



NT 610: The Life of Jesus Christ
Fall Semester A 2010

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

A study of the teachings of Jesus set within the major events of his life. This course evaluates scholarly quests for the historical Jesus and analyzes the unique contributions each Gospel writer makes to an understanding of Jesus.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE	RESEARCH SKILLS
<p>At the end of this course, students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the major events in the life of Jesus and his teachings • Identify the basic facts regarding the historical background of the four Gospels, the culture of first century C.E. Palestine and the religion of Judaism, recognizing the unique contributions of each Gospel toward our understanding of Jesus. 	<p>At the end of this course, students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and respond appropriately to scholarly quests for the historical Jesus and develop the ability to interact productively within a community of Christian learners.
SPIRITUAL FORMATION	MINISTRY PREPARATION
<p>At the end of this course, students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encounter God as He reveals Himself to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as underpinning the plan of redemption. 	<p>At the end of this course, students will...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate basic principles for applying Jesus' teaching to our modern era.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997. ISBN: 0-8054-1058-9

Green, Joel B., Scot McKnight, I. Howard Marshall, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992. ISBN: 0-8308-1777-8

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

- *Reading.* The most important part of the course is the careful, thorough reading of the assigned biblical materials. In addition, each student will be responsible to read the secondary literature assigned for that day.
- *Class Participation.* There will be a lecture in this class, but there will always be discussion. So, I expect everyone to be prepared for class each day. Being prepared implies that a student has read the assigned reading and is willing and able to participate in classroom discussion by asking questions, responding to questions proffered by the professor, and making comments and/or observations on the reading, the remarks of the professor, and the remarks of other students. **Appendix 1** provides assessment and evaluation criteria. Class Participation is worth 10% of the total course grade.
- *Quizzes.* There will be periodic quizzes over the content of the English Bible readings and secondary readings as indicated in the course schedule. These quizzes may not be made up or taken in advance. Each quiz is worth 5% of the total course grade (4 @ 5% each = 20%).
- *Working Exegesis Paper.* Student will write an exegetical analysis of a selected text and guide the class through a study of the same. Guidelines for this assignment are provided in **Appendix 2**. This assignment is worth 20% of the total course grade.
- *Creative Parable.* Concluding our study of Jesus' parables to teach about the kingdom of God, students will write a contemporary parable and make an oral presentation of the same. Guidelines for this assignment are provided in **Appendix 3**. This assignment is worth 10% of the total course grade.
- *Book Review.* Students will write a critical review of one (1) monograph related to Jesus studies and make an oral presentation of the same. A list of the books and guidelines for this assignment are provided in **Appendix 4**. This assignment is worth 20% of the total course grade.
- *Movie Review.* Students will view a Jesus film and then write a critical review of the same. Students are encouraged to present clips from the same when presenting their work to their colleagues. A list of the films and guidelines for this assignment are provided in **Appendix 5**. This assignment is worth 20% of the total course grade.

GRADING

1. The student's final grade will be determined as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Quizzes (4 @ 5% each)	20%
Working Exegesis Paper	20%
Creative Parable	10%
Book Review	20%
Movie Review	<u>20%</u>
	100%

2. The 100 points will be broken down according to CEDS' policy concerning letter grades:

	B+ 93 – 94	C+ 83 – 84	D+ 74	
A 97 – 100	B 87 – 92	C 77 – 82	D 71 – 73	F 0 – 69
A- 95 – 96	B- 85 – 86	C- 75 – 76	D- 70	

POLICIES

1. **Attendance.** Each student must attend class and participate in discussion. One absence without penalty will be allowed during the semester. Other absences, except in extreme emergencies, will result in a reduction of grade at the end of the semester. The professor must be notified before the class in case of an emergency. Three (3) late arrivals equals one absence.
2. **Tardiness.** Classes will begin at the announced time. Because tardiness is disruptive and deprives the professor of valuable teaching time, three (3) late arrivals will be considered an absence and will lower the student's final grade for the course.
3. **Plagiarism.** For written work to demonstrate scholarship and integrity, documentation must be given for all ideas, paraphrasing, and quotations. Failure to do so is viewed as a very serious offense. Any assignment containing plagiarized material will be graded "F" and placed in the student's file. A future occurrence, if determined to be deliberate, will result in dismissal from the divinity school. Cheating in any form will be treated in the same manner as plagiarism.
4. **Written Assignments.** Students are required to use the latest edition of Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* and the *CEDS Research Paper Handbook*. Professors will not accept papers that do not comply with this policy. Proper format, grammar, and spelling will factor into the grade the student receives for the paper. Papers are expected to be submitted on-time, as scheduled by the course professor. All papers are expected to be new work and cannot be submitted twice at CEDS.
5. **Late Work.** All work must be submitted by the due date stated on the SCHEDULE. The professor will not accept late work. All written work must be submitted before the final week of the half-semester. Assignments can be emailed to the professor who will grade them but not print them out and return them. If you must miss class, make arrangements to have your work turned in early. Examinations cannot be taken if all course requirements have not been satisfied.
6. **Examinations.** Examinations must be taken at the times scheduled in the syllabus. Postponement of an examination must be requested in writing within two days of the scheduled date of the exam. The request will be considered only in the case of a major emergency (i.e., death in the family or an illness for which you can produce a doctor's statement).
7. **Incomplete.** Students have thirty (30) days from the end of the half-semester to complete work for which they were given an extension by the professor and Director of Student Records. When course requirements are not met in that thirty (30) day period the final grade will be converted to an "F" and counted as hours attempted in computing the grade point average for the half-semester. The request for an extension must be made in writing and include the reasons for which additional time is needed. Requests will not be considered after the seventh week of class. A fee will be charged for the extension if granted.
8. **Withdrawal.** Students must complete the appropriate form when dropping a course. The withdrawal is not official until the professor and the Director of Student Records have signed the form. Courses may not be dropped after the fourth week of classes.

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 16: Introduction to Study of the Gospels

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 1-111.
- Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 276-82.
- Blomberg, "Form Criticism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 243-50.
- McKnight, "Literary Criticism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 473-81.
- Osborne, "Redaction Criticism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 662-69.
- Stein, "Synoptic Problem," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 784-92.
- Beasley-Murray, "Synoptics and John," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 792-95.

No Written Assignment Due

August 23: The Gospel of Mark

Quiz on the Gospel of Mark

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 115-25.
- Guelich, "Mark, Gospel of," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 512-25.
- Marshall, "Son of Man," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 775-81.
- Bauer, "Son of God," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 769-75.
- Hurtado, "Christ," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 106-17.
- Kruse, "Apostle," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 27-33.
- Witherington, "John the Baptist," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 383-91.
- Wilkins, "Disciples," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 176-82.
- Black, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 549-60.
- Blomberg, "Healing," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 299-307.
- Twelftree, "Demon, Devil, Satan," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 163-72.
- Twelftree, "Blasphemy," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 75-77.
- Geddert, "Apocalyptic Teaching," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 20-27.

Optional Assignment Due:

- Review of Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*.
- Review of Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*.

August 30: The Gospel of Matthew

Quiz on the Gospel of Matthew

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 126-39.
- McKnight, "Matthew, Gospel of," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 526-41.
- Huffman, "Genealogy," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 253-59.
- Moo, "Law," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 450-61.
- Evans, "Old Testament in the Gospels," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 579-90.
- Stanton, "Sermon on the Mount/Plain," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 753-44.
- Stein, "Divorce," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 192-99.

Exegetical Analyses: Matt 5-7, 10, 18

September 6: The Gospel of Luke

Quiz on the Gospel of Luke

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 140-55.
- Bock, "Luke, Gospel of," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 495-510.
- Turner, "Holy Spirit," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 341-51.
- Dunn, "Prayer," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 617-25.
- Davids, "Rich and Poor," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 701-10.
- Marshall, "Salvation," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 719-24.
- Scholer, "Women," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 880-87.

Exegetical Analysis: Luke 1-2

September 13: Excursus on the Parables of Jesus

Required Reading:

- Caragounis, "Kingdom of God/Heaven," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 417-30.
- Snodgrass, "Parable," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 591-601.

Optional Assignment Due:

- Review of Longenecker, *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*.
- Review of Blomberg, *Preaching the Parables*.

September 20: The Gospel of John

Quiz on the Gospel of John

Required Assignment Due: Creative Parable (see Appendix 3)

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 156-75.
- Thompson, "John, Gospel of," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 368-83.
- Burge, "I Am Sayings," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 354-56.
- Johnson, "Logos" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 481-84.

Exegetical Analysis: John 14-16

September 27: The Historical Jesus and Jesus in the Cinema

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 177-97.
- Brown, "Historical Jesus, Quest of," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 326-41.
- Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 364-68.

Optional Assignment Due:

- Review of Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History*.
- Review of Borg & Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*.
- Review of Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels*.

Required Assignment Due: Critical Film Review (see Appendix 5)

October 4: Highlights from the Ministry of Jesus

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 198-362.
- Hoehner, "Chronology," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 118-122.
- Witherington, "Birth of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 60-74.
- Dockery, "Baptism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 55-58.
- Twelftree, "Temptation of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 821-27.
- Green, "Passion Narrative," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 601-04.
- Losie, "Triumphal Entry of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 854-59.
- Corley, "Trial of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 841-54.
- Stein, "Last Supper," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 444-50.
- Green, "Death of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 146-63.
- Green, "Burial of Jesus" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 88-92.
- Osborne, "Resurrection," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 673-88.
- Giles, "Ascension," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 46-50.

Optional Assignment Due:

- Review of Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*.
- Review of Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*.
- Review of Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

Exegetical Analyses: Matt 27-28; Mark 14-16

October 11: Historical & Theological Syntheses

Required Reading:

- Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 365-415.
- “Gospels (Historical Reliability),” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 291-97.
- Allison, “Eschatology,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 206-09.
- Hurst, “Ethics of Jesus” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 210-22.
- Wilkins, “Discipleship,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 182-89.

Optional Assignment Due:

- Review of Witherington, *The Gospel Code*.
- Review of Komoszewski, et al., *Reinventing Jesus*.
- Review of Beasley-Murray, *Preaching the Gospel from the Gospels*.

Appendix 1: Class Participation Expectations, Rationale, & Grading

*Tell me, and I'll forget.
Show me, and I may not remember.
Involve me, and I'll understand.*

Education guru Parker Palmer says that “Knowing and learning are *communal acts*. They require many eyes and ears, many observations and experiences.” Other education researchers agree that “student involvement is the key to learning”:

“The theory ... *students learn by becoming involved* ... seems to explain most of the empirical knowledge gained over the years about environmental influences on student development.... Quite simply, student involvement refers to the *amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience*” (Astin 133-51).

“Analysis of the research literature ... suggests that *students must do more than just listen*. They must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems” (Bonwell & Eisen Executive Summary).

“The body of research on the impacts of the college academic experience is extensive. The strongest general conclusion [is that] the *greater the student's involvement or engagement in academic work or the academic experience* of college, the *greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development*” (Pascarella & Terenzini 616).

“Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing packaged assignments, and spitting out answers. *They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives*. They must make what they learn part of themselves” (Chickering & Gamson 3).

“*You understand it only if you can teach it, use it, prove it, explain it, defend it, or read between the lines....* The student must perform using knowledge to convince us that they really understand material which quizzes and short-answer tests only suggest they understand.... *Understanding is developed through discussion, not instruction*” (Wiggins and McTighe 41, 159).

“Learning is least useful when it is private and hidden; it is most powerful when it becomes public and communal. Learning flourishes when we take what we think we know and offer it as community property among fellow learners so that it can be tested, examined, challenged, and improved before we internalize it” (Lee S. Shulman, *Teaching as Community Property: Essays on Higher Education*, 36-37)

“When white college students are placed in *discussion groups* with a black student—or with students holding opinions in the minority (a student whose opinions on the topics under discussion were at odds with those of the other participants)—they display *higher levels of complex thought*, and that pattern shows that racial and other forms of diversity have *positive effects on education and thought....* Although *homogeneity* of group members may increase solidarity and cohesiveness, it also tends to increase ‘*groupthink*.’ By contrast, ‘*minority influence*’ leads to *more-divergent thinking and perspectives, better critical thinking, and willingness and ability to change*” (Anthony Lising Antonio, Stanford University Department of Education).

In light of this overwhelming evidence, I require each and every student to participate in class discussions on a regular basis. It may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable at first, so you will be graded for your efforts over the arc of the semester. First and most logically, *you must be present to participate*, but presence isn't enough for participation. Below, you will find my class participation rubric (detailed criteria for different levels of performance). Please ask me periodically how you are doing if you are unsure.

Class Participation Grading Rubric

A	<p>Engages in class discussion by frequently doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • voluntarily and frequently offering creative or original responses/ interpretations/ observations beyond the obvious, • consistently offering plenty of effective textual support for observations, • involving others in class discussion by asking questions, seeking others' responses, etc. • eagerly and intelligently attempting to answer questions, • offering follow-up responses, and • treating classmates and the professor respectfully. <p>Eagerly treats class discussion as a conversation among students and professor.</p>
B	<p>Participates in class discussion by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering consistently appropriate and occasionally creative or original responses/ interpretations/ observations • frequently offering appropriate textual support for observations, • answering questions frequently, and • treating classmates and the professor respectfully. <p>Treats the class discussion as a conversation among students and professor.</p>
C	<p>Only sometimes participates in class discussion by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occasionally offering responses/interpretations/observations but nothing that really challenges the class to think/read beyond the obvious, • occasionally offering textual support for observations, most of which is appropriate • answering questions every now and then, • demonstrating overall competence in comments or raising good questions in response to discussion, but rarely actively or voluntarily contributes to discussion, and • treating classmates and the professor respectfully. <p>Many comments are merely factual statements or merely entertaining comments, neither of which demonstrates careful and intelligent responses to class content.</p>
D	<p>Rarely participates in class discussion, and then primarily by doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offering a few instances of response/interpretation/observation and appropriate textual support, • answering a couple of questions or offering one-word responses to discussion • occasionally disrupting class by coming to class late, failing to contribute to the learning environment by blankly staring off into space or working on something else during class, talking with someone while someone else is speaking, being off topic, or being merely entertaining with little purpose beyond clowning around, or • treating classmates or the professor disrespectfully, disrupting the learning environment. <p>Primarily a non-participant in topics relevant to class discussion.</p>
F	<p>Does not participate in class discussion in a constructive manner, doing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • never offering responses/interpretations/observations or appropriate textual support, • actively disengaging from class so that others may not know what this person's voice sounds like, much less what his or her opinions/interpretations/observations might be, or what his or her face looks like when looking directly at them, • participating only at the level of snide comments, or • treating classmates or the professor disrespectfully, disrupting the learning environment. <p>Never involved in class discussions, or serves as a disrupting voice in discussion</p>

Appendix 2: Guidelines for In-Class Exegetical Analyses

Students will write and present a mini exegesis paper on one (1) of the following text: Matt 5-7, 10, 18 (Aug 30); Luke 1-2 (Sept 6); John 14-16 (Sept 20); Matt 27-28 or Mark 14-16 (Oct 4). The purpose of the assignment is to raise the most important issues for interpretation and application of the passage under study. Presentation should last 45-60 minutes. The presentation should have the following structure (3-5 typewritten pages, single-spaced, excluding bibliography):

I. **Outline of the passage** (no more than 1/4 page)

A brief outline of the passage. Footnote source if not original.

II. **Interpretive issues**

- A. Boundaries and placement of the paragraphs
What is it that sets this passage off from what precedes and what follows it? Is there a new thought or theme?
- B. Translation problems
Are there certain words or phrases that are difficult to interpret? What passages seem to be the most difficult to answer the question 'What does this mean?'
- C. Cultural background
Questions of historical cultural context. What is the historical situation facing the author and his audience? Political, economic, social situation? Major threats and concerns?
- D. Use of tradition
Are there quotations or allusions to the sayings of Jesus? the Old Testament? early church hymns? etc.
- E. The function and meaning of the passage in its context
How does the passage fit into the argument as a whole? That is, how does this passage contribute the overall argument of the author?
- F. Relation to other New Testament texts
What do other New Testament texts have to say on the subject? Do they shed any light on the interpretation of the passage being studied?

III. **Significance/preaching**

Ask the question: What does it matter? So what? Does this passage have significance for some theological reason? psychological reason? political reason?

IV. **Discussion questions**

List three or four questions that will get the ball rolling for class discussion. What do you think are the most important issues that we should address when studying this passage?

V. **Annotated bibliography**

An annotated bibliography includes the elements of a standard bibliography and adds "annotations" to each bibliographic entry. The annotations essentially are miniature abstracts of the books and articles included in the bibliography. Edit each abstract so it is as brief as possible while retaining the essential data you wish to convey. Include an assessment of the significance of the piece you are abstracting. This should include a minimum of three (3) scholarly journal articles and two (2) scholarly monographs.

Note: Commentaries need not be abstracted.

Appendix 3: Creative Parable Grading Protocol

Students will write a contemporary parable. In keeping with what we have learned from our analysis of Jesus' parables in the Synoptic Gospels, the parables should have the following characteristics:

Part One: Subject of the Parable (Maximum 10 points)

- _____ The parable presents a teaching about the Kingdom of God.
- _____ The parable strikes for a verdict or evokes a response in action.

Part Two: Formal Features of the Parable (Maximum 20 points for each element)

- _____ A. The parable makes one main point; it is not an allegory.
- _____ B. The parable has three main characters.
- _____ C. The parable poses a contrast.
- _____ D. The parable has end-stress.

Part Three: Composition Mechanics (Maximum 10 points)

- 10 Perfect work
- 8-9 One or two punctuation mistakes OR one spelling or grammatical or syntactical error
- 5-7 Three or more punctuation mistakes OR two spelling or grammatical or syntactical errors
- 2-4 Several punctuation mistakes OR three or four spelling or grammatical errors
- 0 Several punctuation mistakes OR more than four spelling or grammatical errors

_____ **Total Points**

_____ Less points for late submission

_____ **Net Points**

Additional Notes:

Appendix 4: How to Write a Critical Review of a Book

Assignment

Students will read one (1) of the following monographs and write a critical review of the same:

<u>Author and Title</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Twelftree, <i>Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution of the Study to the Historical Jesus</i>	Aug 23
Twelftree, <i>Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical & Theological Study</i>	Aug 23
Longenecker, <i>The Challenge of Jesus' Parables</i>	Sept 13
Blomberg, <i>Preaching the Parables: From Responsible Interpretation to Powerful Proclamation</i>	Sept 13
Powell, <i>Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee</i>	Sept 27
Borg & Wright, <i>The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions</i>	Sept 27
Keener, <i>The Historical Jesus of the Gospels</i>	Sept 27
Bailey, <i>Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes</i>	Oct 4
Wright, <i>Jesus and the Victory of God</i>	Oct 4
Wright, <i>The Resurrection of the Son of God</i>	Oct 4
Witherington, <i>The Gospel Code: Novel Claims about Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Da Vinci</i>	Oct 11
Komoszewski, et al., <i>Reinventing Jesus: What the Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You</i>	Oct 11
Beasley-Murray, <i>Preaching the Gospel from the Gospels</i>	Oct 11

Procedure and Organization

A good book report is an accurate, succinct description of the contents of a book. Your major goal should be to try to describe what the author of the book is up to in such a way that the author would recognize his or her work by reading your report. However, not everything in a book is of equal interest or significance, so you will want to be critical (that is, discerning and discriminating). The chief objective is to represent the contents of the book as faithfully and yet as discriminating a fashion as possible. Do justice to the book.

The report need not be long; ordinarily three or four pages will suffice. The quality of your writing is far more important than the quantity of your writing.

Since no two books and no two book-reporters are ever alike, chances are that no two book reports will ever be alike. Take comfort in this. Since there can be no absolute model of what a book report must look like, you can take about any approach to your report. Be as creative and original as you wish. Remember, just be faithful to the author and his or her book.

Some students, nevertheless, will want to be given *an idea of what a book report might include*. I recommend the following (not necessarily in this order):

1. Summarize the "thesis" (i.e., what the author wants you to believe and/or do as a result of reading this article or book).
2. Sketch the main supporting arguments. For example:
 - What does the author say to convince you that the thesis should be accepted?
 - What kind of evidence does the author adduce?
 - Which scriptures passages does the author cite in favor of the thesis?
 - How are these passages interpreted - both in terms of content and method?
 - What previous studies does the author cite?
3. Select some phrases or sentences which you see as key to conveying the author's point of view (i.e., some "quotable quotes" or "sound bites" to help other people remember the main contentions of the author in this study).

4. Finally, and the most important step for our purposes, **evaluate what you see as the contribution of this work for understanding the study of Jesus and the Gospels.**

A word about the tone of the critique: Recognize that a “critical review” does not necessitate a “trash and burn” approach to another scholar’s work. In fact, it is preferable to take as even-handed an approach as possible. Every study makes some contribution to the field, no matter how small. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Appendix 5: How to Write a Critical Review of a “Life of Jesus” Film

Purpose

1. To practice the skill of “reading” visual and aural imagery in an attentive and analytical way;
2. To develop and articulate a critical awareness of how Jesus is portrayed by contemporary media;
3. To discern the theological understanding of Jesus which underlies each film; and
4. To evaluate how well each film conveys its message about Jesus.

Procedure

1. Watch one of the following Jesus films that are available on DVD:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Director</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Distributor</u>
King of Kings	Nicholas Ray	1961	Warner Home Video, 2003
The Gospel according to Saint Matthew	Pier Paolo Pasolini	1965	Waterbearer Films, 2003
The Greatest Story Ever Told	George Stevens	1965	MGM Home Entertainment, 2001
Jesus Christ Superstar	Norman Jewison	1973	Universal Pictures, 2004
Godspell	David Greene	1973	Columbia Pictures, 2000
Jesus of Nazareth	Franco Zeffirelli	1977	Artisan Home Entertainment, 2000
The Jesus Film	Peter Sykes	1979	Madacy Entertainment, 2003
Monty Python’s Life of Brian	Terry Jones	1979	Criterion, 1999
The Last Temptation of Christ	Martin Scorsese	1988	Criterion, 2000
Jesus of Montreal	Denys Arcand	1989	Koch Lorber, 2004
Jesus	Roger Young	1999	Trimark, 2000
The Miracle Maker: The Story of Jesus	Derek Hayes	1999	Family Home Entertainment, 2000
The Gospel of John	Philip Saville	2003	Visual Bible International, 2003
The Passion of the Christ	Mel Gibson	2004	Newmarket Films, 2004
The Nativity Story	Catherine Hardwicke	2006	New Line Home Video, 2007

2. Bear in mind the following questions as you are viewing the film:
 - How is Jesus (or the Jesus figure) characterized in the film? What kind of interpretation is offered? What kind of personality is he/she given? Which aspects of the various Gospels are developed, and which are ignored? How does the characterization of Jesus in the film compare with his characterization(s) in the Gospels as you understand them?
 - What is the purpose of the film? How well does the film succeed in achieving its goals? To what kind of audience does the film seem aimed? Why?
 - What would you characterize as the “highpoint” of the film, the most dramatic scene, and why?
 - What do you see as the film’s greatest strength, and its greatest weakness? Why?
 - How well do you think the film works as an interpretation of Jesus? Why? What objections might be raised against your assessment? How would you respond?
3. Review at least two published reviews of this film and reflect upon where you agree or disagree with the reviewers’ comments.

Length. Customarily, a film critique should be no longer than 750–800 words.

Organization. *The critique itself will have three parts:*

1. Part One: Synopsis & Sketch of Main Features
 - What is the overall narrative structure or plot of the film? What do you think is the key idea about Jesus that the producer was trying to convey in this film?
 - How would you characterize the producer's selection of which "moments" in the life of Jesus to include (or exclude) from this film?
 - What kind of Jesus is portrayed in this film (e.g., personality, character traits, interests)?
 - Who are the other leading roles, and how are these characters related to Jesus?
 - On which of the NT Gospels does this screenplay rely the most? In what scenes do you see evidence of this?

2. Part Two: Evidence & Illustrations
 - What are the primary differences you see between this screenplay and the story of Jesus we get from the canonical Gospels? What scenes provide key examples of these differences?
 - What one or two scenes do you see as central to understanding the producer's portrayal of Jesus?
 - What are one or two techniques that you found particularly effective in conveying the producer's message of Jesus?

3. Part Three: Critical Evaluation
 - What was the producer's fundamental message about Jesus in this film? Are you convinced?
 - What differences do you see between your reading of the pertinent Gospel texts and the way the film producer has interpreted them? Are these differences of method or content or both?
 - If you were producing your own "life of Jesus" movie, which "moments" of Jesus' life would you be sure to include? How would your selection compare and contrast with the program for this film?
 - What do you see as the three most important contributions of this film to understanding Jesus of Nazareth, and what do you see as its limitations?
 - What two questions would you like the class to discuss concerning this film?

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