



Grace Communion Seminary
NT02 Introduction to the Gospels

Full Syllabus

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GCS Mission statement:

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through graduate education in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies.

Course Description: The Gospels

In this course, students examine the four canonical Gospels to see what each of these four portraits of Jesus tells us. Students will explore the literary and theological relationships between the Gospels, and the major themes each one presents. Students will describe how the teachings of Jesus can be used in our very different circumstances today. Two papers are required: an exegetical examination of one passage and a more theological analysis of another.

Required textbooks

Strauss, Mark L. *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels.*

Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. 0-310-22697-X. About \$30 at amazon.

Wright, N.T. *The Challenge of Jesus.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999. ISBN 0-8308-2200-3. About \$12 at amazon.

Recommended resources (*tentative* recommendations – I have not read all of them yet)

Baukhram, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007.

Black, David Alan, and David R. Beck, eds. *Rethinking the Synoptic Problem.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001. 0-8010-2281-9.

deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004. ISBN 0-8308-2746-3. A massive, affordable resource.

- Green, Joel B., Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992. 0-8308-1777-8. \$31.50.
- Porter, Stanley E., ed. *Reading the Gospels Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004. 0-8028-0517-5.
- Stein, Robert H. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001. 0-8010-2258-4.
- Thielman, Frank. *Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005. 0-310-21132-8.
- Wright, N.T. audio lectures at <http://www.ntwrightpage.com/>. These include three chapters in the above book that were originally given in January 1999.
- Yoder Neufeld, Thomas R. *Recovering Jesus: The Witness of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007. 978-1-58743-202-6.
- Young, Brad H. *Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007. 978-1-56563-405-3.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will be given an opportunity to:

1. Understand the scholarly proposals about the literary relationships between the Synoptic Gospels.
2. Become informed about the distinctive teachings of each of the four Gospels, and how each contributes to a more complete picture of who Jesus was, and what he said and did.
3. Become aware of the historical challenges involved in using the Gospels as sources of historical information, and develop a reasoned response to the challenges.
4. Analyze the cultural and theological differences between Jesus' circumstances and our own, and determine how his teachings may be used in the church today.

Requirements

1. **Reading:** Read both textbooks (about 700 pages).
2. **Writing:** Write one 5-page paper on "what it says." Five passages in Mark and Matthew will be suggested; students will chose one of those five to examine and explain. Students must consult and interact with at least two modern¹ scholarly

¹ This does *not* mean that older commentaries are bad. However, new information or analyses will occasionally help us see that a new interpretation is better. If we do not consult more recent commentaries,

books, including at least one major commentary. (*Modern* means within the last 25 years, and *major* means at least 200 pages devoted either to Mark or Matthew.) Students may need to obtain these through an interlibrary loan, so they should select a passage and identify potential resources as soon as the class starts.

3. **Analyzing:** Write one paper on “what it means.” Five passages in Luke and John will be suggested; students will choose one of those five to examine and explain how the point of the passage might be used today, in a setting that is both culturally and theologically different than the original setting. Again, the research must include at least two modern scholarly works, including at least one major commentary.
4. **Participation:** Student interaction is an important part of this course. Students will be expected to read and participate in the electronic forum.

Weekly Topics and Assignments

Week number	Date	Lecture topics	Reading assignments
1	Sept. 8	What is a Gospel? Why are there four? What is the Synoptic Problem?	
2	Sept. 15	The Gospel of Mark – its structure, theology, and its secret	
3	Sept. 22	How do we interpret and use parables?	
4	Sept. 29	The Gospel of Matthew – its structure, theology, and theme	
5	Oct. 6		
6	Oct. 13		
7	Oct. 20		
8	Oct. 27		
9	Nov. 3		
10	Nov. 10		
12	Nov. 24		Final paper is due. Thanksgiving is Nov.

we may be unwittingly perpetuating a mistake. Another advantage of modern commentaries is that they may address modern questions that older commentators simply did not deal with.

			27th.
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Grading Standards

Each paper counts for 40 percent of the grade; the reading counts for 10 percent, and forum participation counts for 10 percent.

Bibliography

Tentative schedule

1. The Synoptic problem and its solutions
2. Mark and the Messianic secret
3. Interpreting parables
4. Matthew – the Jewish Gospel; Jesus and the Law
5. What is the kingdom of God?
6. Luke's theology and ethics
7. The historical Jesus
8. Why is John so different?
9. The message of John
10. Jesus was not a Christian, so how do we use his teachings?