

Wesley Theological Seminary  
Course of Study: Online May 24-June 30; July 12-16, 2021

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.
- ◆ 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. Between May 24 and June 30, students must access Blackboard regularly in order to complete Modules A-D, including readings, videos, and discussion board components. July 12-16, students must participate in Zoom sessions between 9-11:30 a.m. daily. If you have any questions about the syllabus or assignments, please email me.

**Assignments and Assessment:**

**Five percent** of your overall grade will be based on timely and complete viewing of the Kaltura videos. (Note: this grade is based on the individual viewing stats tracked by Kaltura/Blackboard.)

**Fifteen percent** of your overall grade will be based on presence and participation at the Zoom sessions July 12-16, 2021 (9-11:30 a.m. daily).

**Forty percent** of your overall grade will be based on posts/replies for the Discussion Boards. Students must post/reply on *each* of the prompted discussion boards for Modules A-C. (Each discussion board bears a separate weight within this category, even if there are multiple boards within a single module.). Students must also post on the Start-Your-Own discussion board; no reply is due on this board. The schedule of discussion boards is posted below. More detailed guidelines will be on Blackboard.

**Ten percent** of your overall grade will be based on your Luke assignment due July 12, 2021.

**Thirty percent** of your overall grade will be based on your Final Paper due July 16, 2021. This eight-page paper will (1) discuss a text from John's gospel and (2) synthesize the learning of the class with reference to the gospels' accounts of the crucifixion. This paper will be submitted on Blackboard. A detailed prompt, rubric 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 and Module A available by Friday May 21. The first discussion board posts (A.1, A.2 and A.3) are due Friday June 4, with replies due Tuesday June 8. *Please review carefully the schedule for posts/replies for Modules B and C. They have been revised to allow more time for each module during the asynchronous portion; as a result, the deadlines fall in different days of the week for each.* Module D (Luke) has been revised so that the written response to the prompt is due as an assignment rather than on a discussion board.

**Module A: Gospel Contexts — Posts due Fri. June 4; Replies due Tues June 8**

- ◆ **Read:** Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, preface and ch. 1-5 (“NT Background: Roman World”; “NT Background: Jewish World”; “NT Writings,” “Jesus,” “Gospels”).
- ◆ **Watch** *MODULE A* video on Blackboard.
- ◆ **Respond by Friday June 4** to discussion boards A.1, A.2 and A.3 (prompts below and on Bb). **Reply by Tuesday June 8** 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 — Posts due Tues June 15; Replies due Fri. June 18**

- ◆ **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”).
- ◆ **Watch** *Module B/Mark* on Blackboard.
- ◆ **Respond by Tuesday June 15** to discussion board B (prompt below and on Bb). **Reply by Friday June 18** to *one* classmate’s 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 (“... for they were afraid.”)]. (*300-350 words*)

**Module C: Matthew — Posts due Fri. June 25; Replies due Wed. 6/30**

- ◆ **Read:** The Gospel of Matthew; Powell, ch. 6 (“Matthew”).
- ◆ **Watch:** *Module C/Matthew* on Blackboard
- ◆ **Respond by Monday June 14** to discussion boards **C.1-3** (prompts below and on Bb). **Reply by Friday June 18** to *one* classmate’s 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 — [Post revised to be assignment due Monday July 12]**

- ◆ **Read:** The Gospel of Luke; Powell, ch. 8 (“Luke”).
- ◆ **Watch:** *Module D/Luke* on Blackboard.
- ◆ **Submit response in assignment window on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. Monday July 12:**
- ◆ **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?)
- ◆ **NOTE:** Your paper should demonstrate that you have completed the readings for Luke (the gospel and the Powell chapter) and watched the video on Bb. Your analysis should also be informed by the insights gained from the Tiffany & Ringe chapters assigned.

**Start-Your-Own Discussion — Post due Wednesday June 30.** No reply required.

- ◆ What confused/surprised/challenged/delighted you most in the material covered in Modules A-D. Your post must be specific in identifying the material referenced and describing the confusion/surprise/challenge/delight.
- ◆ **NOTE:** The goal of this discussion board post is to support preparation for the July 12-16 Zoom sessions. Material relating to the synoptic gospels will be reviewed, in part based on the texts/topics discussed on this board.

**July 12-16: Zoom sessions 9-11:30 a.m.** Link to be posted on Blackboard site.

- ◆ **Review:** Discussion boards (I will have posted replies on A-D by Friday July 2).
- ◆ **For Mon Read:** Tiffany and Ringe, *Biblical Interpretation*, ch. 1-5; focus on 2 (“Encountering the Biblical Text”), 3 (“A Close Reading of the Biblical Text”) and 4 (“Reading Contextually”).
  - ◆ **By 11:59 p.m. submit your Luke assignment in the window provided.**
- ◆ **For Tues Read:** Malbon, ‘Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Read?’ in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, Anderson and Moore, ed. (pdf posted on Bb).
- ◆ **For Wed Read:** The Gospel of John; Powell, ch.9 (“John”).
  - ◆ Review the prompt for the Final Paper (below) and start outlining your response.
- ◆ **For Wed Read:** Klink, ‘Audience’ in *How John Works: Storytelling in the Fourth Gospel*, Estes and Sheridan, ed. (pdf posted on Bb).
- ◆ Show up on Zoom prepared to participate!

**Final Paper Due on Blackboard Friday July 16, by 11:59 p.m.**

- ◆ **John’s Gospel** (2-3 pages)
  - ◆ 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?) **FINAL PAPER -- 5 pages — due 11:59 p.m. Wednesday Nov. 11**
- ◆ **‘Putting It Together’** (5 pages)
  - ◆ 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.
- ◆ Consult the rubric on Bb for guidance on citation and formatting as well as criteria for grading.