

# Who Do They Say that I Am? Christology in the New Testament NT 2XC3

McMaster Divinity College  
Instructor: Christopher D. Land, Ph.D.  
[landc@mcmaster.ca](mailto:landc@mcmaster.ca)

Winter 2014 (Term 2)  
Saturday 9:00am–4:00pm  
Jan 11, Feb 1, Mar 8, Apr 5

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Nowadays, most people take it for granted that Jesus of Nazareth was a Galilean Jew who lived in the first century and was executed by the Romans. Yet Jesus was also much more than this, as can be seen from the fact that an estimated two billion people claim to follow him still today, two thousand years after his crucifixion. In this course we will take a historical approach to this astonishing development and seek to understand how Jesus' earliest followers came to regard him as much more than a mere teacher. This will require us to explore the worldviews of Second Temple Judaism and of the wider Greco-Roman world, because these worldviews form the background against which first-century people came to understand Jesus. Most importantly, however, we will examine the different voices within the New Testament in order to see what they have to say about the identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In this course, students will be encouraged to:

### ***Knowing***

- Learn about the cultural contexts within which the early church formed its earliest ideas about Jesus
- Become familiar with the various ways in which the New Testament authors interpret the significance of Jesus as well as the key New Testament passages where christological ideas are expressed
- Critically evaluate different contemporary positions with regard to the development of early Christologies

### ***Being***

- Become self-critical and aware of the differences that exist between 21<sup>st</sup>-century North America and the cultural environment in which Jesus' earliest followers sought to understand his significance
- Become sensitive to the experiential nature of the early church's interactions with Jesus (both pre- and post-Easter) and the effect these experiences had on the formation of early Christologies

- Become open to fresh (and potentially surprising) encounters with the person of Jesus

### ***Doing***

- Read and react to books about Jesus and about responses to him
- Research either a portion of the New Testament or a christological idea and articulate in writing an assessment of its significance for our understanding of Jesus
- Reflect upon Jesus and discuss his significance with others

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

*Students are required to complete all of the following assignments. All assignments must be submitted through Avenue to Learn (unless other arrangements are made in advance). No assignments will be accepted after **April 16<sup>th</sup>**.*

1. Class and Small Group Participation (10%). Students are expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. Also, students will gather in small groups during each class session in order to reflect together upon Jesus and his significance. At the end of the final class session, each student will complete a brief evaluation form that will assess the level of interest and insight demonstrated by each student in his or her discussion group. These self- and peer-evaluations will then be factored into the participation grades.
2. Response to *Who Do You Say That I Am?* (20%). Each student will read this collection of essays and then submit a written response (no less than 1,500 words in total) that answers each of the questions listed below. It is due at **5:00pm on January 31**. Use of the first person is expected in this assignment. While it is acceptable to answer the questions independently using a new heading for each, the thoughts included in each answer should be well-organized and clearly presented in paragraph form (i.e. these are formal responses rather than casual musings).
3. Response to *The Meaning of Jesus* (20%). Each student will read this dialogue about Jesus and then submit a written response (no less than 1,500 words in total) that answers each of the questions listed below. It is due at **5:00pm on March 7**. Use of the first person is expected in this assignment. While it is acceptable to answer the questions independently using a new heading for each, the thoughts included in each answer should be well-organized and clearly presented in paragraph form (i.e. these are formal responses rather than casual musings).
4. Biblical Theology Paper and Presentation (35% + 15%). Students will study either the main christological ideas presented in a specific portion of the New Testament or the ways in which a specific christological idea is developed throughout the New Testament. They will then present the results of their research in both a written paper and an oral presentation. Topics should be approved by the professor no later than **March 8**. The

paper, which is due at **5:00pm on April 4**, must be approximately 2,500 words in length and must follow the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. The presentation, which will take place on **April 5**, should convey (in less than 10 minutes) both the main conclusions of the paper and their relevance to contemporary discipleship, using accessible language and an informal manner (i.e. without visual aids, like a pastoral conversation rather than a business presentation). If time permits, students will be given an opportunity to ask questions following each presentation.

### GRADING SUMMARY

Small Group Participation	10%
Response to Powell & Bauer	20%
Response to Borg & Wright	20%
Biblical Theology Paper	35%
Oral Presentation	15%
Total	100%

### TEXTBOOKS

Students are required to possess the following:

An English translation of the New Testament.

Powell, Mark Allan, and David R. Bauer, eds. *Who Do You Say That I Am? Essays on Christology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999.

Borg, Marcus J., and N. T. Wright. *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999.

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 218, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Class Dates	Written Submissions	Class Agenda
Jan 11		Welcome Course Syllabus Introduction to the Study of Christology
Feb 1	Response to <i>Who Do You Say That I Am?</i> <b>(January 31 at 5:00pm)</b>	Ideas about Jesus in the Apostolic Period Jesus in Relation to People Who Follow Him Jesus in Relation to Society at Large Jesus in Relation to God Ideas about Jesus in the Post-Apostolic Period Ideas about Jesus in the Pre-Easter Period
Mar 8	Response to <i>The Meaning of Jesus</i> <b>(March 7 at 5:00pm)</b> Topic for Biblical Theology Paper <b>(March 8 at 11:59pm)</b>	
Apr 5	Biblical Theology Paper <b>(April 4 at 5:00pm)</b>	
		Oral Presentations Summary and Concluding Reflections

**QUESTIONS CONCERNING *WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?***

1. Select five quotations from this book that made you stop and think, briefly explaining each choice.
2. How has this book deepened your understanding of the historical context within which Jesus' earliest followers first encountered him? Give specific examples.
3. How has this book deepened your understanding of the diversity that exists within the New Testament? Give specific examples.
4. How has this book challenged and deepened your understanding of Jesus? Give specific examples.
5. How has this book affected your thinking about what it means to be a Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Give specific examples.

**QUESTIONS CONCERNING *THE MEANING OF JESUS***

1. Select five quotations from this book that made you stop and think, briefly explaining each choice.
2. Was the dialogic presentation of this book effective? Why or why not?
3. Both Borg and Wright are trying to navigate between a responsible assessment of the historical Jesus and a meaningful assessment of his ongoing importance. Do you recognize a tension between these two in your own thinking? Do you prefer Borg's approach to this tension or Wright's approach? Why do you think this is so?
4. How has this book challenged and deepened your understanding of Jesus? Give specific examples.
5. How has this book affected your thinking about what it means to be a Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Give specific examples.
6. What specific questions has this book prompted you to ask? How do you intend to go about seeking answers to these questions?

### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bauckham, R. *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Bousset, W. *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ From the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1970.
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- Casey, M. *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology*. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991.
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Tuckett, C. M. *Christology and the New Testament: Jesus and His Earliest Followers*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001.

Wright, N. T. *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God 2. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Resurrection and the Son of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God 3. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003.

### **STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Statement on Academic Honesty at [www.mcmasterdivinity.info/programs/rules-regulations](http://www.mcmasterdivinity.info/programs/rules-regulations).

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for assignment submissions, grading, and plagiarism detection. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com can submit an electronic copy of their work via email in PDF format and no penalty will be assigned, but all submitted work is subject to normal verification standards in order to ensure that academic integrity have been upheld (e.g. on-line search).

### **STYLE**

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf>

**Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.**

### **GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of

the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

**This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the respective professor. This syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.**