

**SYLLABUS**  
**CS 321---Bible III: The Gospels**  
**Wesley Theological Seminary**  
**Upper New York Conference COS**  
**March 27 thru April 25, 2020**

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### **Course Description**

This course focuses on the content and message of all four Gospels, as well as the theological perspectives of the Gospel authors. How to bring the message of the Gospels to congregations in a preaching environment will be highlighted.

### **Objectives**

Students will be enabled to: (1) understand the origin, message, and purpose of each Gospel, (2) to interpret the messages of the Gospels to their congregations, and (3) apply this knowledge to preaching, teaching, and issues of the present day.

### **Required Texts**

Powell, Mark Allen. *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*. Baker Academic, 2009.

Murphy, Frederick J. *An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*. Abingdon, 2005.

Reading assignments are “front-end loaded”; that is, number of pages to be read are heavier at the outset. This enables the student to do extensive reading prior to first on-site classes in order to be better prepared for class discussion.

### **Supplementary Texts**

Culpepper, R. Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. Fortress Press, 1983.

Ringe, Sharon. *Luke*. Westminster Bible Companion.

### **Assignment Reminders**

1. All written assignments must be submitted in twelve-point font, double spaced, with one-inch margin.

2. Grammar counts. Your paper is a reflection of your communication skills. In this course you are learning not simply how to read the Gospels critically and spiritually, but to communicate your ideas to others in a clear and coherent manner.
3. Use gender-inclusive language.
4. Support any position you take with specific references to the text on which you are writing and to other texts that support your argument.
5. Produce your own original work. Properly acknowledging your sources is important. But if the bulk of your paper consists of quoted material, this is not your own original work. I seek your understanding of the ideas discussed in texts, lectures, and small groups.
6. Proof read! Typos and grammatical errors make it appear as though you have put little effort into your work. Further, such lack of attention potentially impacts one's grade. I am not your English teacher!
7. Plagiarism is not acceptable. Period! You cannot use someone else's ideas without acknowledging that you have done so. You must always reference your sources, whether a direct quote or not.

## **Grading**

There are twenty pages of written assignments, plus class participation, that will constitute your final grade. Written assignments totaling ten pages are due during the first five weeks of the course. And an additional written assignment of ten pages is due at the beginning of class the second week-end we meet.

## SETTING THE STAGE

Introductions  
Course Description  
Objectives and Expectations  
Assignments and Grading  
Rudyard Kipling Quote

### **Background to the Gospels:**

A Birdseye View of the Bible  
The First Century World  
Good News from Prejudiced Reporters  
A Gospel Overview  
Josephus the Historian  
Jesus' Method of Teaching  
Miracles and Parables

### **Reading assignment prior to class on March 27<sup>th</sup>:**

Powell, pp. 15-45, 63-145  
Murphy, pp. 1-189, 317-372

### **Written assignment #1 due first day of class, Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>:**

Powell's textbook describes the four Gospels as "good news from prejudiced reporters". Do you agree or disagree? Support your position with specific rationale. (2 pages)

## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

### **Background:**

Language and Location  
Written to Whom?  
Source(s)?  
What's Missing?  
Jesus Portrayed as?  
Mark's Theme  
John the Baptist  
Call of the Disciples

**Exegesis of:**

Parable of the Sower (4:1-20)  
The Storm at Sea (4:35-41)  
The Gerasene Demoniac (5:1-20)  
Woman with Flow of Blood (5:25-34)

**The Passion Narrative**

Entry into Jerusalem  
Signs of the Apocalypse  
The Easter Story  
Mark's Abbreviated Ending  
Post-Easter?

**Written Assignment #2 due by email, Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11 P.M.:**

Provide your exegesis of Mark 4:35-41. Highlight Mark's perception of Jesus. Bearing in mind his specific audience, what is Mark's point to his readership? How would you approach this narrative in a preaching opportunity? (3 pages)

**THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

**Background:**

Author, Audience, and Location  
The Genealogy  
The Teaching Gospel

**The Infancy Narrative**

Birth of Jesus  
The Wise Men and the Star  
King Herod

**Teaching Highlights:**

The Beatitudes  
The Lord's Prayer  
The Kingdom of Heaven

**Exegesis of:**

The Temptation Narrative (4:1-11)

The Canaanite Woman (15:21-30)

**The Passion Narrative**

The Jerusalem Entry  
Turmoil in the Holy City  
The Lord's Supper  
Judas the Traitor  
The Crucifixion  
Resurrection!  
Post-Easter

**Written Assignment #3 due by email, Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup>, by 11 P.M.:**

Why is Matthew considered by many as “the teaching Gospel”? In your response, be reminded of his audience and the first century world. (1 page)

And, provide a summary of a sermon you would preach on the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Provide background information (to whom it is addressed and why; what is Luke's intended meaning?) Relate this sermon to your own congregation. (2 pages)

**Reading assignment prior to class on April 24th:**

Powell, pp. 147-189  
Murphy, pp. 191-288

**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

**Background:**

Written by Whom to Whom?  
Common Authorship with Acts  
Luke's Sources and Style  
Geographical References

**Purpose of:**

The Prologue as Summary  
Major and Minor Themes

**The Young Jesus:**

The Annunciation  
Elizabeth and Zechariah  
Infancy Narrative

Hidden Years

**Ministry Years:**

Beatitudes and Lord's Prayer  
Mary and Martha

**Exegesis:**

The Transfiguration (9:28-36)  
Paying Taxes to Caesar (20:19-26)  
The Widow's Offering (21:1-4)

**Parables:**

Of the "Lost"  
The Good Samaritan

**The Passion Narrative:**

The Palm Sunday Parade  
The Last Supper  
The Sadducees and Pilate  
Crucifixion and Burial  
The Resurrection  
Road to Emmaus

**Written assignment #4 due by email by Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 11 P.M.:**

What about the women in John's Passion narrative? What significance might there be regarding the presence of the women and the absence of men in Jesus' final hours? (2 pages)

**THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

**Background:**

Authorship and Location  
Into the Gentile World  
Rise of the Heresies  
Relationship to Johannine Letters

What's Missing?

**Uniqueness of Gospel:**

The Prologue  
Increased Dialogue  
The "I Am" Sayings  
Role of Mary, Jesus' Mother

**Exegesis:**

Woman at the Well (4:4-30)  
Feeding of 5,000 (6:1-14)  
Woman Caught in Adultery (8:1-11)

**The Passion Narrative:**

More Extensive Than Synoptics  
Is Jesus "in Control"?  
Crucifixion and Resurrection  
The Appendix

**Final written assignment due at the beginning of class of the second weekend, April 24th:**

Compare and contrast the Synoptic Gospels with John's Gospel. Specifically: their style and methodology, their audiences, their purpose and content, the manner in which Jesus teaches and acts, interaction of Jesus with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Pontius Pilate, and, the amount of space allocated to the Passion Narrative. Finally, why, in the end, four Gospels in our New Testament, rather than any other number? (10 pages)