NT 760: Jesus in the New Testament
Syllabus

January/Spring, 2010
14 and 15 January (7:00 – 9:30 pm); 5:00 – 7:00 pm on 20 February, 20 March, 24 April
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Course Description:

These are exciting days in Biblical studies on Jesus. Much is being written on the historical Jesus, and significant challenges to old paradigms in New Testament Christology are being presented. Some scholars claim to have discovered ancient and modern conspiracies and to reveal secrets. A number are intentionally trying to unsettle orthodoxy. Others respond to such challenges, while at the same time they advance our understanding of Jesus in the New Testament through their careful and fresh research. The purpose of this course is to explore a number of issues related to the historical Jesus and New Testament Christology in recent scholarship.

Examples of subjects considered are: the early Church’s belief in Jesus’ divinity and in monotheism, the early church’s devotion to and worship of Jesus, an ‘orthodox’ Christology in the early Church, early Christologies, the non-canonical Gospels and the historical Jesus, light shed on the historical Jesus from archaeology and ancient literature, the Jewish context for understanding Jesus, Jesus in light of the Old Testament, the historical reliability of the canonical Gospels and the early Church, the mission of Jesus, Jesus’ self-understanding, the miracles of Jesus, and so forth.

Course Relationship to the Curriculum:

The course has no pre-requisites and is a general elective. However, it is best taken after a class in New Testament exegesis. It will particularly advance students’ knowledge during or after a course on the Gospels. This readings course relates well to parts of many courses that address Jesus, whether in history or theology.

Course Objectives:

*Students will be able to articulate the recent challenges to orthodox Christianity regarding Jesus, know the key persons making such challenges, and be familiar with the arguments that they put forward. These objectives will be accomplished through the reading, note taking, and discussion.
*Students will be able to articulate the recent answers to such challenges by more orthodox scholars, know the key persons involved in this scholarship, and be able to present the arguments that they put forward. These objectives will be accomplished through the reading, note taking, and discussion.
*By building on this reading, which models good scholarship, students will sharpen their own skills in historical and theological research on Jesus. This objective will be accomplished through the research paper.

**Course Approach and Preparation:**

As a readings course, students should expect to read more than usual for this course. The required pages of secondary sources are a little over 2,000, plus reading for the research paper. Some primary source reading is also expected. Students will engage this reading on CAMS, in meeting sessions, and in their research papers.

As part of ‘class participation’, students are asked to interact on CAMS with each other. This can involve: posting and interacting with questions from fellow students, noting what was especially challenging or helpful in a particular work (cite page numbers), and identifying possible discussion topics for the meeting times.

Students will meet for at least six hours to discuss their reading with the professor (see times, below). To prepare for these sessions, students will (1) read the book for that meeting, (2) take careful notes on the reading, and (3) interact with each other on CAMS, and (4) be able to discuss the reading. Note that some books are considerably longer than others.

The course will begin with two lectures by Dr. Craig Evans (see below). Students living reasonably close to Charlotte to drive to these lectures are expected to do so. Other students may engage the lectures through the DVD’s that will be produced for the lectures.

**Course Reading and Outline:**

*Note:* Due to a limitation on the number of pages that can be read for a course, key works by less orthodox scholars are not assigned. Yet their views are generally well presented in the readings chosen for this course, and arguments will be examined further by students for the research paper. Students are encouraged to engage authors’ own works rather than simply access them through another’s presentation.

The course will be conducted as follows.

**First Session: The Historical Jesus**

**Reading:** Students need to have read and taken notes on at least half of the following work by Dr. Evans by the time of this lecture. Complete the reading and note-taking on this work in January. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the primary sources that are noted in Evans by skimming sections of these works (e.g., the *Gospel of Thomas*).

**Meeting Time:** Attend (or receive DVD’s of) the Robert C. Cooley lectures by Dr. Craig Evans at 7:00 pm on 14 and 15 January. Be able to engage Dr. Evans during questions and answers after the lectures with a poignant question.

**Second Session: The Historical Jesus**

**Reading:** Students need to have read and taken notes on the following work before we meet:


**Meeting Time:** 20 February, 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Be prepared to discuss this work with fellow students in a discussion led by the professor.

**Third Session: Christology of the Early Church**

**Reading:** Students need to have read and taken notes on the following work before we meet:


**Meeting Time:** 20 March, 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Be prepared to discuss this work with fellow students in a discussion led by the professor.

**Fourth Session: Christology of the Early Church**

**Reading:** Students need to have read and taken notes on the following work before we meet:


**Meeting Time:** 24 April, 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Be prepared to discuss this work with fellow students in a discussion led by the professor.

**Research Paper:**

The research paper is to hone in on one of the many topics broached in this course. The research question for the paper needs to be approved by the professor. The paper should demonstrate broad, detailed research in books, commentaries, monographs, journals, and
primary sources, as appropriate. It must also engage the Biblical text. It is to be approximately 3,750 words, excluding footnote references. The *SBL Handbook of Style* will serve as a guide to style. The paper is due on the 24 May, 2010.

**Course Assessment:**

- Student Participation—in lectures, meetings, and on CAMS: 20% of grade
- Student Reading and Notes of required books: 20% of grade
- Research Paper: 60% of grade