



**PMIN 203 The Mystery of Jesus Christ
Fall 2009**

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Course Description: The course is an introduction to contemporary Catholic christology. The approach is that of a “christology from below.” That is, after an initial consideration of some fundamental theological concepts which set a framework for our inquiry, we proceed to examine Jesus Christ as an *historical* figure and object of Christian *faith*. The course pivots around Jesus’ proclamation of the “Kingdom of God” and treats of his history through his Resurrection and the sending of his Spirit. Finally, briefly, we will go into the development of New Testament christologies.

Texts:

Ben Meyer, *The Man for Others*, (Xerox in bookstore)

Xeroxed Materials available in the bookstore:

Francis Smith, SJ, “The Mystery of Jesus Christ” (containing readings from two of Smith’s books, *The God Question* (Paulist Press, 1988) and *The World Is Charged: the Transcendent with Us*, (a Herder & Herder Book, the Crossroad Publishing Co., 2003) and some unpublished writings).

Also useful:

The Church’s Confession of Faith: A Catholic Catechism for Adults,
San Francisco: Ignatius/Communio, 1987 (*The German Catechism*)

E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Penguin 1993

Other recommended books:

John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Vol. II
Mentor, Message and Miracles, Doubleday, 1994 (like Sanders’ book, an attempt to answer purely historical questions about Jesus.)

Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ*, Paulist, 1977 (according to the late Raymond Brown, premier American Catholic New Testament scholar, still the best theological treatment of Jesus using a historical approach. Pages 1-61 can be bypassed.)

Two important recent encyclopedia articles:

The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 3, “Jesus Christ” (B. F. Meyer)
The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, “Jesus” (John Meier)

Requirements: Two papers. (see attached)
The first paper will be due **October 20, 2009**.
The second paper will be due **December 8, 2009**.

Plagiarism Policy

Santa Clara University insists on honesty and integrity from all members of its community. The standards of the University preclude any form of cheating, plagiarism, forgery of signatures, and falsification of data. A student who commits any offense against academic honesty and integrity may receive a failing grade without a possibility of withdrawal. An offense may also dictate suspension or dismissal from the University.

Disabilities Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson Center 216. Students must register and provide documentation of a disability prior to receiving academic accommodations: 408-554-4111 or TTY 408-554-5445.

Writing Tutor

The Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries provides a writing tutor free-of-charge to its students. The tutor will not re-write your paper but will provide suggestions on clarity and composition.

If you are interested in utilizing the services of the tutor, you must email the paper to Hilary Titus at least 2 days in advance. htitus@scu.edu

Course Outline:

I. A Theological Framework

Readings: Smith, “The God-World Mystery”
(*German Catechism*, Part I: 15-117)
(Kasper, 41-61, 15-25)

II. The Historical Framework: Jesus—Past and Present

Readings: Smith, “The Search for the Historical Jesus--Past and Present”
“Jesus: His Historical Theological Context”
“Israel in the Time of Jesus”
Meyer, Chapter 1, “The Gospels and the Historical Jesus”
(*German Catechism*, 121-138, 153-180)
(Kasper, 26-40)

III. The Ministry, Death and Resurrection of Jesus and the Sending of His Spirit: An Historical-Theological Synthesis

Outline and readings for Part III: The Ministry, Death and Resurrection of Jesus: An Historical-Theological Synthesis

1. The Ministry of Jesus:

(A) The Central Theme of His Preaching: “The Reign of God”

Readings: Smith, “The Reign of God in the Preaching and Acts of Jesus,” 1-11

Meyer, Ch. 2, “The Great Proclamation”

(*German Catechism*, 121-129)

(B) The Reign of God in the Acts of Jesus

Readings: Smith, “The Reign of God in the Preaching and Acts...,”
11-23

Meyer, 96-99, “Did Jesus Work Miracles?”

(*German Catechism*, 129-131, 131-138)

2. The Question of the Earthly Origin of Jesus

Smith, “The Infancy Narratives and the Question of Jesus’
Origins”

Walter Kasper’s “Letter on the Virgin Birth”

Meyer, 103-109, “Are the Infancy Gospels Historical?”

(*German Catechism*, 139-152, esp. 145-149)

3. The Aim and Expectations of Jesus

Smith, “The Aim of Jesus”

Meyer, Ch. 3, “The Promise and the Threat”
Ch. 4, “The Israel of the Last Times”

4. Jesus’ Relation to the Coming of the Reign of God

Smith, “Jesus’ Relation to the Coming of the Reign of
God”

Meyer, 100-102, “Did Jesus Think of Himself as Divine?”

5. The Reign of God and the Death of Jesus

Smith, “The Death of Jesus”

Meyer, Ch. 6, “How Jesus Died and Why”

(*German Catechism*, 153-163 [A theological reflection on
the death of Jesus])

6. The Resurrection

Smith, “The Resurrection of Jesus”

Meyer, Ch. 7, “The Stunning Reversal”

(German Catechism, 165-180)

7. The Sending of the Spirit

Smith, “The Trinity as the Summary of the Christian Answer to the (Reign of) God Question”

Meyer, Ch. 8, “The Man for Others”

(German Catechism, 181-210)

A three page paper (or four if you need it.) This paper will be due on October 20th.

On the basis of your own life experience discuss: **The question Jesus Christ Answers.**

The meaning of the topic:

Kasper says (p. 41), “The confession that ‘Jesus is the Christ’ is the answer to the question of salvation and redemption.”

Twenty centuries have passed. People have changed. Yet millions of people still believe that Jesus Christ is the answer to the most fundamental question that their lives pose.

How would you phrase that question? To what “ultimate concern(s)” of yours does he offer an answer?

Are your concerns peculiar to you? Can they be generalized, i.e., do you think they are widespread concerns? Are there elements in our present situation that incline us to ask the question about Christ in a different way than before?

An eight-ten page paper. This paper will be due by December 8th.

Topic: **Jesus' Understanding of the Kingdom of God**

Using Smith, Kasper, and your own reflections, discuss the understanding Jesus had of the Kingdom of God as revealed in

1. His words
2. His actions
3. His “program” (aim, goal, hope)
4. How he viewed his death

As a summary discuss the following questions:

1. Was the Kingdom a future or present reality or both?
2. Was it in any way a political/social reality or religious or both?
3. Was it an act of God, an act of man, or both?
4. Was it an event in history, or an awakening to the transcendental (always and everywhere) situation of men and women before God, or both?
5. Would Jesus have said as he died, thy Kingdom has come, the Kingdom come, or both?

(Test Question)

Everyone has his or her own insights into what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God. If you have any that you think are original, or if you feel that you can give a personal synthesis of what he meant, please add these. Finally, add a paragraph on how you understand the relationship between Jesus' message about the Kingdom and his own resurrection and sending of his Spirit.