

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study: Online September 14-November 9, 2020

CS-321 Bible III: Gospels
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Objectives:

This course focuses on the content and message of the Gospels and the theological perspectives of gospel writers. This will include an overview of the social, historical and cultural matrix of the early followers of Jesus, the literary styles and genres used in the texts, and the gospels' multi-faceted portraits of Jesus, discipleship, and community. The practice of exegesis will be emphasized.

Goals:

1. Understand the origin, message, and purpose of each Gospel
2. Exegete this form of literature
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

Required Texts:

- ♦ Powell, Mark Allen, *Introducing the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (1st ed. 2009; 2nd ed. 2018)
 - ♦ You may use either the first or second edition of the Powell book.
 - ♦ You must identify which edition you use; pagination and prose differ slightly in each.
- ♦ Murphy, Frederick J., *An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- ♦ Tiffany, Frederick C. and Sharon H. Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation: A Roadmap*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.
- ♦ A good study Bible with introduction and explanatory notes. Suitable study Bibles include:
 - ♦ *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha*. Nashville: Abingdon Press; Revised ed., 2003.
 - ♦ *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. New York: HarperCollins; Revised ed., 2006.
 - ♦ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 5th Revised ed., 2018.
 - ♦ If you have a Bible other than one listed above, please contact me to discuss its suitability for this course.

Online Access:

This course will be entirely online. Students must access Blackboard regularly in order to complete six 'Modules,' including readings, videos, and discussion board components (Schedule, pp. 3-5). Students must participate in two Zoom sessions: 9-10:30 a.m. on Saturday October 10 and 9-10:30 a.m. on Saturday November 7. (These dates were the Saturdays originally scheduled for in-person instruction.) If you have any questions about the syllabus or assignments, please email me.

Assignments and Assessment:

Five percent of your final course grade will be based on timely and complete viewing of the Kaltura videos (note: individual viewing stats are available).

Ten percent of your final course grade will be based on presence and participation at the two Zoom sessions (Saturday October 10 and Saturday November 7).

Ten percent of your final course grade will be based on posts/replies for the two Start-Your-Own Discussion Boards (one required in advance of each Zoom session). Rubric and guidelines will be available on Blackboard.

Fifty-five percent of your final course grade will be based on posts/replies for the Prompted Discussion Boards. Each Module A-F will have one or more prompted discussion boards. Students must post/reply on *each* of these prompted discussion boards. The prompts for discussion will be listed with each discussion board. Posts (and replies) must be responsive to the prompt, show engagement with the reading/video, and timely. More detailed rubric and guidelines will be available on Blackboard.

Twenty percent of your final course grade will be based on your Final Paper due Monday Nov. 9, 2020. This five-page paper synthesizing the learning of the class with reference to the gospels' accounts of the crucifixion will be submitted on Blackboard. A detailed prompt, rubric and and guidelines will be available on Blackboard.

Assignments in this class require you to engage with the readings assigned. You may choose but are not required to consult other resources (commentaries, dictionaries) such as those you may be familiar with from prior COS courses. On discussion boards and in the final paper, you must properly cite your sources. For readings which have been assigned for this class, include author/page number(s) (i.e. "Powell, 2nd ed., 141"). For Bible citations, provide book/chapter:verse (i.e. "Mark 1:1"). For purposes of this class, introductions, footnotes or other scholarly information from your study Bible may be cited simply giving the study Bible abbreviation and the note verse number (i.e. "*NISB* Mark Introduction," "*NISB* Mark 1:1-13 note," or "*NISB* Mark 1:1 note"; this example is given to make plain the importance of giving the note number; these are two different notes in the *NISB*). For any additional resources you choose to use, you must include author/title/publisher/publication date/page number(s).

Please refer to your Wesley COS Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office (202-885-8688).

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regard the following as forms of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- ◆ copying from another student's paper
- ◆ giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another person
- ◆ using unauthorized material during an examination
- ◆ borrowing and presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another; this includes direct quotation and/or paraphrasing of others' words/ideas

Schedule: The Blackboard course site will be open by Monday September 14, and the first two Modules (A and B) will be available at that time. Modules C-F will open in subsequent weeks on a schedule that allows at least two weeks between the opening of the module (including videos and prompted discussion boards) and the first due date for discussion board postings for that module. Do not wait until September 14 to begin work: acquire the books, review the module schedule and prompts below, and start the assignments now.

Module A: Gospel Contexts — Monday Sept 28-Sat Oct 3

- ♦ **Read:** Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, preface and ch. 1-5 (“NT Background: Roman World”; “NT Background: Jewish World”; “NT Writings,” “Jesus,” “Gospels”); Murphy, *Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*, ch. 1-2 (“Critical Study of the Gospels,” “Reconstructing Ancient Worlds”).
- ♦ **Watch** *MODULE A* video on Blackboard.
- ♦ **Respond by Oct. 3** to discussion boards A.1, A.2 and A.3 (prompts below and on Bb). **Reply by Oct. 10** to two classmates’ posts (on any of discussion boards A.1, A.2, or A.3). Your reply (*100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts
 - ♦ **A.1** Describe the first century background of the New Testament, including the religious, political, geographic, and cultural contexts. What are the main differences you see between the world of the first century and the world of today? How does understanding the world of the first century help you understand the gospel writings? How does understanding the world of the first century help you interpret the gospel writings for the world of today? (*250-300 words*).
 - ♦ **A.2:** What is “gospel”? How does the term “gospel” relate to the New Testament writings specifically titled “Gospels”? How is the term “gospel” broader than the New Testament writings titled “Gospels”? How do these insights about the development, use and meanings of the term “gospel” affect the way you preach or teach from the New Testament Gospels? (*250-300 words*).
 - ♦ **A.3:** The four gospels vary in their presentations of the Jesus’ life, death and resurrection as they interpret the meaning of that experience for the life of Jesus’ followers. Is having different interpretations of Jesus in the New Testament a good thing? Why or why not? (*250-300 words*).

Module B: Mark — Monday Oct 5-Sat Oct 10

- ♦ **Read:** The Gospel of Mark. Notice how it works as a story, i.e. how the events unfold, how the characters are depicted, etc. Read Powell, ch. 7 (“Mark”); Murphy, ch. 3 (“Mark”).
- ♦ **Watch** *Module B/Mark* on Blackboard.
- ♦ **Respond by Oct. 10** to discussion board B (prompt below and on Bb). **Reply by Oct. 17** to two classmates’ posts. Your reply (*100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
 - ♦ **B:** How are the disciples portrayed in the Gospel of Mark? How does Jesus treat them? Do their characters develop (change? mature?) as the story unfolds? If yes, then how? How does Mark portray the disciples at the end of the gospel? [Your answer should focus on the “original ending” of Mark, i.e. Mark 16:1-8]. (*300-350 words*)

- ♦ **Start-your-own-discussion board: by Wednesday Oct. 7** (before Saturday Zoom session).
 - ♦ What confused/surprised/challenged/delighted you most in the material covered in Modules A or B. Your post must be specific.
 - ♦ Post (*150-200 words*) by **Wednesday Oct. 7. Reply by Monday Oct. 12** to one classmate's post. Your reply (*50-100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
- ♦ **Attend Zoom session:** 9-10:30 a.m. Saturday October 10.

Module C: Matthew — Monday Oct 12-Sat Oct 17

- ♦ **Read:** The Gospel of Matthew; Powell, ch. 6 ("Matthew"); Murphy, ch. 4 ("Matthew").
- ♦ **Watch:** *Module C/Matthew* on Blackboard
- ♦ **Respond by Oct. 17** to discussion boards **C.1-3** (prompts below and on Bb). **Reply by Oct. 24** to two classmates' posts (on any of discussion boards C.1, C.2, or C.3). Your reply (*100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
 - ♦ **C.1:** What are some of the chief characteristics of the "Kingdom of Heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew? (*250-300 words*)
 - ♦ **C.2:** Compare and contrast the "Kingdom of Heaven" in Matthew with the Roman Empire in which Jesus' disciples (and the gospel writers) were living. (*150-200 words*)
 - ♦ **C.3:** Explain what you would stress in preaching or teaching Matthew's "Kingdom" theme in your ministry context, and why. (What is your ministry context?) (*150-200 words*)

Module D: Luke — Monday Oct 19-Sat Oct 24

- ♦ **Read:** The Gospel of Luke; Powell, ch. 8 ("Luke"); Murphy, ch. 5 ("The Gospel of Luke..."; skip the pages that are about Acts)
- ♦ **Watch:** *Module D/Luke* on Blackboard.
- ♦ **Respond:** by October 24 to discussion board D (prompt below and on Bb). **Reply by Oct. 31** to the post of a classmate who wrote on a different text. Your reply (*100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
 - ♦ **D:** Choose **ONE** of the following passages:
 - ♦ Luke 15:1-10,
 - ♦ Luke 17:11-19, **or**
 - ♦ Luke 22:24-30.
 - ♦ *In 250 words* describe the form and context of the passage you chose. (What kind of text is this (parable, etc.)? In what part of Luke's gospel does this passage occur? What comes right before and after this particular passage? How does this framing affect the interpretation of the passage? What do we need to know about first century context in order to understand the passage?)
 - ♦ *In 250 words* explain what theme(s) important to Luke is present in this passage (What is Luke telling us about God, Jesus, the Spirit and/or discipleship in this passage?)

Module E: John — Monday Oct 24-Sat Oct 31

- ◆ **Read:** The Gospel of John; Powell, ch.9 (“John”); Murphy, ch. 6 (“The Gospel of John...”; skip the pages that are about 1-3 John)
- ◆ **Watch:** *Module E/John* on Blackboard.
- ◆ **Respond by October 31** to discussion boards **E.1-2** (prompts below and on Bb). **Reply by Nov. 7** to one classmate’s post from E.1 **AND** to one classmate’s post from E.2. Your reply on E.2 should be to a the post of a classmate who wrote about a text you did not choose. Your replies (*100 words each*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
 - ◆ **E.1:** Powell, ch. 9 (“John”), discusses a number of distinctions between the gospel of John and the synoptic gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. Identify three of these distinctions. Which do you feel is most significant, and why? (*250-300 words*).
 - ◆ **E.2:** Choose **ONE** of the following passages from John:
 - ◆ John 3:1-21 (Jesus and Nicodemus),
 - ◆ John 4:1-42 (Jesus and the Samaritan Woman), **or**
 - ◆ John 10:1-11 (“I am...” the Good Shepherd).
 - ◆ *In 250 words* describe the form and context of the passage you chose. (What kind of text is this (parable, etc.)? In what part of John’s gospel does this passage occur? What comes right before and after this particular passage? How does this framing affect the interpretation of the passage? What do we need to know about first century context in order to understand the passage?)
 - ◆ *In 250 words* explain what theme(s) important to John is present in this passage (What is John telling us about God, Jesus, the Spirit and/or discipleship in this passage?)

Module F: Putting it Together — Monday Nov 2-Sat Nov 7

- ◆ **Read:** Tiffany and Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation*, ch. 1-5; focus on chapters 2 (“Encountering the Biblical Text”), 3 (“A Close Reading of the Biblical Text”) and 4 (“Reading Contextually”).
- ◆ **Respond by Wednesday Nov. 4** to discussion board F (prompt below and on Bb). Reply by Monday Nov. 9 to one classmate’s post; your reply (*50-100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
 - ◆ **F.** Describe the main point of each of the three assigned chapters from *Biblical Interpretation*. Which of these points did you find most helpful/insightful/exciting? Which of these points did you find most confusing/challenging/troubling? Why? (*250-300 words*)
- ◆ **Start-your-own-discussion board: Post by Wednesday Nov. 4** (in advance of Zoom).
 - ◆ What confused/surprised/challenged/delighted you most in the material covered in Modules C, D, E or F? Your post must be specific.
 - ◆ Post (*150-200 words*) by **Wednesday Nov. 6**. **Reply by Monday Nov. 9** to one classmate’s post; your reply (*50-100 words*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
- ◆ **Attend Zoom session:** 9 - 10:30 a.m. Saturday Nov. 7

FINAL PAPER -- 5 pages — due 11:59 p.m. Wednesday Nov. 11

- ♦ Each gospel recounts Jesus' crucifixion differently. Analyze the similarities and differences between
 - ♦ Matthew 27:32-54,
 - ♦ Mark 15:21-39,
 - ♦ Luke 23-26-47, **and**
 - ♦ John 19:16b-37.
- ♦ What is distinctive about each version? How do those distinctions relate to the overall perspective or theme of the larger narrative as related to discipleship, Christology, or other particular emphasis of the particular gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John). For each passage, explain what you would emphasize if you preached on that passage on Good Friday.
 - ♦ This question requires you to *analyze* (not list) the similarities and differences. Analysis requires both identification and discussion of the comparison with particular focus on the ways each version relates to the perspective and message of the gospel in which it is located.
- ♦ This paper should be five (5) pages long. Consult the rubric on Bb for guidance on citation and formatting as well as criteria for grading.