

Racializing Jesus: The Politics and Power of Ethnic Representation



Course Description:

This course explores the various ancient and contemporary ethnic representations of Jesus in art, film, music, and scripture. Although portraits of Jesus as a white, blue-eyed prophet, messiah, or rabbi haunt the popular cultural imagination, these often reflect the social location and racial biases of Western scholars. But, what if Jesus were black, non-white Latino/a, Amerindian, Asian, or Jewish? How would understanding of his life, ministry and message change? And, why is contemporary scholarship still grappling with the idea of Jewish messiah? To map the politics of interpretation and representation, this course seeks to “racialize” Jesus by (1) exploring his Jewishness in terms of race and ethnicity; (2) critically engaging sources from the New Testament, Apocryphal narratives, Rabbinic literature, and the Quran; (3) interrogating the racial/racist reconstructions of Western biblical scholarship; and (4) mapping their implications for marginalized ethnic communities and interracial and interreligious dialogue. Key themes to explore include: Race/ethnicity, Colonialism and Imperialism, the Quests for the Historical Jesus, Hitler’s Third Reich, Eugenics, Interreligious Dialogue, Police Violence (Ferguson & Baltimore), and the polemic over Jesus’ Wife.

INSTRUCTOR: Roberto Mata

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OFFICE HOURS: TBD

OFFICE : (300j)

CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES :

Students taking this course will:

- 1.1 Describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions. (Students will fulfill this core objective through group presentations, worship site visits, as well as through midterm and final examinations).
- 1.2 Use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence. (Students will fulfill this core objective through an introduction to the theories and methods from the study of religion, class discussions, reading responses, and both midterm and final exams).

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. Introduce the origins, development, and impact of the quests for the historical Jesus.
2. Explore the influence of racialized biblical scholarship upon American religious traditions, politics, and culture.
3. Provide theoretical tools and methods from the academic study of religion to help students interpret the various racialized portraits of Jesus.
4. Equip students to engage in global dialogue about the ways in which racialized portraits of Jesus intersect with issues such as racism, fundamentalism, migration, genocide, eugenics, colonialism, slavery, and religious violence.
5. Offer students an opportunity to reflect on the impact of racialized Jesus discourses upon their own spiritualities, traditions, and experiences.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Kelley, Shawn. *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*. Routledge, 2005

Blum, Edward J, and Paul Harvey. *The Color of Christ: The Son of God & the Saga of Race in America*. 2012.

John TRCSR (ed), *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. Routledge Religion Companions. 2, revised, annotated ed. Routledge, 2009.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/>

Additional reading material will be posted on Camino Course Site. There you should also find other course related materials including: reading response questions, field education experience response, drop boxes, online discussions, exam study guides, rubrics and other handouts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESMENT METHODS:

- **Class Participation (20%).** Students will achieve 15% of their course grade through: (1) on-time attendance; (2) preparation (i.e. completion of readings assignments or discussion questions); and (3) thoughtful participation in course activities (e.g. small and large group discussions, and online discussions, and site visits. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. Students will describe and compare various representations of Jesus in canonical and non-canonical texts].**
- **Reading Responses (20%)** Students are required to post weekly reading responses (1-2page each) on Camino throughout the quarter. Each response must engage an issue/theme/question in the readings from the students' social location. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.2. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs, religious experiences, or faith journeys through reading responses, as well as through class and online discussions.]**
- **Mid-term Examination (25%):** An essay that explores a relevant theme, issue, or practice of interest in the contemporary context, and that engages one or all of three religious traditions (10 pages). The essay must engage the interpretive approach of at least one major thinker from the academic study of religion. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. and 1.2. The midterm exam challenges students to identify, describe and interpret racialized portraits of Jesus within sacred texts, issues, or religious practices. Students must also articulate the ways in which their own social location impinges on their interpretative process.]**
- **Group Presentations (10%):** In class, multi-media group presentation on a contemporary issue or problem related to racialized discourses on Jesus. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. This collaborative effort entails both description and comparison of Christological themes within three distinct religious traditions, as well as serious engagement with the theory and methods from the study of religion.]**
- **Final Examination (25):** Students will write a 15-page paper requiring description and comparison of select racial/ethnic representations of Jesus. The paper must employ analytical frameworks from the study of religion and engage contemporary issues/problems related to racialized portraits of Jesus (e.g. Colonialism, Liberation, Fundamentalism, Apocalypticism, White Supremacy and etc). Students must also reflect upon the ways in which their socio-religious location shaped their approach to the paper. **[Fulfills core curriculum objective 1.1. and 1.2. Students also employ critical tools to reflect on their own faith journeys and to articulate constructive solutions to the issues they identify.]**

GRADING SCALE:

94%-100%	A	80%-82%	B-	67%-69%	D+
90%-93%	A-	77%-79%	C+	63%-66%	D
87%-89%	B+	73%-76%	C	60%-62%	D-
83%-86%	B	70%-72%	C-	59% & below	F

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The instructor will provide written feedback on reading responses, readings responses, and presentations. Group project feedback will be communicated via email or during office hours.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in The Drahn Center in Kenna 101, (408) 554-4318; TTY (408) 554-5445. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination (Title IX)

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife/about/osl.cfm and click on the link for the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at [408-554-3043](tel:408-554-3043) or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethics point: www.ethicspoint.com or <http://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point>

Academic Integrity Policy

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of F for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions up to and including dismissal from the University as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Community Handbook. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action. For more information on the university's policy on academic integrity see the following: <http://www.scu.edu/provost/policies/upload/Academic%20Integrity%20Protocol.pdf>

PEDAGOGY:

In order to create a collaborative, democratic, and empowering learning environment, this course will implement a form of Border Pedagogy. Such a pedagogical approach acknowledges the shifting borders of power and knowledge, and links the educational enterprise with the struggle for a more just and democratic society. The instructor's version of this approach entails five interrelated stages: Critical Awakening, Journeying, Crossing, Negotiating, and Transforming. Such an approach will translate into the following practical dimensions of our learning practices/experiences: (1) students and the instructor will reflect on their own socio-religious location and the ways it shapes their understanding of the three monotheistic religions; (2) students will collaborate with one another and engage in critical and constructive dialogue for class projects and discussions; (3) students will identify and address key issues/themes/ ritual practices in the three religious traditions; (4) students will learn traditional and non-traditional paradigms for understanding religion, as well as methods of interpretation; (5) students will be prepared to articulate the implications of course content and methodologies for the struggle towards a more egalitarian society.

Week & Date	LECTURE TOPICS and READING ASSIGNMENTS
Wk. 1 Jan 10,12	PART I. "Who do you say I am?" Rabbi, Messiah, or Apocalyptic Prophet
Please read the primary sources marked in Red and ONE of the required readings for each class meeting.	
Required Readings (SELECT ONE):	
Tuesday: Cultural Images of Jesus (Course Overview) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adele Reinhartz, "Jesus in Film" (TBCTJ), 519-532. Paul Harvey, "Jesus in American Culture" (TBCTJ), 394-409. Edward Said, "The Cultural Integrity of Empire" (<i>Culture and Imperialism</i>), 97-110. 	
Video: From Jesus to Christ (PBS Documentary)	
Thursday: Rabbi, Messiah or Apocalyptic Prophet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barth D. Ehrdman, Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium," 125-145. Richard Horsley, <i>Jesus and Empire</i>, 98-105. Gifford, "Religious Authority", 397-410 (TRCSR) 	
Recommended Readings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reza Aslan, <i>Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth</i>. Random House, 2013. Robin M. Jensen, Jesus in Christian Art" (TBCTJ), 477-504. King, "Mysticism and Spirituality," (TRCSR), 323-338. Per Beskow, "Modern Mystification of Jesus" (TBCTJ), 458-474. 	
Wk. 2 Jan 17, 19	"For Whom are You Looking?" The Quest for the Historical Jesus

Required Readings:**Tuesday: The Quests for the Historical Jesus**

- David B. Gowler, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Overview* (TBCTJ), 301-319.
- Ehrdman, "Who Was Jesus," in "Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium, 21-40.
- Kelly, "The ideology of Parables: Funk, Crossan, and the Myth of Origins (*Racializing Jesus*), 190-207.

Thursday: Criteria of Historicity

- Robert J. Miller, "The Jesus of the Jesus Seminar" (TBCTJ), 319-336.
- Kelly, "Funk Wilder and the Poetry of Authenticity" (*Racializing Jesus*), 172-190.
- Schussler-Fiorenza, Jesus and The Politics of Interpretation (PDF).

Recommended Readings:

- J. Compton, The Quest for the Historical Jesus (PDF).
- Henry K. Bond, The Quest for the Historical Jesus: An Appraisal (TBCTJ)
- Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, John Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Wk. 3
Jan 24, 26

Race Matters:
The Politics of Ethnic Representation

Required:**Tuesday: Race and Biblical Scholarship**

- Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza, Introduction: Exploring the Intersection of Race, Gender, Status and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies, (*Prejudice in Early Christian Origins*), 1-26.
- Susannah Heschel, "Theology and Race," (*The Aryan Jesus*), 1-26.
- Kelly, "The Construction of American Biblical Scholarship," (*Racializing Jesus*), 165-171.
- George Moyser, "Religion and Politics," (*TRCSR*), 445

Thursday: Race and Ethnicity: The Politics of Ethnic Representation

- Denise Kimber Buell, "God's Own People: Specters of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in Early Christian Studies" (*Prejudice in Early Christian Origins*), 159-190.
- Blum and Harvey, The Holy Face of Race (*The Color of Christ*), 1-26
- Kelly, Racialized Discourse: Modernity, Race, and Reason (*Racializing Jesus*), 1-31.
- Richard Delgado et al., "Introduction" (*Critical Race Theory*), 1-19.

Recommended:

- Charles R. Lawrence et. al, "What is critical Race Theory? (*Words that Wound*), 1-15.
- Kelly, "In the Shadow of Heidegger, Bultmann and the Quest for Christian Origins" (*Racializing Jesus*), 129-160.

Wk. 4:
Jan 31, Feb 2

Jesus The Jew
Anti-Semitism, the Third Reich, and The Holocaust

Required:

Tuesday: Jesus and Anti-Semitism

- Susannah Heschel, "Draining Jesus of Jewishness," (*The Aryan Jesus*), 26-66.
- John Dominic Crossan, "Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism" (*Who Killed Jesus?*), 31-39.
- Shawn Kelly, "Bultmann, Heidegger, and The Holocaust" (*Racializing Jesus*), 154-160.

Thursday: The Nazi Holocaust

- Susannah Heschel, "The Making of Nazi Theologians" (*The Aryan Jesus*), 167-200.
- David Redles, "Nazi End Times: The Third Reich as Millennial Reich," (End of Days), 173-198.
- Shawn Kelly, "Jesus and the Myth of The West" (*Racializing Jesus*), 64-87.

Recommended:

- Edwin Black, "Hitler's Eugenic Race" 279-318 in (*War Against the Weak*) 279-318.
- Jerry Bergman, "Darwinism and the Nazi Race Holocaust" in *Journal of Creation* 13, no. 2 (1999): 101-111.
- Michael J. Cook, "Jewish Perspectives on Jesus" (TBCTJ), 215-233.

Wk. 5:
Feb 7, 9

The Native Messiah:
Colonialism, Race, and The Contact Zone

Required:

Tuesday: Christ in the Americas

- Eleanor Wake, Framing the Sacred (*Framing the Sacred*), 235-257.
- Blum et al., "When Christ Crossed the Atlantic" (*The Color of Christ*), 25-39, or 188-194.
- George E. Tinker, "Christology and Colonialism: Jesus, Corn Mother, and Conquest" in (*American Indian Liberation*), 84-110.
- Frantz Fanon, "On Violence" (*The Wretched of the Earth*) 1-50.

Thursday: Our Christ and Their Christ

- R.S. Sugirtharajah, "The Jesus from Bengal and Their Jesus," (*Postcolonial Reconfigurations*), 129-43.
- "The Indian Jesus," (*The Non-western Jesus*), 169-200.
- Homi Bhabha, "Mimicry" and "Sly Civility," (*The Location of Culture*) (PDF).

Recommended:

- Francisco Vitoria, "On the Evangelization of Unbelievers" (PDF).
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak et. al., *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of An Idea*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

- George E. Tinker, "Liberation and Sustainability" (*Spirit and Resistance*), 1-27.

Wk. 6:
Feb 14, 16

PART III. The White Jesus: Race, Fundamentalism and White Supremacy

Required:

Tuesday: White Christian Fundamentalism

- Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Is Christ White? Racism and Christology" in (*Christology and Whiteness*), 101-113.
- Blum et al., "Body Battles in Antebellum America" (*The Color of Christ*), 103-116.
- Husam Mohammad, "Protestant Evangelicals and U.S. Policy Towards Israel." In *End of Days*) 221-241.
- Munson, "Fundamentalism," (in TRCSR), 354-371.

Thursday: White Supremacy and Assaultive Speech

- Shawn Kelly, "Portrait of the Artist as a White Messiah" (*Racializing Jesus*), 165-171.
- Karen Teel, What Jesus Wouldn't Do: A White Theologian Engages Whiteness (*Christology and Whiteness*), 19-35.
- Mary J. Matsuda et. al., "Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story," (*Words that Wound*), 31-50.

Recommended:

- New, *Holy War: The Rise of Militant Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Fundamentalism*, 16-23.
- Riesebrodt, "Sociology of Religion," (in TRCSR), 145-164.
- <http://www.breitbart.com/tech/2015/12/27/shaun-king-argues-depictions-jesus-promote-white-supremacist-agenda/>
- http://www.salon.com/2015/04/01/the_rights_made_up_god_how_bigots_invented_a_white_supremacist_jesus/

Wk. 7:
Feb 21, 23

The Black Christ: Slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and Black Lives Matter

Required:

Tuesday: Jesus and Slavery

- Kelly Brown Douglas, "The Roots of the Black Christ" (*The Black Christ*), 9-32.
- M. Shawn Copeland, "The Black Jesus of Detroit: Reflection on Black Power and (White) American Christ" in (*Christology and Whiteness*), 180-195.
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins/White Masks* (PDF).

Thursday: From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter

- Kelly Brown Douglas, "The Civil Rights Struggle and the Black Christ" (*The Black Christ*), 35-45.
- Jim Wallis, "The Parables of Ferguson and Baltimore" (*America's Original Sin*), 15-

33.

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins/White Masks* (PDF).

Recommended:

- Anthony B. Pinn, "Looking Like Me? Jesus Images, Christology and the Limitations of Theological Blackness" (*Christology and Whiteness*), 169-179.
- <http://newsacred.org/2015/12/the-ptsd-of-my-blackness/>
- Kelly Brown Douglas, "The Theological Development of the Black Christ," 53-72
- Blum et al., *The Civil Rights and the Coloring of Christ (The Color of Christ)*, 205-233.
- Edwards et. al., "Michael Brown and Ferguson," in *Black Lives Matter*. 2016.

Wk. 8:
Feb 28,
Mar 2

**The Asian Jesus:
Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Portraits**

Required:

Tuesday: In Christ's Likeness

- M E. Brinkman, "The Chinese Jesus" in (*The Non-western Jesus*), 57-78.
- Dale A. Johnson, "The Jesus Caves of China" (*The Asian Jesus*), 32-49.
- Ashis Nandy, "The Intimate Enemy: The Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism" (PDF).

Thursday: The Asian Jesus

- The Japanese and Korean Jesus (*The Non-western Jesus*), 101-138.
- M E. Brinkman, "The Indonesian Jesus" (*The Non-western Jesus*), 169-200.
- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (PDF).

Recommended:

- Dale. A. Johnson, "Why Christianity is an Asian Religion" (*The Asian Jesus*), 1-10.
- Michal Amaladoss, A Hindu-Christian Jesus (*The Asian Jesus*), 19-20.
- Dale A. Johnson, Matteo Ricci and the Catholic Rites Controversy (*The Asian Jesus*), 110-117.

Wk. 9:
Mar 7, 9

**PART V. Jesus or Jesús?
Liberation Theologies, De-coloniality, and The Hispanic Jesus**

Required:

Tuesday: The Hispanic Christ

- Virgilio Elizondo, Elements for a Mexican American Mestizo Christology (*Jesus in the Hispanic Community*), 3-15.
- Luis R. Rivera, "El Migrante/The Migrant Christ," (*Jesus in the Hispanic Community*), 135-155.
- Walter Mignolo, *Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity* (PDF).

Thursday: The Politics of Jesús

- Miguel A. De La Torre, *Introduction: Jesus or Jesús in The Politics of Jesús: A Hispanic Political Theology*. 2015, 1-20. 2
- Eduardo C. Fernandez S.J., “Three Visual Images of Jesus The Christ from the Latino/a Community: God the Vulnerable; God the Broken; God the Loving” (*Jesus in the Hispanic Community*) 171-189.
- Ignacio Ellacuria, “The Crucified People” (*Mysterium Liberationis*), 580-604.

Recommended:

- Elizondo, Virgilio P. *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Veli-Matti Karkkainen, “Christology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America” (TBCTJ), 375-393.
- The Quest for the Cuban Christ
<http://www.nathanieltturner.com/questforcunabchrist.htm>

Wk. 10:
Mar 14-16

Part VI. Why Jesus Matters: Intersectionality and Interreligious Dialogue

Required:

Tuesday: Intersectionality

- Lisa Isherwood, “Feminist Christologies,” (TBCTJ), 427-443.
- Did Jesus Had a Wife? In The Atlantic
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/07/the-unbelievable-tale-of-jesus-wife/485573/>
- Matsuda, *Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew*” (*Words that Wound*), 111-120.

Thursday: Interracial and Interreligious Dialogue

- Hedges, “Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue” (TRCTSR), 58-109;
- Traci West, “When a White Man-God is the Truth and the Way for Black Christians” in (*Christology and Whiteness*), 114-127.
- Michael Barnes, “Religious Pluralism” (in TRCSR), 407-422.

Recommended:

- Gilman, “Collaboration and Conflict,” 35-55.
- Zeba A. Crook, “Jesus Novels: Solving Problems with Fiction” (TBCTJ), 504-519.
- Kelly, *The Illusion of a Fresh Start: Deconstruction and Escaping Racialization (Racializing Jesus)*, 219-222.
- James W. Perkinson, “Upstart Messiahs, renegade Samaritans, and Temple exorcism: What Can Jesus’ peasant resistance movement in first-century Palestine teach about confronting “color-blind” whiteness today? (*Christology and Whiteness*), 156-158.

Wk. 11:

FINAL EXAMS WEEK