

**CONTINUING STUDIES**  
**Stanford University, Fall Quarter, 2006**

**Religion 15**  
**THE HISTORICAL JESUS**

**HOW DID JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHO NEVER CLAIMED TO BE CHRIST OR DIVINE,  
BECOME THE SON OF GOD?**

Professor Thomas Sheehan  
Department of Religious Studies  
Stanford University

**Overview:**

Who was the historical Jesus of Nazareth? What did he actually say and do, as contrasted with what early Christians (e.g., Paul and the Gospel writers) believed that he said and did?

What did the man Jesus actually think of himself and of his mission, as contrasted with the messianic and even divine claims that the New Testament makes about him? In short, what are the differences—and continuities—between the Jesus who lived and died in history and the Christ who lives on in believers' faith?

Over the last four decades historical scholarship on Jesus and his times—whether conducted by Jews, Christians, or non-believers—has arrived at a strong consensus about what this undeniably historical figure (born ca. 4 BCE, died ca. 30 CE) said and did, and how he presented himself and his message to his Jewish audience. Often that historical evidence about Jesus does not easily dovetail with the traditional doctrines of Christianity. How then might one adjudicate those conflicting claims?

This is a course about history, not about faith or theology. It will examine the best available literary and historical evidence about Jesus and his times and will discuss methodologies for interpreting that evidence, in order to help participants make their own judgments and draw their own conclusions.

**Required texts:**

*New American Bible: St. Joseph New Testament Study Edition* [ISBN 0899423116]

Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*  
[http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/thomas\\_sheehan/firstcoming/index.shtml](http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/thomas_sheehan/firstcoming/index.shtml)

Paula Fredriksen *From Jesus to Christ*, 2nd edition, Yale-Nota-Bene [9-780300 08457]

Bernard Scott, *Re-imagine the World* Polebridge [0944344 86 0]

Robert J. Miller, *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate*, Polebridge [0944344 89 5]

Dominic Crossan *Who Killed Jesus?* HarperSanFrancisco [0-06-06141803]

Stephen J. Patterson, *Rethinking the Death and Life of Jesus* [0-8006-3674-0]

Various other texts

1. **CALL ME YESHUA**  
Introduction to the course
2. ***KINGDOM AND CATASTROPHE***  
A history of Israel
3. ***LEFT BEHIND***  
The first century of Christianity
4. ***PEALING THE ONION***  
From the Gospels and Paul back to Yeshua
5. ***APOCALYPSE NOW***  
From the Baptist to the Kingdom
6. ***WORDS AND WONDERS***  
The ways of a prophet
7. ***THE EMPIRE UNLEASHED***  
Passion and death
8. **CRISIS AND CONTINUITY**  
The making of a martyr
9. ***APOCALYPSE TO COME***  
Awakening the prophet
10. ***RESURRECTION***  
Rewriting history