Class will convene at 7:50 a.m. each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. You should be seated and ready to begin our work together promptly at the beginning of the period. As I am never late for class, there is no good reason for you to be late either. Please plan accordingly.

GENERAL EDUCATION

Ultimate Questions courses consider questions and answers fundamental to religious and philosophical traditions. They emphasize the relevance of these questions to contemporary experience and self-understanding, and include the reading and analysis of original texts. Examples of “ultimate questions” that orient such courses are: What is really real? Who are we? How should we live? What is of value? What are our origins and destiny? How is knowledge possible?

Such courses provide students with the ability to think and write about “ultimate questions” in ways that demonstrate both an understanding of the questions’ importance to individuals and to society, and the ability to critically evaluate their own and others’ answers.

COURSE DESCRIPTION.

This course is—in the first place and above all—a history course. It is designed to introduce students to the following several related subject matters, conceived and studied from a historical perspective:

The contents of the four canonical gospels (the texts contained in the New Testament under the rubric “the Gospel” according to Matthew, according to Mark, according to Luke, and according to John).

The literary and theological abilities of the “evangelists” (the authors of the canonical gospels that, by tradition, are named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

The contents of several other ancient texts which purport to tell readers something about the life and/or message of Jesus.

The circumstances of the Christian communities in which these texts were composed.
The historical person known to us as Jesus of Nazareth.

The history and culture of the ancient world in which Jesus conducted his ministry and in which the Christian movement originated.

Several of the historical methods by which the preceding subject matters are studied.

If this looks to be an overwhelming “lot of stuff” to study in one semester, then you will be surprised to discover that it isn’t. These subject matters are so closely interrelated that we can move easily and coherently from one to the other and back again.

If you apply yourself as you should then, by the end of the semester, you should have gained a useful knowledge of the canonical gospels, of issues relating to Jesus of Nazareth, of the pieties and theologies of early Christians, and of the thought processes in play in the discipline of historical studies.

Along the way, of course, and as it is appropriate to do so, we will also consider issues of later church history and of contemporary faith and Christian life. Some of you, at least, will serve as the primary resource for such issues. You must raise them as they occur to you—we will always take the time to consider them, regardless of where we are in the syllabus. This is, of necessity, a lecture course. I am most happy, however, to put a lecture on hold in order to address questions and comments from students. There are not “bad” or “dumb” questions, and any issue of concern to you is an issue worthy of the class’ consideration. Speak up, then, when you are inclined to do so. Your initiative will only serve to make this a better learning experience for everyone, including me.

REQUIRED TEXTS.


COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ETC.

1. Class attendance and participation.

Students are expected to attend all classes, although “roll” will not be taken after the final registration list is established. I will treat you as mature and responsible adults, and I assume that you will conduct yourselves in just that manner. Excessive absences will be noted, and my concern might be expressed, but no penalty to the final grade will be assigned on that account.

2. Reading assignments.

It is expected that the reading assigned for a particular date will be done prior to class on that date, as the classroom work for that day will build upon that assigned reading.
3. Examinations.

There will be a mid-term examination and a final examination. The mid-term exam will be worth 100 points. The final exam will be worth 150 points. The date of the mid-term is noted in the course outline and is not subject to change. The registrar will establish the date and time of the final exam.

4. Quizzes.

Twenty 10-point quizzes will be given during the semester.

(1) If you are absent on the day of a quiz, then that quiz is scored a “0.” The only exception to this policy is absence on account of a field trip for another course at the College.

(2) With the exception noted above, there will be no make-up quiz offered during the first fifteen weeks of the semester. A single make-up quiz will be offered during the final week of the semester for anyone who has missed a quiz. There will be no exception to this policy so don’t bother seeking for one.

(3) Quizzes will begin promptly at the beginning of the period. If you arrive at class after the quiz has started, then you simply miss the questions that have already been assigned for the quiz but you may answer the remaining questions that you are present for. No exceptions, so don’t ask.

5. Grading.*

A final grade will be assigned according to the following points-earned out of the 450 points possible:

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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>405+</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>374+</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>329+</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>284+</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>396+</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>351+</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>306+</td>
<td>D+</td>
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*Under the following conditions, you can be excused from the final examination and receive the grade earned as of Monday, April 28 (A or A-):

(1) An A- average or better on the mid-term exam and the quizzes, i.e. at least 270 points earned from among the first 300 points possible.

(2) Perfect attendance during the final three weeks of the semester.

6. Office hours.

MWF 9:00-10:00 and TR 1:00-2:00
SYLLABUS.

Jan.  10  Introduction to the course
       12  *Historical background: Israel, Judaism, early Christianity
       14  Historical background
       17  NO CLASS—MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
       19  Historical background
       21  *Historical background
       24  Historical background
       26  Historical background
       28  *Historical background
       31  The Christian Canon

Feb.  2  Canon
       4  *Text criticism
       7  Text criticism
       9  *Two-document hypothesis
       11  Two-document hypothesis
       14  *Form criticism
       16  Form criticism
       18  *Redaction criticism
       21  20th century literary criticism
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 2</td>
<td>Problem of the historical Jesus</td>
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<td>MID-TERM EXAMINATION</td>
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<td>SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>Mark (entire text)</td>
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<td>*Mark (Mk.1-2)</td>
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<td>*Mark (Mk.13-16)</td>
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<td>Matthew (entire text)</td>
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<td>*Matthew (Mt.1-3)</td>
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<td>EASTER BREAK</td>
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<td>*Matthew (Mt.26-28)</td>
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<td>Apr. 1</td>
<td>Luke (entire text)</td>
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<td>*Luke (Lk.1-4)</td>
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<td>*Luke (Lk.22-24)</td>
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<td>John (entire text)</td>
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11  *John (Jn.1-4)
13  *John (Jn.18-21)
15  Marcion and Montanus
18  *Dialogue of the Saviour
20  *Gospel of Mary
22  Gospel of Thomas
25  *Infancy Gospel of Thomas
27  *Infancy Gospel of James
29  Gospel of Peter (make-up quiz for those who are eligible)

________________________________________ Final Examination (date and time to be determined by the Registrar