

REL 3160 Syllabus

Site: [AsULearn](#)
Course: REL3160-101_LIFE & TEACHINGS OF JESUS (FALL 2024)
Book: REL 3160 Syllabus

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Description

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REL 3160 General Information



REL 3160 - Life and Teachings of Jesus (3) [GenEd: HS]

When Offered: On Demand

GEN ED: Historical Studies Designation; Liberal Studies Experience

An examination of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, his life, message, and teachings, using the various methods of Biblical Criticism. The class will focus on what can be known about the historical Jesus and different methodologies used in that pursuit.

This course can be applied toward fulfillment of the requirements for the Religious Studies [major](#) or [minor](#), or the Philosophy & Religious Studies [minor](#). If you enjoy this course, consider pursuing one of these degree programs! Here are instructions on [how to add or change a major/minor](#).



Contact Information & Office Hours

Professor: Dr. Rodney K. Duke



[Personal Web Page](#)

Contact Info.

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(I check email a few times a day. If you need a response in less than 24 hours, feel free to call me.)

NO ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED BY EMAIL.

Tentative Office Hours Schedule

TR: 8-9, 10:45 - 11:45 am

Appointments may be arranged to fit your schedule. Call me or email. When possible, please let me know in advance, when you are planning to come, so that I can put it on my calendar.

General Education: LSE and HS Designator

REL 3160 "Life and Teachings of Jesus" fulfills the requirements for the General Education Liberal Studies Experience and the Historical Studies designator while meeting two main discipline-specific goals: 1) To provide the student with introductory training in the skills of the academic, historical pursuit (methods, sources, and theoretical conclusions) of the reconstruction of the life of the historical Jesus; and 2) to provide the student with introductory training in skills of the academic study of nature of the primary source materials, the New Testament (NT) Gospels. This course will serve as a means of developing basic liberal arts skills in observation, analysis, and synthesis that should be helpful in all of the students' courses. It will introduce students to the multi-disciplinary field of biblical studies, expose them to the richness and complexity of a non-Western culture's literature, broaden their perspectives across time and space, and enable them to further reflect on and develop their own worldviews, values, and intellectual assumptions.

Course Goals and Rationale

As an upper-level course, this course is designed for guided learning. Through practice, students will have the opportunity to employ and refine general critical thinking and communication skills. At the same time, they will have the opportunity to acquire topic-specific knowledge about the life and teachings of Jesus and to develop specific literary and historiographic skills involved in studying the life and teachings of Jesus.

This course has two main discipline-specific goals: 1) To provide the student with introductory training in the skills of the academic, historical pursuit (methods, sources, and theoretical conclusions) of the reconstruction of the life of the historical Jesus; and 2) to provide the student with introductory training in skills of the academic study of nature of the primary source materials, the New Testament (NT) Gospels.

Many people hold a specialized interest in studying the New Testament (NT): the religious communities that hold it sacred, historians, sociologists, archaeologists, philosophers, and all those who appreciate literary beauty. More importantly however, most people, at least in Western world and parts of the Eastern world, should have a vested interest in the Bible (both Old and New Testaments), since it has influenced their formative political documents, laws, culture, concept of "rights" and morality, etc. Despite this vested interest in the NT, the Gospels, and the life and teachings of Jesus, the modern reader often does not know how to read this ancient literature skillfully within its cultural and literary settings or how to explore critically its historical presentation. Therefore, this course seeks to inculcate basic knowledge and skills for these pursuits.

Specific Course Objectives

Students should be able to:

- Communicate effectively the issues and problems related to the pursuit of historical reconstruction.
- Demonstrate thinking critically by identifying, investigating, and evaluating the influence of the context and assumptions of different theoretical conclusions regarding the reconstruction of the life and teachings of Jesus.
- Clearly and logically express their own tentative conclusions for reconstructing the life of Jesus.
- Define the historical, cultural, and rhetorical contexts of the NT and explain how those contexts influence one's interpretation of the meaning of texts and their role in historical reconstruction.
- Clearly explain what makes communication effective and demonstrate the integration and application of those elements (e.g. target audience, rhetorical intention and strategies, key genre-specific literary features) through close readings of scholarly sources and the biblical texts.
- Explain the nature of and the communicative intentions of the NT Gospels.
- Explain the goals and methods of a variety of critical approaches used in the study of the NT Gospels and demonstrate some basic skills of integrating and applying them to biblical texts to form one's own tentative conclusions.
- Improve written communication skills for greater clarity of and fluency of communication.

General Course Expectations

Teacher should:

- provide a course design that promotes independent learning,
- strive to be well prepared, helpful, available, and respectful,
- return work promptly with guiding feedback, and
- be open to learning from students' insights and perspectives.

Students should:

- learn outside of class through the assignments and come to class prepared ("In practical terms, students should expect to spend two to three hours of studying for every hour of class time," ASU [Statement on Student Engagement with Courses](#));
- strive to be fearless by asking questions, by volunteering responses, and by being willing to be "wrong" in order to push their own learning curve.

Instructional Methods

Instructional Methods*

- Independent student readings in textbooks for synthesis of main arguments and information and assessment
- Exploratory (inductive) readings of select biblical texts for their literary features and communicative intentions
- Written assignments, quizzes, short papers, and tests to develop and assess comprehension and communication skills
- Lectures to develop and supplement class learning
- In-class learning exercises and discussions in pairs, small groups or class-wide to contribute, clarify, and evaluate observations and concepts
- *If there are Honors students, they may have additional requirements that employ other methods of learning and assessment

Instructional Procedures

Outside class:

- Students will be asked to prepare daily assignments that focus on controlling the content of textbook material, exploring the biblical texts, and drawing conclusions concerning implications and application. Students can expect about 25 pages of readings and a couple of paragraphs to write for each class.
- Occasionally, there may be on-line quizzes to take before coming to class.
- Tests will be taken in class or online at the current class time.

Inside class:

- There will be some quizzes over the assignment preparation as well as scheduled examinations.
- Students will be called upon to share their learning and observations.
- Students may be asked to work in pairs and in groups of 4-5 to share what they have learned and to help one another develop reading methods and skills.
- Students will submit assignments online, but should have a copy on hand for in-class discussion.

Group work will be used for cooperative learning purposes, since there are some areas in which students can benefit more from working together rather than alone. It will, therefore, be necessary for students to prepare, to attend, and to participate daily in order for the course to provide maximum benefit for all. Students will be graded, however, primarily on the basis of individual work and only minimally on the basis of group work.

The teacher will introduce material not in the textbooks, seek to clarify material in the texts, provide guidance for the assignments and in-class exercises, and seek to model the skills the students are to acquire.

Determination of Grade (Tentative)

Assignments, Tests, and Reflection Papers: 80% of the final grade.

- Assignments in the form of formal notes (assignments marked "N"), written, typed paragraphs (assignments marked "W"), and general preparation (assignments marked "P") will be given for most classes. "N's" and "W's" are to be prepared for grading. Depending on class size:
 - Most assignments will be collected and graded on the basis of completeness, thoughtfulness, and correct formal style (often 0-20 points, but some assignments may be for more points). See "Guidelines for Written Assignments" and "Assessment Rubrics for Assignments" posted at AsULearn.
 - Some assignments will be awarded 10 points for completeness or 0 if incomplete.
- Online and in-class quizzes may also be given. (The larger the class, the more dependent I will be on these quizzes.)
- Tests and/or unit reflection papers will generally be graded on a scale of 100 points possible.
- *Additional assignments will be added for honors students.

Participation: 20% of final grade. Determined by self, peer, and instructor evaluation.

- Unexcused absences (see "Absences") and phone use without permission will result in deductions.

Note on Participation:

- Being a contributing member of an academic community is an important part of a university education.
- Half of the participation grade will be based on peer and self evaluation of in-group participation.
- The other half will be based on class-wide participation: being prepared when called upon (students will be called upon!), raising questions, making observations, etc.
- Students may be asked to keep a formal record of their own class-wide participation.
- Other ways to gain some "class-wide" participation credit are:
 - visit me during office hours to discuss your learning in the course is going,
 - turn in a question before class begins with a well-written question about that day's assignment.
- I will not simply be recording quantity, but will be looking for thoughtful quality of participation.
- Unexcused absences (see "Absences") and phone use without permission result in a 1-point deduction per infraction.

*Additional assignments will be added for honors students.

Assessment Rubrics for Assignments

(More specific rubrics will be provide in handouts (Course Pack) and/or on AsULearn main page.)

The main goals of the assignments are to enable students:

- to gain skill of learning on their own,
- to come to class thoughtfully prepared to engage in refining what they have learned,
- to practice the skill of communicating one's thoughts clearly in formal writing, and
- to prepare for the tests.

All complete assignments will receive credit, but not all will be graded by the instructor.

Many assignments will be more thoroughly assessed on a 20-point (occasionally a 30 or 40 point scale):

- **Completeness and Quality of Thoughtfulness** (1/2 points)
Shows careful reading and reflection.
- **Clarity and Communication** (1/2 points)
Ease of readability with strong lead thesis statement, clear sentence structures, and good grammar.

Some assignments will be assessed for evidence of complete and thoughtful preparation with the expected norm of 10 points.

- 10 pts.: complete and thoughtful effort
- 0 pts.: incomplete or demonstrates little effort

Many assignments will be more thoroughly assessed on a 20-point (occasionally a 30 or 40 point scale):

- **Completeness and Quality of Thoughtfulness** (1/2 points)
Shows careful reading and reflection.
- **Clarity and Communication** (1/2 points)
Ease of readability with strong lead thesis statement, clear sentence structures, and good grammar.

Absences/Make-up Policy

- 1. A maximum of three class absences may be fully excused (absence and assignment) for illnesses and a variety of difficult circumstances as recognized at the instructor's discretion.** (See #6 for how to apply.) In such cases, it is strongly recommended that students still do the assignments and turn them in late for credit. There will be no excused absences for days before and after the breaks without supporting documents such as a doctor's note.
- 2. Unexcused absences result in 1% (pt) each being deducted from the participation grade.**
- 3. Regarding religious observances and university-sponsored events:** requests for excused absences must be submitted in advance in writing and in a meeting with me in my office, and no later than three weeks after the first class day of the term. Documentation for school-sponsored events must be provided. At our meeting in my office, we will discuss the absence as it affects the course expectations, and we will create a contract that specifies what work compensates for the missed classes, work, and participation. If you anticipate that you will miss more than 3 class periods, I advise you to consider dropping now and taking this class in another semester. Although I am willing to work with you and provide extra assignments, there comes a point at which in-class time cannot reasonably be sacrificed.
- 4. No make-up tests will be given except for significant reasons** (e.g. emergencies). In such cases you should contact me before the day of the test and are responsible to reschedule the test as soon as possible.
- 5. No credit will be given for missed assignments or quizzes, if the absence is not excused.**
- 6. To obtain an excused absence:** provide a written note on the day you return, citing: name, course and section number, group letter, date of class missed, assignment # or quiz involved, and reason for absence. Clarify if you were unable to complete the assignment and would like it to be excused or if you will be turning it in late. (Notes from a physician usually not required, but see #1 above.)
Note: Excuses are for the days missed and do not cover the assignment for the next class attended. Students are responsible to obtain the next assignment from a fellow student and to prepare it.

School Sponsored Activities Expanded

1. Absences for ASU-sponsored events are not counted against students as "unexcused." However, they are not the same as "excused absences" due to illnesses and difficult circumstances. As stated under "Absences," school-sponsored absences are excused, but the absence needs to be made up through some comparable educational work as determined by the instructor.
2. **I will need an official copy of your schedule in advance** (1st two weeks of semester); however, I will not have your specific schedule in mind, so part of our agreement will be that the student needs to remind me by the previous class about the upcoming absence and to work out with me the details of what to do for "make up."
3. In fairness to the other students, you will need to have assignments submitted on time. If you need to do them early, please get in touch with me for an advanced notice of what will be due. (We follow a schedule of assignments that is in the Course Pack; however, I often make some modification to some of the details, so that the assignment fits the class well.)
4. Also, as is true for all absences, whenever a student is absent, it is the responsibility of the student to get missed notes and find out what preparatory work is due for the next class.

Additional Course Policies

1. Individual work: Although group study and discussion of assignments is encouraged, to receive credit an individual's written work must be self-composed **without use of an AI composer or taken from another source**.
2. Academic Integrity: Standards and procedures of the [Academic Integrity Code](#) will be upheld.
3. Class notes: Class notes must be kept separate from assignment work, which is to be done in advance, in order to receive credit for the assignment.
4. Labeling work: Assignments and quizzes need to be completely labeled with full name, group letter (if assigned), date, and assignment # in order to receive credit for the work.
5. Email: **Assignment work will not be accepted by email.**
6. Late work: Assignments will not be accepted late "because the printer ran out ink" (= "a dog ate my paper"), left it on the printer, etc.
7. Final Exam: All students are expected to take the final examination on the date posted in the school calendar and not make arrangements for leaving town earlier.

For face-face class meetings: Electronic Devices: **NO LAPTOPS OR CELLPHONES FOR CLASS USE**, unless granted permission by the instructor. Communications devices in the possession of students are to be **turned off during class and put out of sight**, except for: 1) medically necessary devices, 2) approved emergency communications devices operated by authorized personnel, and, 3) cell phones registered with APPSTATE-ALERT, which must be placed in vibrate or silent mode during class period and put out of sight. **Failure to comply may result in:** a warning, a loss of a participation point, dismissal from class for the day of the infraction, or further sanctions as called for in section IV of the Academic Integrity Code.

Required Texts

The New International Version Bible. (NIV) To be purchased.

[Note: You may choose to use another modern translation, if that works well for you; however, the in-class version will be the NIV.]

John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, fourth edition (Westminster John Knox, 2022). Ebook, found through course AsULearn.

Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content*, third edition (Abingdon, 2003). Rental book.

Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee*, second edition (Westminster John Know, 2013). Rental book.

Note: Students are responsible for having these textbooks on the first day of class.

Course Outline (Tentative)

CONTENT TRACK	SKILL TRACK
	Reading comprehension and Writing for clarity in all units.
<p>Unit 1: Textual Concerns and Methods (c. 10 classes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Background to studying the historical Jesus · Nature of sources and tools for studying those sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop literary exegetical skills for reading and analyzing the biblical texts (types of biblical criticism)
<p>Unit 2: Reconstructing the Historical Jesus (c. 6 classes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · History of search for historical Jesus · Philosophy of history and nature of historiography · Examples of reconstructions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Learning to critically assess presuppositions and methods employed to reconstruct the historical Jesus
<p>Unit 3: Background to the Gospels and Jesus, Reading the Gospel of Mark (c. 11 classes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Political, religious, and social background to the Gospels · Summary of life and teachings of Jesus · Close reading of the Gospel of Mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Develop literary method and skills for reading gospel narrative

Philosophy of Education

"Now it is not difficult to see that one must not make amusement the object of the education of the young; for amusement does not go with learning--learning is a painful process." (Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII.4:4. 1339a 26) *wink*

Actually, I am here to serve you, and to help you to make the most of your educational opportunity at ASU -- not to make learning painful. Still, the point is that any skills acquisition takes work and practice.

I believe that the role of a teacher is to cause learning to take place. Therefore, I design assignments for which students must read, think, and then write out their thoughts and observations. This course will have such assignments for almost every class. Also, I realize that most students, soon after a course has ended, tend to forget many of the facts that they have learned. However, students will retain more in terms of theory and skills that they have practiced. Therefore, I have designed this course to be heavy on communication theory and reading/writing skills.

Please, always feel free to let me know how I can be of help.

Dr. Rodney Duke

Additional University Policies

For university wide policies regarding: Academic Integrity Code, disability resources, attendance policy, and student engagement with courses (course workload expectations), see [Syllabi Policy and Statement Information](#).

Religious Studies Program Mission and Learning Goals

Religious Studies Program Mission and Learning Goals

The study of religion at ASU critically describes, interprets, explains, and evaluates religious phenomena across cultures while fostering essential skills for life-long success in the global marketplace. To this end, our learning goals are:

- to encourage students to become self-reflective learners by:
 - carefully analyzing their assumptions, presuppositions, and expectations about religion,
 - closely examining religious beliefs, behaviors, practices, texts, experiences, communities, and institutions,
 - using multidisciplinary perspectives (e.g., anthropology, biology, economics, literary criticism, philosophy, post-colonialism, psychology, sociology);
- to enable students to develop adaptable skills for:
 - demonstrating sophisticated understanding of diverse beliefs, behaviors, practices, texts, experiences, communities, institutions and worldviews,
 - communicating clearly and persuasively,
 - identifying problems and developing solutions by gathering, analyzing, and assessing data, sources, and arguments,
 - moving successfully into career related opportunities (e.g., law, NGOs, graduate school, ministry/seminary, medical professions, media, community organizing)
- to promote global citizenship through:
 - recognizing how students' worldviews are similar to and different from others,
 - acquiring religious literacy by viewing religion as an integral part of the human cultural, literary, and artistic heritage,
 - fostering understanding of the complexity of human behavior in a way that informs their religious, political, and social lives.

Homelessness and Food Insecurity

"Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students, 324 Plemmons Student Union, for a list of resources and support. The ASU Food Pantry and Free Store is a free resource with pantry and personal care items, located in the Office of Sustainability on the bottom floor of East Hall. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable him/her to assist you with finding the resources you may need."

Title IX

Appalachian State University and its faculty are committed to maintaining a safe learning environment for all students. To meet this commitment, and to comply with state and federal laws, Appalachian faculty are required to formally report instances of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Please be advised I have a responsibility to report such conduct to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Upon receipt of this report, the University will provide the those who disclose said concerns with support, resources, and information as to how the report may be managed. For additional information, please visit <https://titleix.appstate.edu>.