



ECJS853

The Quest for the Historical Jesus

S2 Evening 2019

Dept of Ancient History

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Disclaimer

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Christopher Forbes

christopher.forbes@mq.edu.au

Contact via christopher.forbes@mq.edu.au

Australian Hearing Hub, Level 2, S W95

Wednesday 11-12 midday, Thursday 12-1pm.

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MAnchHist or GradCertAnchHist or MA in (Ancient History or Coptic Studies)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Co-Badged with AHIS706 - Advanced Study in Egyptian History 2

Unit description

Despite two centuries of enquiry, the figure of Jesus behind the Christ of faith remains elusive. How do we know what is told us in the gospels actually happened? This unit looks at how authenticity in the tradition is argued, but more particularly at the differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke in how they portray Jesus. A careful comparison of the parallel traditions shared by these gospels will be undertaken to determine the focus and bias of each and their view of Jesus. This allows for an assessment of their reliability and avoids simple harmonisations of their accounts about Jesus.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Identify the origins and formal characteristics of the ancient Christian text-type "Gospel" as a broad genre;

Demonstrate a comprehension of early Christian world-views and cultural concepts at an advanced level;

Contextualise the early Christian gospels within their cultural environment, both within the early Christian movement and more broadly;

Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;

Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;

Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;

Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

General Assessment Information

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct, and particularly with the Academic Honesty policy. (Links to both will be found under "Policies and Procedures" below.) *Note particularly* that any piece of work found to be plagiarised will normally receive 0%. The issue of plagiarism will be specifically discussed in the first seminar, but it is the responsibility of the student to be aware of University and Departmental policy on academic honesty.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Short Paper 1	25%	No	Monday August 26th.
Short Paper 2	25%	No	Variable: see Description.
Major Paper	50%	No	Monday November 11th.

Short Paper 1

Due: **Monday August 26th.**

Weighting: **25%**

Students must write one 1,000 word short paper on one of the first four weekly Seminar topics. The Short Paper is to be submitted via Turnitin, on or before Monday August 26th, using the link on the Unit iLearn page.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify the origins and formal characteristics of the ancient Christian text-type "Gospel" as a broad genre;
- Demonstrate a comprehension of early Christian world-views and cultural concepts at an advanced level;
- Contextualise the early Christian gospels within their cultural environment, both within

the early Christian movement and more broadly;

- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Short Paper 2

Due: **Variable: see Description.**

Weighting: **25%**

Students must write one 1,000 word short paper on one of the weekly Seminar topics for Weeks 5-11. The Short Paper is to be submitted via Turnitin, using the link on the Unit iLearn page.

Short Papers on Topics for Weeks 5-8 are due on or before Monday October 7th.

Short Papers on Topics for Weeks 9-11 are due on or before Monday October 28th.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a comprehension of early Christian world-views and cultural concepts at an advanced level;
- Contextualise the early Christian gospels within their cultural environment, both within the early Christian movement and more broadly;
- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Major Paper

Due: **Monday November 11th.**

Weighting: **50%**

Students are to write their Major Essay (c. 3,000 words) for the Unit on the Seminar Topic for Week 12. The Essay is to be submitted via Turnitin, on or by Monday November 11th, using the appropriate link on the Unit iLearn page. See Further details under "Description of Assessment".

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Demonstrate a comprehension of early Christian world-views and cultural concepts at an

advanced level;

- Contextualise the early Christian gospels within their cultural environment, both within the early Christian movement and more broadly;
- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Delivery and Resources

ABOUT THIS UNIT

This Unit sets out to introduce students to the evidence, methods and some of the conclusions of modern “Historical Jesus” scholarship. It focusses on a close examination of the texts of the canonical Gospels, the most important historical sources for Jesus of Nazareth, and asks: what kind of historical evidence is this? What is a “gospel”, and how did they come to be written? How should an historian use this evidence, and what conclusions have historians in fact come to, when they have done so? The Unit will outline the various methodologies (source-critical, form-critical, redaction-critical, etc.) which have been developed with New Testament scholarship, and evaluate their results. The major underlying questions will be: how much do we know about Jesus of Nazareth, and with how much certainty do we know it?

For lecture times and classrooms please consult the MQ Timetable website:

<http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au>. This website will display up-to-date information on your classes and classroom locations.

Class Times:

The class will normally be held on Monday evenings between 6 and 8 pm, in room 10HA 246 (Y3A 246). The first hour will normally be a lecture; the second hour will normally be a more flexible seminar-style discussion. Both sessions will be recorded for External students, and made available through Echo360, on the Unit's iLearn page. Any visual aids used during the lectures will be made available in PDF format on the Unit iLearn page.

The Unit weekly study guides will also be made available in PDF format on the Unit iLearn page.

Access to a computer and the Internet are required. Basic computer skills (e.g., internet browsing, use of the Library's online resources and skills in word processing) are also a requirement. You will need a copy of Adobe Acrobat Reader, since (as noted above) most Unit documents are provided in PDF format. This software is freely available on the Internet. Please consult the Course Convenor for any further, more specific requirements.

Face-to-face classes will be held for Internal students; for External students there will be recordings (as above) and regular postings on iLearn, and discussion on the Online Forum.

External students who can come to Internal classes are welcome to do so; just let me know you're coming!

Books you may find useful:

There is no one text-book for the Unit. For preliminary reading, and to orientate you within modern scholarship in this field, I recommend:

several of the chapters in A. Nobbs & M. Harding, eds., *The Content and Setting of the Gospel Tradition* (Eerdmans, 2010), including my own survey of historical Jesus studies in ch. 10 of that volume,

and in more detail, Ben Witherington III's *The Jesus Quest: the Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downer's Grove, 1995).

Students wishing to do further preliminary reading should consider J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, 1991, pp. 167-184, and D. Gowler, *What Are They Saying about the Historical Jesus?*, New York, 2007.

Weekly bibliographies, and required readings for seminar topics, will add considerably to this.

Changes made to previous offerings of the unit:

The Unit is based on the same lecture and seminar topics as it has been in previous years. Bibliographies are continuously updated. In previous years the Unit has included a 15% Participation mark, but this assessment component has been removed due to the difficulty of balancing the differing participation of Internal and External students.

Unit Schedule

Week 1	July 29th Introduction. Seminar Topic: The Birth Narratives
Week 2	August 5th From Aramaic into Greek; Which Orality? Seminar Topic: "Criteria of Authenticity"
Week 3	August 12th The "Two Document Hypothesis" Seminar Topic: Mark's Gospel
Week 4	August 19th John the Baptist and the Jesus-Tradition Seminar Topic: The Baptism of Jesus by John

Week 5	August 26th The "Messianic Secret" in Mark's Gospel (and elsewhere) Seminar Topic: The "Transfiguration"
Week 6	September 2nd The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-20) Seminar Topic: Jesus walks on water
Week 7	September 9th The Parables of Jesus Seminar Topic: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants
Mid-Semester Break	
Week 8	September 30th Models for Understanding the Historical Jesus Seminar Topic: The Confession at Caesarea Philippi
Week 9	October 7th Jesus and the Pharisees Seminar Topic: The Pharisees and Sadducees question Jesus
Week 10	October 14th The Trials of Jesus Seminar Topic: Miracle stories
Week 11	October 21st The Execution of Jesus Seminar Topic: The Crucifixion
Week 12	October 28th The Tradition about the Resurrection of Jesus Seminar Topic: The Resurrection Narratives
Week 13	November 4th Unit Summary and Conclusions

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central](http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central>).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Submission of Work:

All Internal Short Papers and Major Essays are to be submitted via Turnitin, using the links on the Unit iLearn page.

Extensions and Disruption of Studies:

Extensions for assignments can only be granted for medical reasons or on compassionate grounds. Without documentation (medical or counselling certificates) or prior staff approval, a penalty of **2% a day, including weekends**, will normally be applied. If required, applications for extensions should be made to the Unit Convenor before the assignment's due date. Naturally, if this is not possible or reasonable, particular cases will be dealt with on their merits. (For students who have suffered serious and unavoidable disruption to their studies, see further under Disruption to Studies Policy.)

Unit requirements:

To complete the unit you will need to submit all assessment tasks and achieve an overall mark of 50% or above.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper 1
- Short Paper 2
- Major Paper

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Identify the origins and formal characteristics of the ancient Christian text-type "Gospel" as a broad genre;
- Demonstrate a comprehension of early Christian world-views and cultural concepts at an advanced level;
- Contextualise the early Christian gospels within their cultural environment, both within the early Christian movement and more broadly;
- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper 1
- Short Paper 2
- Major Paper

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and

knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper 1
- Short Paper 2
- Major Paper

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;
- Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper 1
- Short Paper 2
- Major Paper

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different

social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Conduct independent research on several chosen topics at an advanced level;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;
- Formulate independent views in dialogue with both ancient evidence and modern interpretations.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper 1
- Short Paper 2
- Major Paper

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate a comprehension of early Christian world-views and cultural concepts at an advanced level;
- Contextualise the early Christian gospels within their cultural environment, both within the early Christian movement and more broadly;
- Develop an awareness of the complexity of the process of understanding ancient accounts of past events and experiences;

Assessment task

- Major Paper

Changes from Previous Offering

The Unit is based on the same lecture and seminar topics as it has been in previous years. Bibliographies are continuously updated. In previous years the Unit has included a 15% Participation mark, but this assessment component has been removed due to the difficulty of balancing the differing participation of Internal and External students.