



McMaster Divinity  
College

# “WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?” THE SURPRISING LIFE OF JESUS AND THE ENDURING CHRIST OF FAITH

NT 3XL3 (BS/PS)  
NT 5XL5/6XL6 (DPT/PHD)

McMaster Divinity College  
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Winter 2021 (Term 2)  
Tuesday 4:00–5:50pm (Online)

## 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 Pontius Pilate. 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 both a historical and a literary approach to Jesus’s astonishing impact. We will examine what Jesus did and said, seeking to understand how and why his earliest followers came to regard him as much more than a mere teacher. We will also examine the different voices within the New Testament in order to see what they have to say about Jesus. In some cases, the course will explain seemingly-strange aspects of his character as perfectly normal (for a first-century Galilean Jew); in other cases, it will render still more awe-inspiring those qualities of Jesus that have persuaded millions of people to follow him and even to worship him.

## SPECIALIZATIONS

The NT 3XL3 course is available for two different specializations:

- ≈ Students taking this as a *Biblical Studies (BS)* course will be encouraged to explore what the New Testament says about the life of Christ and to consider the early emergence of christological ideas from various perspectives (e.g. historical, sociological, literary, theological).
- ≈ Students taking this as a *Pastoral Studies (PS)* course will be encouraged to explore how the life of Christ is relevant for Christian faith and practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as both an exemplary human life and a revelation of God.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Following this course, students ought to:

## KNOWING

- Know the general tenor of historical Jesus research and the major debates that characterize it;
- Know Jesus's words and deeds and how they relate to important aspects of his social, historical, and cultural contexts (e.g. socio-economic realities in Galilee, circumstances preceding the Jewish War, Torah observance, etc.);
- 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

- Appreciate Jesus as a real, historically-situated human being;
- Appreciate that Jesus's beliefs and social interactions are meaningful first-and-foremost within the first-century matrix of Early Judaism;
- Be amazed by the character and behaviour of Jesus;
- Be 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;
- Recognize the great honour and respect that is due to Jesus, both as a remarkable human being and as a revelation of God;
- Become open to fresh (and potentially surprising) encounters with the person of Jesus;

## DOING

- Have basic historical research skills, including the ability to locate useful resources, the ability to assess competing historiographical methodologies, and the ability to weigh historical evidence;
- Have the ability to knowledgeably discuss the various perspectives on Jesus of Nazareth that have been articulated by biblical authors, historians, theologians, film makers, and others;
- Have the ability to situate Jesus within his first-century environment and to discuss intelligibly the ways in which this environment sheds light on his words and actions;
- Have the ability to "bring Jesus to life" by some form of effective communication (e.g. written, spoken, artistic, etc.);
- Have the ability to carry out doctoral-level research in relation to the historical Jesus or early Christian understandings of him (NT 5XL5/6XL6).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Note: Students are required to complete all of the following assignments in order to pass the course. No un-attempted assignments are permitted. For all posts to the A2L discussion forum, *students are strongly encouraged to prepare their draft content offline* in order to avoid the data loss that occurs when inadvertently leaving the A2L page. *Written assignments must be uploaded to Avenue to Learn either as Word documents (.doc, .docx) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf). Unless otherwise stated below, a penalty of 2%*

*per day will be applied to all late assignments, including assignments submitted in incorrect file formats. Assignments cannot be submitted after April 8<sup>th</sup> without written permission from the Office of Registrar ([strickpd@mcmaster.ca](mailto:strickpd@mcmaster.ca)).*

#### ALL COURSES: PARTICIPATION (10%)

As a graduate seminar, the course will involve not just lectures but also regular discussions both in small groups and as an entire class. Students are expected to attend class meetings, to listen to the lectures—and most importantly, to participate in discussions.

#### NT 3XL3: INITIAL AND CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS (5% EACH = 10%)

At the start and end of the semester, students will briefly answer the question: *Who is Jesus, and how do you know him?* While your reflections must be thoughtful, they need not be long. Certainly, they should not exceed 1,000 words. The opening statement must be uploaded to A2L prior to **January 17<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm**. The concluding statement must be uploaded prior to **April 4<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm**. While the concluding reflection need not offer a changed perspective on Jesus, it should somehow convey the influence that the course has had on your understanding.

Please avoid the temptation to focus exclusively on the first part of the assignment (who Jesus is). Things to consider as you undertake your reflections on the second part (how you know Jesus) include the role that the canonical witnesses play in Christian theology relative to other sources of information about Jesus (i.e. Should Christians attempt to go “behind” the Gospels by doing historical research, and if so why?), the extent to which Jesus’s humanity is decisive for explanations of his thoughts and actions (i.e. Do we interpret Jesus’s words and deeds with reference to his enculturation as a first-century Jew, or do theological beliefs about him require that we understand him differently than we do other people in history?), the role and significance of contemporary experiences regarded as “a personal relationship with Jesus,” and the degree to which life-determining commitments ought to rest on “objective” evidence (i.e. Is it important for individual Christians to confirm that their understanding of Jesus is historically reliable, or is knowing Jesus a matter of faith and experience?).

#### NT 3XL3: BOOK RESPONSES (10% EACH = 20%)

Prior to Intensive Week, students will read two textbooks and then post thoughtful reactions to A2L. For their first book, Biblical Studies (BS) students will read *The Gospels and Jesus*, whereas Pastoral Studies (PS) students will read *The Meaning of Jesus*. All students will read *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?* as their second book.

Your book responses must engage the content of each book, which means that they must invoke specific information and/or argumentation (citing specific pages and key quotations) and then offer an insightful response of some kind (such as a counterargument, a connection to something else in the New Testament or in later Christian thought or practice, a reflection on the implications of the information, etc.). Your task is not merely to *assess* the book but rather to consider what it *means*. So, if you choose to take issue with something in the book, you must also discuss the importance of the issue and the ways in which it has implications for Christian individuals and/or communities. Each post should be approximately 750 words (quality, not quantity!). The title of your post should clearly identify its subject (as opposed to

merely “Response to Stanton” etc.). Finally, your post must conclude with a thought-provoking statement or question that can serve as a point of departure for subsequent discussion.

### NT 3XL3: BOOK DISCUSSIONS (10% EACH = 20%)

During two weeks in which no Zoom meetings are scheduled, students will instead engage in online asynchronous discussions of the course textbooks, with these discussions initiated by the initial book responses (see above). Over the course of the week, you can respond to fellow students’ concluding questions and/or initiate new topics. The grading will consider all posts, but I am looking in particular for posts that engage with specific ideas, offer thoughtful and constructive insights, and demonstrate the ability to grow in/through community. Each student’s initial (substantive!) follow-up post must be completed no later than 11:59pm on Tuesday, because early posting is critical for getting the discussion started. To be considered for grading, posts must be completed prior to 11:59pm the following Monday, although the forums will remain open and subsequent (ungraded) posts are encouraged insofar as certain discussions may need to continue.

A few details regarding expectations for discussion posts: (1) If you initiate a new topic, the subject line should transparently identify a specific issue that is being raised or addressed. Ideally, the issue should involve something that truly *matters* to you. (2) New topic should clearly identify a specific idea, explain how it relates to the reading, what information or argumentation in the book pertains to the issue (ideally with cited pages and/or quotations), why the issue is of significance, and what you currently think about the issue. Please strive for clarity and precision. Vague generalities will not prove helpful to the class. (3) The goal is critical thinking, so posts should display not only an understanding of the reading and its implications, but also a thoughtful and rational engagement with the relevant evidence and its various interpretations. Please try to outline alternative positions, and if possible, situate yourself in relation to one of these positions. It is fine to be undecided, but the terms of the (in)decision should be made as clear as possible. (4) The usual requirements of academic writing do not necessarily apply (e.g. you can use contractions and you do not need to follow an essay structure), but the posts should be clean (e.g. use capitalization and proper punctuation and try to spell properly).

### NT 3XL3: FILM REVIEW (10%)

Over the course of the semester, you must watch one of the films in the “Jesus Films” bibliography below, or some other Jesus film approved with the professor via email. You must then offer a brief film review by means of a short (2–3 minutes) video. Students are responsible for arranging to view their chosen film. (Please note that the Hamilton Public Library has all of the listed films in its catalogue.) Videos can be recorded in any format that can be posted to an A2L discussion forum (<https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/how-do-i-use-the-avenue-to-learn-macvideo-integration>).

As far as content is concerned, the reviews will vary depending on the student’s specialization. For students in the Biblical Studies (BS) specialization, the focus of the review should be historiographical. For instance, what sources seem to undergird the film’s portrait of Jesus? Is it based on one or more of the Gospels, on historical research, on popular (or even fanciful) speculation, on artistic creativity, etc? Whether the film’s portrayal upholds orthodox Christian opinions about the life of Christ or challenges them, does it do so in the interest of a reliable historical reconstruction or is there some other motivation

at work? For students in the Pastoral Studies (PS) specialization, the focus of the review should be the contemporary significance of Jesus. For instance, what is the overall impression of Jesus with which the viewer is left? Given that no creative work (including the canonical Gospels) can produce a complete representation of Jesus, how has your filmmaker exercised his or her craft in order to produce a meaningful portrait of Jesus, and what is the likely significance of this portrait for viewers? In short, for whom is the film impactful, what is the likely impact, and how would you assess this impact?

Regardless of specialization, each review must include at least one positive thing about the film, at least one negative thing, and at least one question that can be used as a conversation starter in order to stimulate thoughtful discussions about Jesus among viewers of the film.

### NT 3XL3: FINAL PROJECT (30%)

For their final project, students will apply their new knowledge about the historical Jesus and New Testament Christology to some facet of contemporary thought and/or practice. The details will vary for each student, with students selecting some area of focus that suits their specialization. Whatever the final shape of the project, there must be: (1) scholarly support, in the form of academic publications, that support the claims being made with regard to the historical Jesus and/or New Testament Christology; and (2) popular materials that exemplify the contemporary thought or practice in view. For instance:

~ A student in the Biblical Studies (BS) specialization might assess evangelical debates regarding the person or ministry of Jesus, with online blogs exemplifying the relevance of the issue.

~ A student in the Pastoral Studies (PS) specialization might compare the views of Jesus exemplified in contemporary worship songs with the views of Jesus articulated in the New Testament.

*Students are encouraged to be creative in designing their final projects.* For all specializations, however, the assignment must demonstrate solid New Testament research, including a bibliography of at least ten (10) suitable academic resources. The main written component of the final project must be a 3,000-word essay that follows the MDC *Guidelines for Essays and Theses*. Additional materials that are relevant (e.g. key blog posts from which quotations have been drawn, sample song lyrics, etc.) should be attached as appendices. Please conclude your essay with a concrete proposal regarding the future direction you would recommend for the contemporary thought or practice in question. The assignment is due on **March 28<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.**

### NT 5XL5: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (25%)

DPT students will produce an annotated bibliography that lists key works in the areas of historical Jesus research and New Testament Christology. This bibliography must include approximately 15–20 resources (not including commentaries) for a total of around 3,000–4,000 pages of reading. The included resources should display the full range of New Testament studies, exemplifying a variety of different questions and approaches as well as different confessional and/or non-confessional perspectives. Each annotation should, in approximately 100–150 words, summarize the content of a particular resource and its distinctive contribution to scholarship. It is due on **February 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.**

**NT 5XL5: JESUS FOR NON-DUMMIES (25%)**

Drawing upon the above annotated bibliography, DPT students will compose an introduction to Jesus such as would be suitable for a graduate student (or alum) seeking to think and speak about Jesus without being ignorant of contemporary scholarship. This overview should highlight significant issues that impact our understanding of Jesus as a key figure in both history and theology. While you need not attempt to be unbiased, it is not the focus of the assignment to advocate for a particular point of view. Instead, focus on laying a general foundation for more specialized research. The paper will be approximately 3,000 words. It is due on **March 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm**.

**NT 6XL6: ESSAY ON THE JESUS OF HISTORY AND THE CHRIST OF FAITH (35%)**

In lieu of a bibliography, PhD students will write an essay that explores the relationship between history and theology as regards Jesus of Nazareth. The essay need not advance innovative hypotheses or arguments, but it should demonstrate familiarity with contemporary scholarship as regards both the historical Jesus and New Testament Christology. The goal is to reflect hermeneutically on the meaning of Jesus and the various factors that contribute to a person's understanding of Jesus (such as the selection of relevant evidence, cultural and individual presuppositions, different methods of inquiry, different goals, etc.). The paper must be approximately 5,000 words in length. It is due on **February 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm**.

**NT 6XL6: COURSE SYLLABUS (15%)**

PhD students will prepare a course syllabus designed for a college or seminary course. The course must deal with Jesus and must be a viable course offering such as might actually be offered at a North American institution. Although the format of the course and syllabus are not prescribed, your syllabus must clearly define not only the content and organization of the course but also its objectives. In a supplementary document, you must explain in brief paragraphs how each component of the course contributes the overall objectives. The syllabus and accompanying explanation are due on **March 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm**.

**NT 5XL5/6XL6: RESEARCH PAPER (40%)**

In consultation with both the professor and their doctoral supervisor, DPT students will define an area of intersection that involves both New Testament Christology and the student's own practice-led research. A research paper will then be written in which the student explores this area of intersection and thereby advances scholarly understanding of his or her practice. For PhD students, this paper can pursue any line of inquiry that is relevant to the topics of the course and potentially publishable as a piece of New Testament scholarship. Research papers must be approximately 8,000 words in length. They are due on **April 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:59pm**.

## GRADING SUMMARIES

### NT 3XL3

Participation	10%
Reflections	10%
Book Responses	30%
Book Discussions	10%
Film Review	10%
Final Project	30%
Total	100%

### NT 5XL5

Participation	10%
Annotated Bibliography	25%
Jesus for Non-Dummies	25%
Research Paper	40%
Total	100%

### NT 6XL6

Participation	10%
Essay	25%
Course Syllabus	25%
Research Paper	40%
Total	100%

## TEXTBOOKS

All students are required to possess an English translation of the New Testament, as well as:

Hurtado, Larry. *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Biblical Studies (PS) students are also required to possess:

Stanton, Graham. *The Gospels and Jesus*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Pastoral Studies (PS) students are also required to possess:

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 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstore, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON, M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

## JESUS FILMS

In addition to the course readings, students are required to view one of the following films. *NB: Some of these films contain violence, nudity, and/or profanity. Students who wish to avoid potentially disturbing content should research the films before watching them (e.g. using the parental advisories at [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)).* It is the student's responsibility to obtain access to his or her chosen film.

- The Greatest Story Ever Told (George Stevens, 1965)
- Jesus Christ Superstar (Norman Jewison, 1973)
- Godspell (David Greene, 1973)
- Jesus of Nazareth (Franco Zeffirelli, 1977)
- The Last Temptation of Christ (Martin Scorsese, 1988)
- Jesus of Montreal (Denys Arcand, 1990)
- The Passion of the Christ (Mel Gibson, 2004)
- Color of the Cross (Jean-Claude La Marre, 2006)
- Mary Magdalene (Garth Davis, 2018)

## MEETING AND DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

Date	Venue	Topic
Jan 11	Zoom	Historiography and/or Theology
Jan 18	Zoom	Money, Sex, and Violence (Part 1)
Jan 25	Zoom	Money, Sex, and Violence (Part 2)
Feb 1–7	A2L	<i>The Gospels and Jesus // The Meaning of Jesus</i>
Feb 8	Zoom	Forgiveness, Healing, and Hope (Part 1)
Feb 15	Zoom	Forgiveness, Healing, and Hope (Part 2)
Feb 22–28	A2L	<i>How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?</i>
Mar 1		Intensive Week (No Class Meeting)
Mar 8	Zoom	Death, Resurrection, and Cosmic Revelation
Mar 15	Zoom	Presence, Authority, and Proclamation
Mar 22	Zoom	The Practice of Profession
Mar 29–Apr 4	A2L	<i>Final Projects</i>
Apr 5	Zoom	Concluding Discussions

## ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULES

### NT 3XL3

Due Dates	Assignments
Jan 17 @ 11:59pm	Initial Self-Reflection
Jan 31 @ 11:59pm	Response to <i>The Gospels and Jesus</i>
Feb 21 @ 11:59pm	Response to <i>How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?</i>



Mar 28 @ 11:59pm	Final Project
Apr 4 @ 11:59pm	Concluding Self-Reflection

## NT 5XL5

Due Dates	Assignments
Feb 11 @ 11:59pm	Annotated Bibliography
Mar 11 @ 11:59pm	Jesus for Non-Dummies
Apr 1 @ 11:59pm	Research Paper

## NT 6XL6

Due Dates	Assignments
Feb 25 @ 11:59pm	Essay
Mar 25 @ 11:59pm	Course Syllaus
Apr 1 @ 11:59pm	Research Paper

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bartlett, David L. *Christology in the New Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2017.

Bates, Matthew W. *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament & Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

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.

Bird, Michael F., Craig A. Evans, Simon J. Gathercole, Charles E. Hill, and Chris Tilling. *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—A Response to Bart Ehrman*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014.

Bousset, W. *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ From the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1970.

Brown, R. E. *An Introduction to the New Testament Christology*. New York: Paulist, 1994.

Casey, M. *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology*. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991.

Collins, A. Y. and J. J. Collins. *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Cullmann, O. *The Christology of the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1959.

De Jonge, M. *Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Response to Jesus*. Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1988.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *God's Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus' Own View of His Mission*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Demetrian, George. *The Historical Jesus and the Christ of Faith: Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright in Critical Dialogue*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017.
- Dunn, J. D. G. *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
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- Gordley, Matthew E. *New Testament Christological Hymns: Exploring Texts, Contexts, and Significance*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2018.
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- \_\_\_\_\_. *Studies in Early Christology*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004.
- Horrell, David G., and Christopher M. Tuckett, eds. *Christology, Controversy & Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*. NovTSupp 99. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Hultgren, A. J. *Christ and His Benefits: Christology and Redemption in the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.

- Hultgren, A. J. and G. E. Gorman. *New Testament Christology: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Greenwood, 1988.
- Hurtado, L. W. *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Juel, D. *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992.
- Kirk, J. R. Daniel. *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.
- Kugler, Chris. *Paul and the Image of God*. Lanham: Lexington, 2020.
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Thatcher, Tom. *Greater Than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

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 Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at:

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) for plagiarism detection and the student's continuation in the course represents his or her consent to the use of this service. If a student has objections to the use of this service, alternate arrangements for assignment submission must be made with the professor in advance of the assignment deadlines.

A useful guide to avoiding plagiarism is the Harvard Guide to Using Sources:

<http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>

## STYLE

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

<https://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.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 its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**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.**