

FIU Department of Religious Studies  
**REL 3250: Jesus and the Early Christians**

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DM 303  
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Fall 2021  
TR 11:00-12:15  
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**Introduction and Aims:** This semester we will examine the life and teachings of Jesus and the growth and development of early Christianity. This study will be conducted mainly through the writings of the New Testament, but where appropriate we will also examine other sources such as new archaeological discoveries, various writings from the Greco-Roman world, and Christian apocrypha. In addition, we will look at the methods that scholars have developed for studying the New Testament and discuss their uses and limitations.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** At the end of this course you will

- Know the historical background of the New Testament writings
- Understand the issues of authorship, date and place as they affect the interpretation of the texts
- Be aware of the ways that scholars put together evidence from various sources to arrive at conclusions about the aims of Jesus
- Be familiar with the outline of the early Christian movement after the time of Jesus
- Appreciate both the unity and diversity of the early church

### **Syllabus**

1. [August 24] Introduction. Issues in the Study of the New Testament.

Read: *INT*, pp. 208-222, 437-453 or *IB*, pp. 370-375 [nothing corresponding to 208-216 “Can we Trust the Gospels?”], 628-644.

2 [August 26] Background Study: Biblical History

Read: *INT*, pp. 27-45 or *IB*, pp. 302-317 [nothing corresponding to 40-41 on apocalyptic].

3 [August 31] Background Study: The Roman Empire.

Read: *INT*, pp. 10-27 or *IB*, pp. 288-302.

4 [September 2] What is a Gospel? How do the Gospels Relate to Each Other?

Read: *INT*, pp. 161-186, 194-199 or *IB*, pp. 409-427, 435-440 [nothing corresponding to p.175-176, 182-186].

NT: The Gospel of Matthew.

5 [September 7] Oral Traditions to Written Forms.

Read: *INT*, pp. 187-191 or *IB*, pp. 428-432.

NT: The Gospel of Mark.

6 [September 9] Putting Pen to Paper and Writing Things Down.

Read: *INT*, pp. 191-194 or *IB*, pp. 432-435.

NT: The Gospel of Luke.

7 [September 14] The Gospel of John.

Read: *INT*, pp. 199-207 or *IB*, pp. 440-448.

NT: The Gospel of John.

8 [September 16] Dates and Authors.

9 [September 21] Putting Together the Life of Jesus: Some Recent Proposals.

Read: *INT*, pp. 46-65 or *IB*, pp. 318-375 [nothing corresponding to 48-49, 55-57, 64-65].

10 [September 23] The Teaching of Jesus.

Read: *INT*, pp. 66-75, 86-101, 109-123 or *IB*, pp. 330-339, 350-363 [nothing corresponding to p. 100; p. 362= p.123].

11 [September 28] The Miracles of Jesus

Read: *INT*, pp. 101-108 or *IB*, pp. 363-369.

12 [September 30] Jesus as Son of Man and Son of God.

Read: *INT*, pp. 76-85 or *IB*, pp. 340-349.

13 [October 5] Accounts of the Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Read: *INT*, pp. 124-160 or *IB*, pp. 376-407 [nothing corresponding to pp. 138-139].

14 [October 7] **Midterm Examination.**

15 [October 12] The Acts of the Apostles.

Read: *INT*, pp. 224-251 or *IB*, pp. 449-4 [nothing corresponding to pp. 235, 243-244, 251].

16 [October 14] The Life of Paul.

Read: *INT*, pp. 252-277 or *IB*, pp. 471-494 [nothing corresponding to p. 275].

17 [October 19] The Life of Paul—cont'd.

Read: *INT*, pp. 278-287 or *IB*, pp. 495-504.

18 [October 21] The Letters to the Thessalonians.

Read: *INT*, pp. 296-302 or *IB*, pp. 513-520.

NT: 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

19 [October 26] The Letters to the Corinthians.

Read: *INT*, pp. 303-319 or *IB*, pp. 521-537.

NT: 1 Corinthians.

20 [October 28] The Letters to the Corinthians—cont'd.  
NT: 2 Corinthians.

21 [November 2] The Letter to the Galatians.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 287-294 or *IB*, pp. 504-511.  
NT: Galatians.

22 [November 4] The Letter to the Romans.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 319-333 or *IB*, pp. 537-549, 551.  
NT: Romans.

23 [November 9] Paul's Doctrine of Justification.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 349-374 or *IB*, pp. 550, 562-564 [nothing corresponding to pp. 349-370].

24 [November 11] Philippians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Colossians.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 334-343 or *IB*, pp. 552-561.  
NT: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon.

25 [November 16] The Pastoral Epistles.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 344-348 or *IB*, pp. 565-569.  
NT: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus.

26 [November 18] Hebrews and James.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 375-391 or *IB*, pp. 571-585 [nothing corresponding to pp. 390-391].  
NT: Hebrews and James.

27 [November 23] The Petrine Epistles, Jude, and the Johannine Epistles.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 392-403, 416-423 or *IB*, pp. 586-597, 609-614 [nothing corresponding to pp. 422-423].  
NT: 1 & 2 Peter, Jude, 1-3 John.

**November 25—No class, Thanksgiving!**

28 [November 30] Revelation.  
Read: *INT*, pp. 404-416 or *IB*, pp. 598-609.  
NT: Revelation.

**Paper due.**

29. [December 2] Conclusion

**Textbooks:** *INT* = *Introducing the New Testament* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., by John Drane (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011). ISBN13: 978-0800697501.

OR:

*IB = Introducing the Bible 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, by John Drane (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011). ISBN13: 978-0800698409.

*NT = The New Testament.* You may find one of the following versions helpful: The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV; this is the one I will read from this semester), New International Version (NIV), New American Standard Version (NASV), Jerusalem Bible (JB), King James Version (KJV). Try to stay away from paraphrases of the New Testament.

**Grading:** Quizzes 25%  
Midterm 25%  
Final 25%  
Term Paper (9-12 pages) 25%

**Quizzes:** There will be six quizzes based on the textbook readings through the course of the semester. The quizzes will be multiple choice or short answer. Your lowest score from the semester will be dropped. At the end of the semester, the scores from the five best tests will be added and the grading scale will be as follows:

A 90-100  
B 80-89  
C 70-79  
D 60-69  
F below 60

**Examinations:** Both midterm and final examinations will be a combination of multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching and essay questions. The final examination is not cumulative—it covers only material from the second half of the semester.

**Term Paper:** Each student will write a term paper on some topic relating to the course that particularly interests him or her. The topic must receive the approval of the instructor before it is handed in. The paper itself should be 9-12 pages in length, excluding bibliography. Each paper is to be printed with lines double-spaced. Margins for the pages should be 1 inch on all sides and the style should conform to either that of *MLA* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. In the body of the paper you may use either footnotes or endnotes.

**Attendance:** An absolutely essential part of the course! Some material will inevitably be covered in class that is **not** to be found in the textbook so that each absence will affect your ability to do well on the tests. Make sure to come to class regularly.

**Academic Honesty:** Each student is expected to do his or her own work. It is absolutely unacceptable to submit someone else's work as your own. This is plagiarism and will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment and possible disciplinary action. Thus, when in the course of writing your paper you quote or paraphrase an idea found in one of your sources you must give credit to the original author (usually by means of a footnote).

**Academic Conduct:** Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful

exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

**Syllabus Note on Internet Use in Research:** You may cite from the internet in your term papers, but you must be discerning. Anyone can post “information” on the internet, and thus some of what is there is inaccurate, incomplete, and sometimes even blatantly untrue. As in print collections in libraries, only scholarly articles on the internet are acceptable as sources for research papers.

Internet articles should ideally have authors. Some will list individual authors; others will list institutions as sources. The credibility of the information depends on the credibility of the source. Acceptable sources include individual scholars with academic credentials, educational institutions (e.g., Institute of Reformation History, Princeton University), publicly supported national or international institutions (e.g. the World Health Organization or the National Institutes of Health) or other well known institutions with credible reputations (e.g. the World Council of Churches, the Children’s Defense Fund). Most educational institutions have addresses which end with the letters “edu.” You must use your judgment since many reputable institutions may not be well known by most students. Also, sometimes websites may list a university as the place from which the material emanates, but which does not sponsor or in any way support the information on that site. (You could set up a website that lists FIU as its origin, and purports that the Pope died last month and was replaced by a ringer!).

There will be some internet sources the reliability of which will be difficult to assess. Sometimes you must judge by the tone and range of an article. If it reads like a magazine or newspaper article and cites none of the sources it used, it is not scholarly. You should ask whether the article demonstrates balance: Does it attempt to tell all sides of the story? Does it ask critical questions of the material it covers? How well does its treatment accord with other treatments of the same material you have found? If you would really like to cite an internet article but have doubts about its acceptability, look up the institution or the author on the internet or in the library. Has the author or institution published other works? Have those been reviewed or cited by other scholars?

When you cite from the internet, you must list the entire address on the web where you found the information and the date you accessed it. When applicable you must also note any search terms needed within the website to find this particular article when these do not appear within the address.

The following are some bibliographic entries:

Musa, Edward, “The Art of the Maya.”  
<http://www.unescape.org/pop/journal/v1onaal.htm>. 4/27/19.

Zarabozo, Jamaal, “Is Family Planning Allowed in Islam?”  
<http://www.albany.edu/~ha4934/famplan.html>. 4/21/19.