

## **BCRE28 The Historical Jesus and the Gospels**

**Semester: A**

**ECTS Credits: 5**

**Duration: 11 weeks**

**Contact Hours: 22**

**Quota: None**

**Prerequisite subjects: None**

Who was the historical Jesus – the Jewish Galilean whose activities and death resulted in the emergence of Christianity? This class explores questions about Jesus the man, his world, his Jewish disciples and their literary activities. The earliest literary witness to his life— namely the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—occupy a significant amount of our attention. In order to assess Jesus' environment and social milieu we shall engage with material culture and archaeology, as well as other ancient literature such as Josephus and selected Dead Sea Scrolls. You will have the opportunity to study literary theories and approaches used to read ancient literature in order to develop and articulate your own viewpoint on the origins of Christianity. In conclusion to this module issues that arise in the assessment of Jesus as a historical figure will be explored as they relate to other religious traditions, particularly ancient Judaism and early Islam (i.e. the historical Muhammad).

**Learning Outcomes:** On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

Appraise at least three approaches to resolving the “synoptic problem.”

Assess the distinguishing characteristics of each of the “quests” for the historical Jesus.

Debate five of the approaches historians have developed to read the gospels.

Dialogue at an intermediate level about the significance of literary and historical approaches to the gospels for the study of religion in antiquity.

Compare the basic content of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

### **Indicative Reading:**

Freyne, S., *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

Sanders, E. P. & Davies, M., *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM Press, 1989).

**Assessment:** One 3,000 word essay

### **Name of lecturer**

Professor Benjamin Wold