

Wesley Theological Seminary
 Course of Study: Online January-February, 2024
First Discussion Board post due Jan. 8;
Required Zoom Sessions Jan. 20 and Feb. 17

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. Please identify the edition in your work.
- ◆ 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 the course.

Online Access:

This course will be entirely online. Students must access Blackboard regularly in order to complete 'Modules' A-E, including readings, videos, and discussion boards. Students must participate in two 2-hour Zoom sessions: **9-11 a.m. Saturday January 20 and 9-11 a.m. Saturday February 17**. If you have any questions about the syllabus or assignments, please email me.

Assignments and Assessment:

Ten percent of your final course grade will be based on presence and participation at the two Zoom sessions (Saturday January 20 and Saturday February 17).

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

Sixty percent of your final course grade will be based on posts/replies for the Prompted Discussion Boards. Each Module A-E will have one or more prompted discussion boards. Students must post/reply on *each* of these prompted discussion boards. Note: each discussion board bears a separate weight within this category, even if there are multiple boards within a single module. More detailed rubric and guidelines will be available on Blackboard.

Twenty-five percent of your final course grade will be based on your Final Paper due Wednesday February 21, 2023. 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.

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 December 4, 2022. Introductory material and Module A will be available at that time. Modules B-F will open in subsequent weeks on a schedule that provides at least two weeks between the opening of the module and the first due date for discussion board postings for that module. Acquire the books, review the module schedule and prompts below, and start the assignments now.

Module A: Gospel Contexts — Posts due Mon. Jan 8; Replies Thurs. Jan 11

- **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 Monday January 8** to discussion boards A.1 and A.2 (prompts below and on Bb). **Post a reply by Thursday January 11** on discussion board A.1 *and* A.2. Your posts should engage specifically with the assigned material, including readings/videos. Your reply on each board (A.1 and A.2) (*75 words*) should ask a question about the analysis; add an idea to the 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 similarities and 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? (*400 words; 15 points*)
- **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? (*300 words; 15 points*).

Module B: Mark — Post due Mon. Jan. 15; Replies due Thurs. Jan. 18**First Start-Your-Own Discussion Post due Thurs. Jan. 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 Monday January 15** to discussion board B (prompt below and on Bb). Your post should engage specifically with the assigned material, including readings/videos. **Reply by Thursday January 18** to **two** classmates’ posts. Your replies (*75 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,” i.e. Mark 16:1-8 (‘ ... for they were afraid.’)]. (*400 words; 25 points*)

Tiffany and Ringe —

- ◆ **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”).
 - ◆ **NOTE:** There is no separate video module/prompted discussion board for Tiffany/Ringe. The Tiffany/Ringe approach should inform the exegetical work you do on the prompted discussion boards for the Luke and John modules as well as your final paper. It will be discussed during our first Zoom session. You are highly encouraged to reference your thoughts on Tiffany/Ringe on the first Start-your-own discussion board due Thurs. Jan. 18. (See Start-your-own instructions below.)

First Zoom session and preparation —**◆ Start-your-own-discussion board: by Thursday January 18**

- ◆ What confused/surprised/challenged/delighted you most in the material covered in Modules A, B, and/or Tiffany/Ringe? Your post must be specific. The goal of this assignment is to better focus our time together on Zoom.
- ◆ Post (*150-200 words*) by **Thursday January 18**. Reply posts are welcome but not required.

◆ Attend Zoom session: 9-11 a.m. Saturday January 20**Module C: Matthew — Discussion Board Posts due Mon. Jan. 29; reply by Thurs. Feb. 1**

- ◆ **Read:** The Gospel of Matthew; Powell, ch. 6 (“Matthew”).
- ◆ **Watch:** *Module C/Matthew* on Blackboard
- ◆ **Respond by Monday January 29** to discussion boards **C.1 and C.2** (prompts below and on Bb). **Reply by Thursday February 1** on both discussion boards, C.1 and C.2. Your reply (*75 words each*) should ask a question about the analysis; add an idea to the analysis; or make a new connection between posts. (Reply on C.2 to a classmate who compared a *different* set of texts.)
 - ◆ **C.1:** What are some of the chief characteristics of the “Kingdom of Heaven” in the Gospel of Matthew? How does the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ described Matthew compare to the Roman Empire in which Jesus’ disciples (and the gospel writers) were living. How does it compare to the world in which Jesus’ disciples live today? (*350 words; 15 points*)
 - ◆ **C.2:** Choose ONE of the sets parallel passages from Matthew and Mark (below). Compare and contrast the passages: What words are used to tell the story? Who are the characters? What do they do/say? In what part of each gospel does the passage occur? What comes before and what comes after? How does each passage exemplify the larger themes of the particular gospel in which it’s found? Your post should discuss and analyze the two passages (do not provide a bullet list of similarities/differences). (*350 words; 15 points*)
 - ◆ Matthew 3:7-17//Mark 1:9-11
 - ◆ Matthew 12:9-14//Mark 3:1-6
 - ◆ Matthew 8:18-27//Mark 4:35-41

Module D: Luke — Post due Mon. Feb. 5; Reply due Thurs. Feb. 8

- ◆ **Read:** The Gospel of Luke; Powell, ch. 8 (“Luke”).
- ◆ **Watch:** *Module D/Luke* on Blackboard.
- ◆ **Respond: Monday Feb. 5** to discussion board D (prompt below and on Bb). Title your post with the text you are analyzing. **Reply by Thursday Feb. 8** to the post of a classmate who wrote on a *different* text. Your reply (*75 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 6:20-26
 - ◆ Luke 17:11-19, **or**
 - ◆ Luke 19:1-10.
 - ◆ *In 200 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 200 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?)
 - ◆ (*Total post length approx. 400 words; 30 points*)

**Module E: John — Discussion Board Posts due Mon. Feb. 12; Reply due Thurs. Feb. 15
Second Start-Your-Own Discussion Post due Thurs. Feb. 15**

- ◆ **Read:** The Gospel of John; Powell, ch.9 (“John”); *How John Works* (chapter on Blackboard).
- ◆ **Watch:** *Module E/John* on Blackboard.
- ◆ **Respond by Monday Feb. 12** to discussion boards E (prompt below and on Bb). Title your post with the text you are analyzing. **Reply by Thurs. Feb. 15** to a classmate who wrote about a *different* text. Your reply (*100 words each*) should ask a question about their analysis; add an idea to their analysis; or make a new connection between posts.
 - ◆ **E:** Choose **ONE** of the following passages from John:
 - ◆ John 3:1-21 (Jesus and Nicodemus),
 - ◆ John 6:24-35 (Jesus and the Bread), **or**
 - ◆ John 10:1-11 (“I am...” the Good Shepherd).
 - ◆ *In 200 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 200 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?)
 - ◆ (*Total post length approx. 400 words; 30 points*)

Second Zoom session and preparation —**◆ Start-your-own-discussion board: by Thursday February 15**

- ◆ What confused/surprised/challenged/delighted you most in the material covered in Modules C (Matthew), D (Luke) or E (John)? Your post must be specific.
- ◆ Post (*150-200 words*) by **Thursday February 15**. Reply posts are welcome but not required. The goal of this assignment is to better focus our time together on Zoom.
- ◆ **Attend Zoom session:** 9-11 a.m. Saturday February 17

FINAL PAPER -- 5 pages — due 11:59 p.m. Wednesday February 21

- ◆ 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 approximately five (5) pages/1500 words long. Consult the rubric on Bb for guidance on citation and formatting as well as criteria for grading.