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Religious studies program expands with course on historical Jesus

By Eric Reikowski, media relations assistant

As interest in religious topics continues to grow, Oakland University's Religious Studies program has responded with expanded course offerings on a diverse range of subjects. The newest course, "Jesus and the Biblical Tradition," was introduced last summer and is offered this semester.

Taught by Dr. John Kinkel, the course looks at Jesus from a historical perspective, examining who he was, what he taught and how his teachings stood out from those of other major religious groups of his time.

The course seeks to discover who Jesus was by referring to ancient texts that have plausible answers, Kinkel said, adding that students study a number of biblical sources, including the gospels and St. Paul's letters.

"We are teaching history, literature, what people said happened," Kinkel explained. "That doesn't mean we can't have debates about what happened, but we are looking to the texts for explanations."

Students develop a profile of Jesus by studying historical accounts from both Christian and non-Christian sources. According to Kinkel, focusing on historical texts is critically important in gaining a full understanding of Jesus and helping dispel misconceptions about who he was and what he taught.

Senior anthropology major Michael Fluture is enrolled in the course and said his interest stemmed from a desire to learn more about the founder of one of the largest organized religions in the world today.

"I thought it would be interesting to look at Jesus as a person," said Fluture, who also is taking "Introduction to Sacred Texts," a course that examines the holy books of world religions such as Judaism and Islam.

Other religion courses Fluture has taken at Oakland, including "Religions of the Modern World" and "Early Christianity," have helped increase his appreciation of diverse cultures and ideas.

"I would absolutely recommend these courses to anyone who would like to learn more about religion and people's faith," Fluture said. "After taking these courses, I have a better understanding and a deeper respect for other religions in different parts of the world."

The Religious Studies program at Oakland offers a general concentration in religious studies, along with minors in religious studies, Judaic Studies, Islamic Studies and Christianity Studies. Students also can major in religious studies through an independent major. For more information, visit the [Web site](#).

SUMMARY

OU's Religious Studies program offers expanded course offerings on a diverse range of subjects, including a new course, "Jesus and the Biblical Tradition."

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