Welcome to JWST 20700, Jesus the Jew.

This semester we're going to look at the historical figure of Jesus from the Jewish perspective.

Jesus of Nazareth was born into one of the most exciting centuries in Western history (and certainly did his part to make it even more interesting). Throughout this course we will learn about the world Jesus called his own: we will look at Hellenistic society, the different Jewish sectarian movements, the great rabbis Hillel and Shammai and the literature that has survived from them.

With that heady mixture of Hellenistic and Jewish culture consumed, we will turn to the earliest Christian ideas and writings and try to discover their Jewish origins. In our perusal of early Christian thought, we will discuss Jewish law, the messianic movement, prophecy, social reform and magic. We will consider a variety of interpretations of Jesus in our efforts to gain the fullest possible understanding of Jesus, the Jew.

Texts:

Students need to have a hard copy of the Bible and bring it to class when needed. The recommended version for this course is the Oxford Annotated Edition and it is sold at the City College bookstore. If students already own a different Bible (preferably NRSV or RSV), please bring it to class the first or second day so it can be approved for use in this course.

In an effort to save students money in a less than robust economy, texts do not need to be purchased. Instead, every text that students will need can be read freely online. The instructor has either provided links to the readings from the course website or will email assignments to the class. Students must be sure instructor has their email addresses and must check these accounts regularly. The website for this course is “members-only” and students must request access to it jewishjc.pbworks.com-- a copy of this syllabus, including embedded links to the readings, is available on the website.

Aims:

By the end of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Define and explain how Jesus' Jewishness defined his development as both a leader and messiah.

2. Analyze primary sources (biblical as well as other 2nd Temple literature) as they pertain to both Judaism of the
first century and the life of Jesus.

3. Compare and contrast modern scholarly understandings of Jesus' origins and teachings.

During the course of this semester, we will look at both primary and secondary sources in an attempt to discover Jesus’ Jewishness. Through analysis and discussion, we will learn about the world of Jesus and by doing so place him, as a Jew, firmly in it. Students will engage in writing assignments and group work in an attempt to find the historic Jewish Jesus, an identity of Jesus that has not always been the focus of subsequent religious movements.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. It is presenting as your own a phrase, sentence or passage from another’s work without using quotation marks or otherwise citing it: this includes any facts gathered from print texts or the Internet. City College regards acts of academic dishonesty as a serious offense: plagiarism will result in an automatic course failure.

Assignments:

All assignments must be handed in to the instructor, during class, on the day they are due.

1: Jesus’ World (first paper)

In 500 words, describe the first century world into which Jesus arrived. What was the political situation at the time? How about religious? Was Jesus a surprise to his contemporaries? How did they view him? (15%) due 25 September

2: Jesus in the Gospels (first project)

In groups which will be chosen/assigned in class, a presentation should be developed and given regarding the view given of Jesus by the Gospels. Is Jesus presented as Jewish? Give specific examples of his Jewishness or lack thereof. The group must present together and provide an outline of the presentation. (20%) due 23 October

3: Jesus in modern scholarship (second paper)

In 700-1000 words, discuss three different scholarly perusals of the evidence for Jesus as a Jew (you may choose websites, e-texts, online articles or print). Compare and contrast these perspectives. Is their evidence solid? Why or why not? What conclusions can you draw about the academic approach to Jesus? (Choice of scholarship is worth 5%, paper is worth 20%). sources must be approved by 13 November, paper due on 18 November

4: Jesus as a Jew (second project)

Individually or in pairs (to be chosen/assigned in class), write 1000+ words on a preapproved topic concerning Jesus as a Jew-- use at least five scholarly sources to back up your assumptions. (20%) due 11 December

In-class Assignments:

Throughout the semester we will be looking at primary sources and trying to uncover what they have to tell us about Jesus' Jewishness -- often we will look at these sources in groups, and your participation is required. Pass/fail essays/outlines on
previously assigned readings will be assigned for in class completion as well. This is 10% of your grade.

Attendance:

Attending class and participating in class discussion are vital to the course and account for 10% of the grade — if more than 4 classes are missed, the student will be dropped from the course. Two late arrivals to class will be counted as an absence as will two early departures. If you absent yourself from class for more than ten minutes, that will be counted as an early departure. If you are seriously ill, please let me know ASAP so we can be sure you don't get too far behind.

Readings & Homework:

All readings are required. Students must read the assigned materials and do the homework assignments in a timely fashion. Pop-quizzes will be given based on the course readings.

Do not use your cell phone/BlackBerry/iPhone/tablet during class. Do not email, text, message or use the Internet during class sessions.

***Below you will find the subject of each class session, underneath each subject is the reading for the following class. There is no reading for the first class.***

Class Sessions & Readings

1. Wednesday 28 August— Introduction

Homework: Students must email instructor and receive a response (acknowledging that the instructor has the student's email address).

**No class on 2 or 4 September for Labour Day and Rosh Hashannah**

Background & History

2. Monday 9 September—Discussion of Primary Sources

Homework: Request access to the course website (include name).

Reading for the following class session: Josephus’ Life pgs.vii-xviii, Philo of Alexandria, (from the beginning until Stoic Influence).

3. Wednesday 11 September— Understanding Jesus’ historical context

Reading for the following class session: Jesus, A Jew? and look at The Maccabees and skim Maccabees II

4. Monday 16 September— Judaism at the Time of Jesus

Reading for the following class session: Check out the DSS exhibit and look at Josephus' Antiquities (JA), 18.5.2.
5. Wednesday 18 September-- Continuing Judaism at the Time of Jesus
Reading for the following class session: Jesus in the eyes of Josephus and look at JA, 18.3

6. Monday 23 September-- Josephus
Homework for the following class session: 1st PAPER DUE NEXT CLASS

7. Wednesday 25 September-- Philo, Dead Sea Scrolls and other sources
**1st PAPER DUE**
Reading for the following class session: Meier on John the Baptist in Josephus and his relations to Jesus.

8. Monday 30 September—Baptism amongst other Jewish customs
Reading for the following class session: Josephus' Jewish War (bk 3).

9. Wednesday 2 October-- Political Upheaval
Reading for the following class session: Jesus as a Jew, Introduction

Jesus from the Gospels
Bring Bible (RSV, NRSV, Oxford or other approved version) to classes 10-20

10. Monday 7 October-- Jesus as understood by Mark
Groups and exact topics for the group assignment will be allotted.
Reading for the following class session: The Gospel of Mark

11. Wednesday 9 October-- Mark cont.
Homework: Group project presenting a Jewish view of the Gospels due in two weeks.
Reading for the following class session: The Gospel of Matthew

**No class for Columbus Day on 14 October**
**at City College 15 October is a Monday**

12.*TUESDAY* 15 October-- How does Matthew differ?
Homework: Group project presenting a Jewish view of the Gospels due in less than two weeks.
Reading for the following class session: cont. Matthew and Gospel of Luke

13. Wednesday 16 October-- The Jewish vs. Greek Jesus
Homework: Group project presenting a Jewish view of the Gospels due in one week.
Reading for the following class session: Gospel of Luke
14. Monday 21 October-- Issues in the Gospels  
Homework: GROUP PROJECT PRESENTING A JEWISH VIEW OF THE GOSPELS DUE NEXT CLASS  
Reading for the following class: continue reading the Gospels

15. Wednesday 23 October-- Gospels Cont. & Presentations  
***Project 1: Group Projects, to be Presented***  
Reading for the following class: continue reading the Gospels and begins Acts of the Apostles.

16. Monday 28 October-- The Virgin Birth & Other Issues in Gospels  
Reading for the following class: Finish readings already assigned.

17. Wednesday 30 October-- Jesus before & after Jerusalem  
Homework: Choose your 3 scholarly articles/websites and get them approved.  
Reading for the following class: Finish Acts of the Apostles.

18. Monday 4 November-- Paul's Jesus  
Homework: Choose your 3 scholarly articles/websites and get them approved.  
Readings for the following class: Paul's Letter to the Hebrews.

19. Wednesday 6 November-- Was Paul's Jesus Jewish?  
Homework: THREE SCHOLARLY SOURCES ON JESUS IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP DUE NEXT CLASS  
Readings for the following class: Paul's Letter to the Galatians.

***11 November no class for Veteran's Day***

20. Wednesday 13 November-- Was Paul's Jesus the same as Mark's? Matthew's?  
***Jesus in Modern Scholarship sources are due.***  
Homework: JEWISH IN MODERN SCHOLARSHIP PAPER DUE NEXT CLASS  
Readings for the following class: Paul's Letters to the Corinthians, Romans and Phillipans

A Jewish Messiah

21. Monday 18 November-- Jesus as Jewish Messiah  
***Paper 2: Jesus in Modern Scholarship paper due***  
Readings for the following class: Paul's Letters to the Corinthians, Romans and Phillipans

22. Wednesday 20 November-- Jewish Messiahs
Readings for the following class: Lenowitz chapter will be emailed by instructor.

23. Monday 25 November -- Jesus in Jewish Literature
Readings for the following class: article will be emailed by instructor.

***at City College 27 November is a Friday***

24. Monday 2 December -- Jesus in Later Literature
Readings for the following class: Levine article will be emailed by instructor.

25. Wednesday 4 December -- Anti-Judaism
Readings for the following class: article will be emailed by instructor.

26. Monday 9 December -- Do Jews see Jesus as Jewish?
Homework: JESUS AS A JEW PROJECT DUE NEXT CLASS. Be prepared for question and answer session.
Readings for the following class: Nothing (finish your project!)

27. Wednesday 11 December -- Was Jesus Jewish?

Last class-- Israeli snacks

**Updates:**

Any updates to this syllabus, the course or the required readings will be announced on the Announcements page of the course website and changes will be made to the online syllabus. Announcements will also be made in class.