



# ECJS853

## The Quest for the Historical Jesus

S2 Evening 2015

*Dept of Ancient History*

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Christopher Forbes

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Contact via [christopher.forbes@mq.edu.au](mailto:christopher.forbes@mq.edu.au)

W6A 536

Tuesday 12-1pm, Wednesday 2-3pm.

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MAnchHist or GradCertAncHist or MA in (Ancient History or Coptic Studies or ECJS) or PGDipArts in (Ancient History or ECJS) or PGCertArts in (Ancient History or Coptic Studies)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

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 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	Due
<a href="#"><u>Short Paper 1</u></a>	15%	Monday August 24th.
<a href="#"><u>Short Paper 2</u></a>	15%	Variable: see Description.
<a href="#"><u>Major Paper</u></a>	55%	Monday November 9th.
<a href="#"><u>Participation</u></a>	15%	End of Semester

### Short Paper 1

Due: **Monday August 24th.**

Weighting: **15%**

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 24th, 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: **15%**

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 5th.

Short Papers on Topics for Weeks 9-11 are due on or before Monday October 26th.

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 9th.**

Weighting: **55%**

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 9th, 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.

## Participation

Due: **End of Semester**

Weighting: **15%**

Students will be graded on their participation in Seminar discussion (Internal students) or their participation in Online Forums (External students). Both the quantity and the quality of contributions across the whole Unit will count towards the mark.

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;
- Demonstrate critical engagement with a variety of modern scholarly opinions;

## 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 Tuesday evenings between 6 and 8 pm, in room W5A 204. The first hour will normally be a lecture; the second hour will normally be a 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.

## Unit Schedule

Week 1	July 28th Introduction. Seminar Topic: The Birth Narratives
Week 2	August 4th From Aramaic into Greek; Which Orality? Seminar Topic: "Criteria of Authenticity"
Week 3	August 11th The "Two Document Hypothesis" Seminar Topic: Mark's Gospel
Week 4	August 18th John the Baptist and the Jesus-Tradition Seminar Topic: The Baptism of Jesus by John
Week 5	August 25th The "Messianic Secret" in Mark's Gospel (and elsewhere) Seminar Topic: The "Transfiguration"
Week 6	September 1st The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-20) Seminar Topic: Jesus walks on water
Week 7	September 8th The Parables of Jesus Seminar Topic: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants
Mid-Semester Break	
Week 8	September 29th Models for Understanding the Historical Jesus Seminar Topic: The Confession at Caesarea Philippi
Week 9	October 6th Jesus and the Pharisees Seminar Topic: The Pharisees and Sadducees question Jesus

Week 10	October 13th The Trials of Jesus Seminar Topic: Miracle stories
Week 11	October 20th The Execution of Jesus Seminar Topic: The Crucifixion
Week 12	October 27th The Tradition about the Resurrection of Jesus Seminar Topic: The Resurrection Narratives
Week 13	November 3rd Unit Summary and Conclusions

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of 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/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, 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](http://ask.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](http://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](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use 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
- Participation

## 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
- Participation

## 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
- Participation

## **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 tasks**

- Major Paper
- Participation

## **Changes from Previous Offering**

There are no substantive changes to the Unit since its last offering. Bibliographies are constantly updated.