to address the following competencies for Master of Divinity and Master of Arts students at LSTC:

- Demonstrates an understanding of the Bible that is thorough and comprehensive, to communicate effectively and embody the witness of Scripture for ministry, [especially such ministries as preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and church leadership (M.Div.)] (ATS Area: Religious Heritage [Scripture]);
- Demonstrates a knowledge of and ability to communicate the Christian heritage in its rich diversity, and especially in its Lutheran expressions—faithful to Scripture, ecumenically sensitive, and intellectually defensible—with an ability to evaluate, interpret, and integrate that heritage with
contemporary knowledge and experience [for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel and the theological life of the church (M.Div.)] (ATS Area: Religious Heritage [Traditions]);
• Demonstrates the ability to think contextually, with cultural sensitivity, creatively engaging a pluralistic world in interpreting the message of the Gospel (ATS Area: Cultural Context)

Course Learning Outcomes (Learners will be able to):
(What difference will this course make to students’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices?)
The course will introduce students to a variety of interpretive skills and strategies for understanding the Jesus tradition and the Gospels in their literary, cultural and religious context, and also relate them to contemporary contexts. Special emphasis will be given to the rhetorical design of each Gospel, that is, how the narrative was constructed to shape the identity, beliefs and practices of ancient audiences. Students will engage in the critical process of relating the Gospel portraits of Jesus to particular issues in contemporary contexts. Upon completing this course successfully students should be able to:

• Read biblical texts closely and critically, skillfully using relevant exegetical tools;
• Employ a variety of different interpretative strategies in reading the Gospels that cultivate contextual and cross-cultural awareness for interpreting biblical texts in a pluralistic world;
• Identify the distinctive literary and theological themes of each of the four canonical Gospels and describe how the Gospels function to shape communal practices and beliefs;
• Comprehend the aims and strategies of Jesus’ renewal movement in its social, religious and political contexts in the first century and critically reflect and discuss its significance for issues of public faith in contemporary contexts;
• Examine complex issues of social, economic, and religious power dynamics in the Gospels as they relate to both ancient and modern contexts from a systems perspective; and
• Relate the Gospels to proclamation, witness and the practice of Christian faith in public contexts and a variety of settings.
• Host and respond to online discussions clearly, succinctly, and respectfully, in a manner befitting critical, faithful discourse

Strategies for Learning):
(How shall we go about achieving these outcomes?)

As an online course, students will be required to be more self-motivated and careful in their time management. The formal requirements will be:
• Weekly online discussion, based on the reading assignments
• Regular essays or exegetical reports
• A final paper or essay exam

Assessment :
(How shall we know if we—students and instructors—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?)

• Preparation and Participation
  Students will be assessed for careful preparation of the reading and informed, thoughtful, and constructive participation in online discussions.
• Written Exercises
Written assignments will be assessed for clarity of argumentation, including presentation of thesis/claim, identifying and using quality evidence, and relevance of topic. Exegetical reports will be assessed based on informed analysis of each of the relevant areas of the report (instructions will be provided).

- Final (Final paper or essay exam)
  A. Final paper: Students will be assessed on the final paper as on the essays (above)
  B. Final essay exam: If students opt for a final exam instead of paper, they will be asked to write three essays on topics provided that cover material from the course.

### Bibliography:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>ISBN# (Required)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction</td>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>978-0664239725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel Parallels</td>
<td>Throckmorton</td>
<td>978-0840774842</td>
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Additional information:
Students should also own a quality academic study Bible. The following are acceptable:

*HarperCollins Study Bible* (rev. ed.)
*New Oxford Annotated Bible* (4th ed.)
*CEB Study Bible*
*Catholic Study Bible* (3d ed.)

An especially useful resource is the *Jewish Annotated New Testament* (rev. ed.)