

Hartford Seminary
SC 636 Images of Jesus in Christian and Muslim Sacred Writings
Online Course Preliminary Syllabus
Fall 2019

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Office Hours: via phone or Zoom, by appointment only

NOTE: Dr Mosher teaches remotely, from her office in northeast Florida

Course Timeframe:

Structured but asynchronous online learning. Students are expected to log onto the course's Canvas website—the hub for all course activities—at least three times per week. A commitment of nine hours per week (reading plus online and related activities) will suffice for most students.

Course Description:

Drawing on canonical scriptures (the Bible and the Qur'ān), in conversation with other primary and secondary sources, aided by critical investigations, and making use of the notion of “images” both literally and metaphorically, we will study the birth, mission, death, resurrection, and eschatological role of Jesus in Christianity and Islam—plus the closely related matter of the life and status of his mother Mary. Attention will also be given to the role of Jesus and Mary in personal and communal piety. As an online graduate seminar in scripture study and comparative theology, this course will make use of various modes of online presentation and interaction. Substantial reading and writing will be expected. Auditors are welcome.

Goals and Objectives

This course is designed to help students achieve Hartford Seminary's Master of Arts Program Learning Outcomes. Doctoral students are expected to engage the material more deeply.

Specifically, students who participate fully in this course will be able to:

1. Identify textual sources for several Christian and Muslim “images” of Jesus, distinguishing their theological implications;
2. Differentiate between the styles and genres of the “Jesus material” in the New Testament, the non-canonical Gospels of James and Thomas, the Qur'an, and the Hadith;
3. State and explain several of the present concerns of “Jesus Studies”, comparing the work of at least two Christian and two Muslim scholars in this field;
4. Compare what Christian tradition and Islamic scripture and tradition say about the birth and childhood of Mary Mother of Jesus;
5. Distinguish between the narratives of the birth of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Luke, the (non-canonical) Gospel of James, and the Qur'an— comparing their theological implications;
6. Contrast accounts and interpretations—both within the Christian and Muslim traditions and between them—of death of Jesus and his present and future role;
7. Explain and compare the roles of Jesus and his mother Mary in Christian and Islamic personal and communal piety.

Through this course, students should be able to achieve the following *Hartford Seminary Master of Arts Degree Program Learning Outcomes*:

- To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one's own religion.
- To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and world views.
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

Assessment Expectations

You are expected to log in on the Canvas website several times per week. There you will find course modules, each of which includes items to read, watch, or listen to—plus related online activities. Logging in and completing activities as directed constitutes “attendance” in class.

The Canvas website's Discussion Board is the center of course activity. All Discussion Board posts and responses to other sorts of assignments must accord with Hartford Seminary's stated policy regarding the citing of sources. Be advised that Hartford Seminary now uses an originality checking service. *Plagiarism is to be avoided!* Rubrics for evaluation of Discussion Board posts are provided on the Canvas Site.

Grades are determined by participation on Discussion Board forums (75%); completion of occasional short quizzes will help assess one's progress toward course goals (10%); submission of a summary essay and participation in class discussion of this assignment (15%). Time for writing the summary essay is built into the course schedule.

Required Reading

Nasr, et. Al. *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York; HarperCollins, 2015. 978-0-06-112586

[Also acceptable: Abdel Haleem, M. A. S. *The Qur'an: English translation and Parallel Arabic text*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978019957013]

Coogan, Michael, et al., editors. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha, Fourth Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 0195289609.

Akyol, Mustafa. *The Islamic Jesus: How the King of the Jews Became a Prophet of the Muslims*. New York: St Martin's Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-250-08869-7

Barker, Gregory, ed. *Jesus in the World's Faiths: Leading Thinkers from Five Religions Reflect on His Meaning*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005. ISBN: 1570755736

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts & Richard B. Hays, editors. *Seeking the Identity of Jesus: A Pilgrimage*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008. ISBN: 0802824714.

George-Tvrtković, Rita. *Christians, Muslims, and Mary: A History*. Paulist Press, 2018. ISBN: 9780809153282

Khalidi, Tarif. *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001. ISBN: 0674011155.

Leirvik, Oddbjørn. *Images of Jesus Christ in Islam*, 2nd Edition. New York: Continuum, 2010.
ISBN: 1441181601

Taylor, Joan E. *What Did Jesus Look Like?* T&T Clark, 2018.

Various items provided by the instructor via the course's Canvas website.

Highly recommended for students with little prior knowledge of Islam:

Hussain, Amir. *Oil and Water: Two Faiths: One God*. Kelowna, British Columbia: CopperHouse, 2006. ISBN: 1896836828.

Murata, Sachiko and William Chittick. *The Vision of Islam*. St Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1998. ISBN: 1557785163.

Highly recommended for students with little prior knowledge of Christianity:

Hart, David Bentley. *The Story of Christianity: An Illustrated History of 2000 years of the Christian Faith*. London: Quercus, 2011. ISBN: 1623654165

McGrath, Alister. *Christianity: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006.
ISBN: 1405108997

Highly recommended for everyone:

John Renard, *Islam and Christianity: Theological Themes in Comparative Perspective* (University of California Press, 2011) ISBN 0520266781

Tentative Course Plan

The course comprises twelve modules—most running for one week. (Two-week modules accommodate holidays or provide essay preparation time.) Each module has a major theme:

1. Getting started: the very notion of “images of Jesus”
2. The birth and childhood of Mary the Mother of Jesus in Christian and Muslim sacred texts and traditions
3. Jesus' birth and childhood
4. What Jesus taught (which will include the launch of his ministry): Christian perspectives
5. What Jesus taught: Muslim perspectives
6. The conclusion of Jesus' earthly life
7. Jesus in Christian and Muslim eschatology
8. Jesus and Mary in personal and communal piety and asceticism
9. “Jesus Studies” as an academic discipline: Christian contributions
10. “Jesus Studies” as an academic discipline: Muslim contributions
11. Jesus' Appearance: what can we know?
12. Wrapping up: Jesus and Mary as gulf/bridge between Christians and Muslims; from polemic to appreciative conversation

The details of each module are provided on the course's Canvas website.

Within each module you will find a series of “learning objects”—such as detailed instructions for reading assignments in required textbooks; downloadable journal articles or other reading materials; audio-visual lectures by your professor; other audio-visual or audio-only items to watch or hear; discussion-board prompts requiring responses; quizzes.

Discussions: In each module, you will usually find two kinds of discussion-forum prompts:

- A. *Reflection:* request for a post that demonstrates deep thinking about the readings and other material in that module. Substantive, supportive, and scholarly responses to two classmate posts per reaction forum will be expected. 50%
- B. *Question-raising:* request for a one-paragraph post posing a significant question for classmates or the professor that will require in-depth clarification or analysis. The question(s) should have direct relationship to the themes of that module. Substantive, supportive, and—where appropriate—scholarly responses to at least two classmates’ question-post per module will be expected. 25%

The only way to find out what others are saying in a discussion-forum is to reply to the prompt yourself. **Auditors:** to enter a forum, simply post a short message, such as “Just listening in” or “Auditing; enjoying the conversation.” Auditors are, of course, welcome to post and comment substantively.

Summary Assignment: As the course nears its conclusion, you are to compose and post a summary essay (longer than a typical discussion post) entitled “Jesus: Gulf and a Bridge Between Christians and Muslims,” giving particular focus to some aspect of this theme. An exercise in comparative theology, this post is an opportunity to demonstrate depth of understanding of Christian and Muslim sacred texts and scholarly sources, and the range of points of view within each religion-community. See Canvas for more details on essay-writing expectations. This essay should be posted by 12/10. A scholarly, substantive, supportive response to at least one classmate’s essay is expected as part of this assignment, and should be completed by 12/17.

Announcement Board: This is where you’ll find messages from your professor “for the good of the order.” Do pay heed to these messages to the class as a whole and, if warranted, reply.

In short, this course’s Canvas website is your primary roadmap for this course.

- Be sure to explore the site thoroughly before you begin.
- If you have difficulty navigating or operating any aspect of the site, do take advantage of the “Help” button (indicated by a question-mark). The “live chat” feature works very well and you can expect prompt and clear responses to your questions. You may also phone the Canvas Support Hotline: (877) 249-4494.
- If you have questions about course content (or you tried Canvas Help but are still mystified), please do email or text-message your professor right away. If the situation is better addressed voice-to-voice, request a specific time for a phone or Zoom conversation. (Making an appointment ensures that your professor is ready to talk with you seated at her desk rather than in the supermarket!)

- If you fall behind, move on to the next module so that you can participate in the discussion-board along with your classmates; but, at the same time, check with your professor about strategies for catching up.
- Your professor reserves the right to adjust the schedule, topics, and assignments in order to accommodate the needs and interests of the students enrolled in this course.