I. REL 207  JESUS IN HISTORY AND TRADITION (#FCREL207)
Ferrum College  
Program: Religion  
School: Arts and Humanities  
Spring 2017

II. Instructor:  
Instructor Name: Dr. Eric M. Vanden Eykel  
Office: Britt Hall 115  
Phone Number: 540-365-4320 (office)  
E-Mail: evandeneykel@ferrum.edu  
Office Hours: 8 hours/week, posted at vandeneykel.youcanbook.me

III. Class Meeting Times: MWF 1:25 – 2:20

IV. Textbooks and Materials:  
• A Bible with an Old and New Testament (any translation will do). I want you to have a print Bible in class – no electronic/smartphone Bibles. Let me know if you want or need a recommendation!  
• Amy-Jill Levine, The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus (HarperOne, 2006)  
• Joan E. Taylor, ed., Jesus and Brian: Exploring the Historical Jesus and his Times via Monty Python’s Life of Brian (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015)  

V. Catalog Course Description:  
A study of a selected religion or of issues and major themes within a single religious tradition or in a variety of religions. The topic under consideration varies from semester to semester according to periodic assessments of the needs and interests of students. Students may take only one 207 course as one of the two courses required to meet the general education requirement in religion. Three hours, three credits.

VI. Purpose/Rationale for this Course:  
Jesus of Nazareth is without doubt one of the most influential people who ever lived. But he was born in obscurity, and he probably never traveled farther than about 100 miles from his hometown. We know little for certain about the type of life that he lived, and the earliest “biographies” written about him disagree on key points. Yet today about 30% of the world’s population believes that he was, in some way, God in human form. So how did we get from there to here? That’s what this course is about.

VII. Instructional Methodology and Uses of Technology  
Our course will be comprised of careful readings, reading responses, lectures, small-group work, and discussion. Technology expectations include Internet access and a word processor (e.g., Word, Pages). Brightspace is our Course Management System.

VIII. College and Course Outcomes  
College-wide Student Learning Outcomes  
Students will demonstrate an integrated knowledge in the liberal arts  
Our course goal is to understand a historical figure (Jesus) in various historical and cultural contexts. Strategies used to support our exploration include: careful reading, discussions, and essays. Assessment will involve a grade on essays, exams, and participation.

Students will demonstrate information literacy, using available technology when appropriate  
Our course goal is to use academic research tools extensively. Strategies used to support information literacy and technology use include library research instruction and assignments requiring the use of information literacy and technology. Assessment of information literacy will involve a portion of essay and presentation grades.
Students will demonstrate competency in quantitative skills and reading
Our course goal is to read texts carefully and responsibly. Students will be expected to read primary sources that are written in various historical and personal styles. College-level textbooks will assist students in their own reading and interpretation of these texts. Students should be able to recall and define significant individuals, terms, and concepts related to the Christian apocrypha that are covered in the class. | Strategies to support your reading guided response prompts of varying lengths. | Assessment will involve a grade on essays, exams, and participation.

Students will think critically and solve problems through analysis, evaluation, inference, induction, and deduction
Our course goal is to analyze critically. Students should be able to read ancient and modern texts in light of their respective contexts, to locate different voices and perspectives in the texts, to compare and contrast different accounts and modern interpretations, and to assess strengths and weaknesses of arguments. | Strategies to support this process include readings, discussions, and essays. | Assessment of critical thinking will occur in your essays, exams, and discussions.

Students will communicate with unity of purpose and coherent organization consistent with standard rules and recognized conventions using appropriate methodologies
Students communicate effectively when their essays have a unified focus and organization, when their ideas and arguments are developed logically with coherent, precise, and effective wording, when their sentence structure and vocabulary are appropriate for the assignment, when their essays are free of mechanical errors, and when students completely and accurately document the sources used in the assignment. | Strategies to support this include reading, class discussions (the more you talk about what you have read, the better you will write), and written exercises. | Assessment of communication will occur in your essays, presentations, and participation.

Students will demonstrate awareness of local, national and global issues
Our course goal is for students to see the person of Jesus evolve with the post-biblical tradition, to make new connections, and to raise contemporary questions about the significance of the historical Jesus for contemporary Christian traditions. | Strategies to support your ability to demonstrate awareness of local, national, and global issues include reading, library research, writing, and class discussions. | Assessment of your growing awareness will be in the essays, exams, and participation in class discussions about contemporary moral issues as shared in the post-biblical literature.

Program Student Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate a depth of knowledge, capability and ethical reasoning in a chosen field
Religion graduates will demonstrate a satisfactory appropriation of the critical skills commonly used in biblical and theological scholarship.

Students should be able to read ancient and modern texts in light of their respective contexts, to locate different voices and perspectives in the texts, to compare and contrast different accounts and modern interpretations, and to assess strengths and weaknesses of arguments. | Strategies used to support our exploration include: reading, discussions, and essays. | Assessment of critical thinking will occur in your essays, exams, and participation.

Religion graduates will explain the development of the Christian tradition and demonstrate the ability to analyze the complex relationships between this tradition and contemporary culture.

Our course goal is to understand a historical figure (Jesus) in various historical and cultural contexts. | Strategies used to support our exploration include: reading, discussions, and essays. | Assessment of the will involve a grade on essays, exams, and participation in class during discussions and group presentations.
Religion graduates will demonstrate effective research and writing skills about religion.

Students communicate effectively when their essays have a unified focus and organization, when their ideas and arguments are developed logically with coherent and effective wording, when their sentence structure and vocabulary are appropriate for the assignment, when their essays are free of mechanical errors, and when students completely and accurately document the sources used in the assignment. Strategies to support this include reading (the more you read, the better you will write), class discussions (the more you talk about what you have read, the better you will write), and essays. Assessment of communication will occur in essays, presentations, and participation.

IX. Course Requirements/Assignments:

Assignments

**Reading Responses (25%)**

Brief written “responses” will accompany most assigned readings. These should be around 250 words (1 page max) and will be submitted to Brightspace before we discuss them in class. Late responses are scored at half credit (no exceptions), and responses may not be turned in after we discuss them. Your lowest two response scores will be dropped automatically.

**Jesus in Media Project (25%)**

Over the course of the semester we (as a class) will compile a database of “Jesus in media.” What I have in mind here is a robust collection of images, films, music, etc. that have Jesus as their subject. This will be a collaborative online project that will be updated every two weeks or so. Details forthcoming.

**Book Analysis (25%)**

Near the end of the semester you will submit a 3-4 page book analysis on a 21st-century “Jesus novel”: Christopher Moore’s *Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ’s Childhood Pal*. Specifics about this assignment will be provided around midterm.

**Classroom Citizenship (25%)**

The college classroom should be a community that facilitates critical thinking. The “citizenship” component of your grade reflects the extent to which you have (or have not) been a “good citizen” of your community. Good citizenship entails behaviors like attending class regularly and on time, doing the readings, asking questions, contributing to discussions, etc. Examples of poor citizenship include cheating or turning in plagiarized work, not attending class or being late on a regular basis, sleeping, fiddling with your phone, not removing your headphones, whispering to your neighbor, or any behavior that conveys to me or your colleagues that you would rather be somewhere else. Sometimes you might have to fake interest, and that’s OK; part of being a contributing member of society is learning to act interested even when you might not be. We all have to fake it sometimes. Trust me. Our class is small by design, and the way I have planned it, participation will be crucial to its success.

Makeup Work

The ability to make up work is a privilege, not a right. If you are absent on the day of an in-class assignment because of illness or emergency, you must 1) contact me as soon as possible with an explanation of why you were absent, and 2) provide official documentation of your absence (e.g., a doctor’s note) in order to qualify for a makeup. If arrangements are not made within one week, a zero will be recorded. It is your responsibility to contact me about making up work.
Extra Credit

There will be no extra credit in this class. The components outlined above add up to 100%, which means that I have provided you with all the credit that you need to succeed. It is up to you to make good use of it by doing your work and by doing it well.

Classroom Etiquette

In this class we will be speaking openly about religion, one of the things that you are not supposed to speak openly about (the other being politics). One of our aims is to learn how to talk about this topic in a way that is informed and charitable. Disagreements are encouraged, as long as they are offered graciously.

Technology

Studies show that we learn better when electronic devices are absent, so if you are compelled to distract yourself with an electronic device, know that you are doing so at your own peril. If your device becomes a distraction to me or to your neighbor, I will ask you to leave.

Communication

Throughout the semester I will communicate with you by means of the e-mail accounts that the college provides for us, and through the Brightspace newsfeed. I expect you to check these on a regular basis and to actually read what you find there. You are responsible for any and all directives that I send through these media! I check my e-mail frequently and compulsively. If you e-mail me with a question that is answered in the syllabus or on Brightspace, my reply will be “What is written in the syllabus?” (see Luke 10:25-28).

Office Hours

I have at least eight hours per week when I am at your disposal. Please see my actual availability and make an appointment using the following: vandeneykel.youcanbook.me. I am happy to help with any and all aspects of the course: inquiries about the material, questions about your grade, etc. Even if you don’t have a specific question or concern, please stop by — I enjoy getting to know my students!

X. Evaluation and Grading Scale:

A = 90-100%
B = 80-89%
C = 70-79%
D = 60-69%
F = Below 60%

XI. Attendance Policy:

If you are not in class, you will be recorded as absent, regardless of the circumstances. If you are absent because of legal obligation (e.g., jury duty), health (e.g., flesh-eating bacteria), or college-sanctioned activities and related travel (e.g., athletics), your absence may be “excused” if you can provide official documentation justifying it. But excused absences are still recorded as absences. The only difference between an excused and an unexcused absence is that an excused absence allows you to make up in-class work that you may have missed.

If you arrive after I have taken attendance, you will be counted as absent for that day. One tardy = one absence.

By the college’s 25% policy, any student who misses or is late to ten classes (on a MWF schedule) will receive an
You are responsible for keeping track of your attendance. I am happy to tell you how many absences you have (come to my office or ask after class), but it is not my job to send reminder e-mails if you are approaching the 25% mark. I will, however, e-mail you when you have reached this mark.

XII. Academic Integrity:

In all instances, policies identified in the Ferrum College Catalog and the Ferrum College Student and Faculty Handbooks regarding the Honor System shall be followed. Students are expected to display academic integrity at all times and in all circumstances. **Students who plagiarize or cheat on an assignment will receive an automatic F in the course and will be reported to the Ferrum College Honor Board. Consider this your warning!**

XIII. Academic Accessibility Services:

As directed by Ferrum College’s policy, any student with a disability who qualifies for and seeks academic accommodations (testing or other services) must work through the Office for Academic Accessibility for accommodations. The office is located Lower Stanley Library, Office 110 and the director may be reached by phone at 365-4262 or by email at nbeach@ferrum.edu. Please remember that accommodations cannot be granted retroactively; they must be requested in a timely manner prior to when the accommodation is needed. Students who wish to use accommodations through OAA are encouraged to meet with the director during the first weeks of the semester to discuss the process, and are also invited to read the policy manual on [www.ferrum.edu/disability](http://www.ferrum.edu/disability) for specific information.

XIV. Civility in the Classroom Policy

Civil behavior and mutual respect between faculty and students are critical in the college classroom environment if teaching, learning, critical thinking, and sharing of ideas are to occur. Respectful and civil behavior at a very basic level includes the following: turning off cell phones; arriving to class on time; engaging appropriately in classroom activities, lecture, or discussion through attentive listening without interruption or side chats; and demonstrating the ability to discuss topics without inappropriate language or attacking others (physically or verbally). Students who do not comply with the Civility in the Classroom policy described in the Faculty Handbook and the Student Handbook may be removed from the academic setting and may risk serious consequences as outlined in the Civility policy.
Tentative Schedule

Lecture-based courses are easy to schedule with precision because we (people who lecture) typically know how long it takes for us to “get through” material. But my hope for this class is that the majority of time we spend together will involve us talking to each other, and not just you listening to me talk (although there will, unfortunately, be some of that). And scheduling that sort of class is tricky because it’s impossible to know at the outset what sorts of discussions we will have! I therefore present this schedule to you as a tentative one that will change from time to time as the semester progresses.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gospel of Mark (Bible); Levine, <em>The Misunderstood Jew</em>, pp. 1-52</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Letters of Paul (selections, on Brightspace); Levine, <em>The Misunderstood Jew</em>, pp. 53-86</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Gospel of Matthew (Bible); Levine, <em>The Misunderstood Jew</em>, pp. 87-115</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gospel of John (Bible); Levine, <em>The Misunderstood Jew</em>, pp. 119-166</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Apocalypse of John (aka Revelation) (Bible)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Infancy Gospel of Thomas (Brightspace); Protevangelium of James (Brightspace)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Jesus and Brian (selections, TBD)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Contemporary Images of Jesus (readings/topics TBD)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ’s Childhood Pal</td>
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<td>15, 16</td>
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