

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

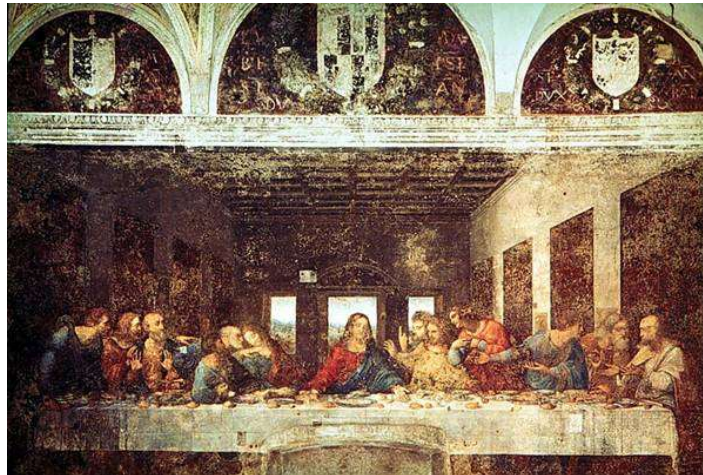
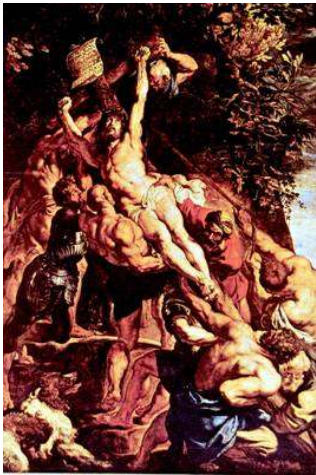
Degree Completion Program
Springfield, Missouri

Current Issues in Biblical Interpretation: Method, Madness, and Mark

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May 6—June 3, 2004
(3 Credits)

COURSE SYLLABUS



I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

A careful analysis of the Gospel according to Mark critiquing and judiciously utilizing the predominant methodological approaches to Gospel study. Emphasis will fall on the contribution of literary methods.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to enable the student to make informed judgments regarding the presuppositions and ultimate value of the major methodological approaches to Gospel study. Attention is given to the problematic assumptions and assertions of the Jesus Seminar. Specialized assignments guide the student in evaluating various analytical approaches by using insights developed and honed in the Evangelical tradition. The first part of the course deals with the historical nature of revelation as it pertains to the gospel witness. The second part discusses the nature of the gospel materials and focuses on their character as narrative. Part three outlines and evaluates the major analytical approaches to the study of the gospels. The final part of this course offers a careful interpretation of the Gospel of Mark making judicious use of the major methodological approaches but focusing primarily on literary methods. Our primary interest, however, is not in the documents themselves, but in the Central Figure of whom they testify: our Lord Jesus Christ! The gospels are historical documents to be sure, but they are not merely so; they are *stories* about JESUS! Through the ministry of Jesus they reflect God's world-view and challenge us to evaluate our lives in light of it.

This study is not an end in itself, but a means for you to develop attitudes and skills that will enable you to become a conscientious interpreter of God's word and a faithful representative of Christ. May God grant that we may be unashamed workmen for his kingdom's sake! Accordingly, upon the completion of this course, THE STUDENT should be able to:

Cognitive Domain Goals

1. Compare the Gospels with their close first-century generic neighbors and plot several hermeneutically significant features.
2. Compare source-, form-, redaction-, and literary-criticism in terms of their assumptions about history and their focused goals.
3. Evaluate the nature, working-assumptions, purpose, and value of the major analytical approaches to the Bible in terms of their faithfulness to a Biblical worldview.
4. Trace out the logical/chronological developmental line running through modern analytical methods, noting historical forces for change, shared assumptions and derived conclusions.
5. Produce an evangelical response to the issues raised by critical studies in general and to the Jesus Seminar in particular.
6. Compare the paradigms represented in the major analytical approaches with the postmodern paradigms of today.
7. Compare the rhetorical effect of Mark's Gospel on a male reader with that of a female reader (Jew/Gentile, Minority/Majority).
8. Develop a constructive methodology for preaching and teaching from the Gospels.

III. COURSE TEXTBOOKS

A. Required Texts

Camery-Hoggatt, Jerry. *Speaking of God: Reading and Preaching the Word of God*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*. NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996.

McKnight, Scot. *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.

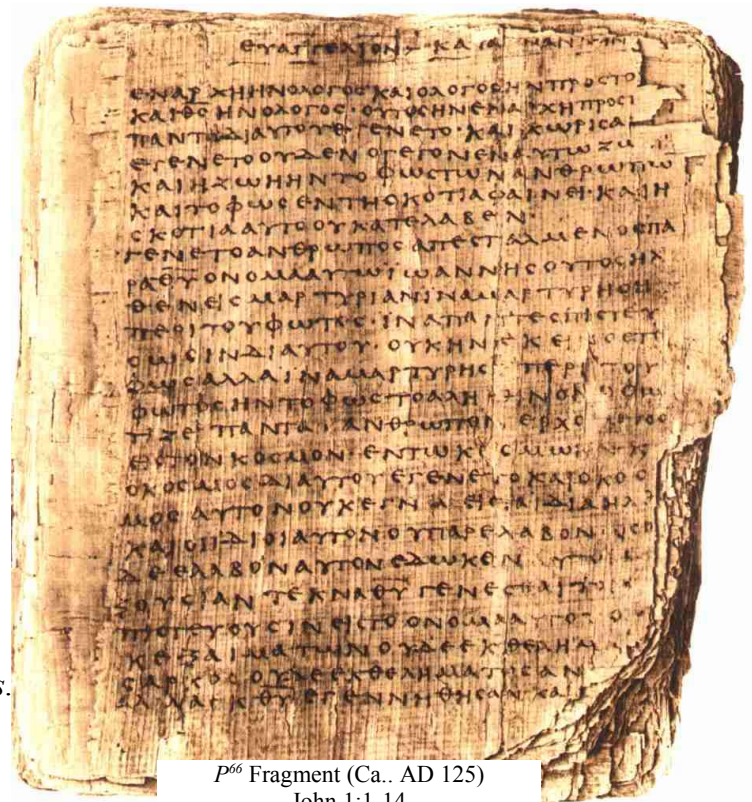
Merenlahti, Petri. *Poetics for the Gospels? Rethinking Narrative Criticism*. NY: T&T Clark, 2002.

Powell, Mark A. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991.

Rhoads, David, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*. 2nd Ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999.

9. Affective Domain Goals

1. Hold a deep respect for Scripture as God's inspired and authoritative standard for faith and practice.
2. Recognize and embrace the worldview of God as it is perfectly revealed in the person of His unique Son to whom the Gospels bear witness.
3. Understand and appropriate the attitudes and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ
4. Esteem matters of biblical introduction for their contribution to a proper understanding of the biblical documents.
5. Appreciate the complex process involved in the identification, preservation, and transmission of the Gospels, as well as God's providential handiwork in the product and process.
6. Embrace the multifaceted view of Jesus presented in the Gospels.



P⁶⁶ Fragment (Ca.. AD 125)
John 1:1-14

B. Recommended Resources for Additional Reading Assignments:

- Anderson, Janice Capel and Stephen D. Moore, eds. *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.
- Black, David Alan and David S. Dockery, eds. *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.

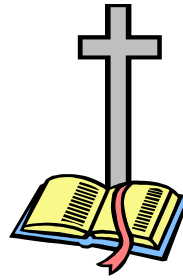
C. Other Recommended Resources:

- Allen, O. Wesley, Jr. *Reading the Synoptic Gospels: Basic Methods for Interpreting Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.
- Boomershine, Thomas. *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Evans, C. Stephen. *The Historical Christ & The Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Gerhardsson, Birger. *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001.
- Green, Joel B. and Scot McKnight., eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1992.
- Greidanus, Sidney. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Kingsbury, Jack Dean, ed. *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical and Social-Scientific Approaches*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997.
- Linnemann, Eta. *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?* Trans. Robert W. Yarbrough. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- Linnemann, Eta. *Is There a Synoptic Problem: Rethinking the Literary Dependence of the First Three Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Marsh, Clive and Steve Moyise. *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction*. Cassell Biblical Studies Series. London: Cassell, 1999.
- Moo, Douglas, ed. *The Gospel and Contemporary Perspectives: Viewpoints from Trinity Journal*. Biblical Forum Series, Vol. 2. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1997.
- Stegner, William Richard. *Narrative Theology in Early Jewish Christianity*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.
- Stein, Robert. *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*. 2nd edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.
- Soulen, Richard N. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*. 3rd ed. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1991.
- Thomas, Robert L. *Three Views on the Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2002.
- Tolmie, D. F. *Narratology and Biblical Narratives: A Practical Guide*. San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1999.
- Wilder, Amos N. *The Bible and the Literary Critic*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Weren, Wim. *Windows on Jesus: Methods in Gospel Exegesis*. Translated by John Bowden. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999.
- Wilkins, Michael J. and J.P. Moreland, eds. *Jesus Under Fire*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

DISCLAIMER: Suggested readings do **NOT** constitute an endorsement (by either the professor or AGTS) of any positions adopted in the textbook, supplemental readings, or articles.

IV. COURSE PROCEDURES

1. Lectures on class topics according to course schedule.
2. Guided discussion of issues related to topics covered in lectures and reading assignments.
3. Individual reading and research.
4. Reaction papers and seminar discussion.



V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is designed to introduce the participants to the major themes and issues of the Gospels as well as the insights of the Evangelical tradition for dealing with these issues. By critiquing both the methods themselves and our application of them, we will develop our capacity to analyze the world-view presented in the Gospels and make sound judgments regarding its import for citizens of God's kingdom.

Student grades are based on successful completion of the following learning tasks:

1. Class Participation.

Students should plan to attend every class session. Any exemptions due to extenuating circumstances will be handled in accordance with the attendance policy of the seminary. Your presence is essential for keeping up with the incipient knowledge base of the class and for the effectiveness of our weekly small-group seminar discussions. Come to each class prepared to make informed comments and to ask thoughtful questions that are relevant to the topics of discussion slated for that class. Think of your assignments as the raw materials that will enable you to be an active contributor in our collegial learning environment. If you must, pretend that you are being issued a salary bonus for every contribution you make to the class. But remember the (adapted) immortal words of the late President John F. Kennedy (or at least those of his speechwriter):

“And so, my fellow AGTSers, Ask NOT what your class can do for you! Ask . . .”

Give this class your best effort and God will surely bless you for it!

2. Timely completion of scheduled readings.

This requirement is a *sine qua non* for optimizing the learning potential for our class. We will be covering a lot of theological and methodological ground in a short span of time. Your diligent preparation will enable us to quickly reinforce previously encountered concepts and spend more time in critical dialogue over the issues raised in the readings. *Please be sure to complete the assignments for the first class prior to our meeting!*

3. Reaction Papers

Think of this assignment as if you were writing a review of the material for a scholarly journal. No more than half of the paper should house a concise summary of the contents of the article or book (or section of a book), leaving at least half for a balanced critique (agree or disagree with the contents and adduce supporting arguments; offer ways that an author's point could be legitimately extended, or suggest ways that it should be qualified or restricted; critique the author's logic, use of sources, thoroughness of data, etc. Do any of the author's assumptions or conclusions contradict the clear teaching of the Bible? If so, explain). Papers should be no less than four and no more than five pages in length and should reference specific points of the texts in the body of the paper as follows: (author, page). Please submit one copy to your professor and one copy to each of the members of your seminar group. Each student will present his/her critique before the seminar group and then field questions, comments, and critiques. Remember, some reading assignments present far more information than can be summarized in the space allotted. Be selective. Choose what you feel are the most valuable aspects.

4. Final Project:

Write an essay (5-8 pages) that answers **ONE** of the following questions:

VIII.COURSE OUTLINE AND OBJECTIVES

U N I T	O B J E C T I V E S
<p style="text-align: center;">W E E K 1</p> <p>Literary Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of the Synoptic Materials • Goal of Synoptic Studies • Synoptic “Problem” • Historical Criticism 	<p>Read McKnight, 13-44; Dockery, 272-77, 336-54; Johnson, 29-177; (optional: Thomas, 8-388; Linnemann, <i>Bib Crit on Trial</i>, 18-73)</p> <p>At the conclusion of these lectures and reading assignments, you should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain what is meant by the “Synoptic problem.” 2. Evaluate the theories to explain the relationships among the Gospels and offer your conclusions. 3. Produce an evangelical response to the issues raised by critical studies in general and to the synoptic problem in particular. 4. Distinguish various views of history and determine where each coincides with or departs from a Biblical perspective.
<p style="text-align: center;">W E E K 2</p> <p>Critical Methodologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source Criticism • Form Criticism • Redaction Criticism • Literary Criticism 	<p>Read McKnight, 57-96, 121-37; Dockery, 74-161; Merenlahti, 1-58</p> <p>At the conclusion of these lectures and reading assignments, you should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define the nature, working-assumptions, purpose, and method of source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and literary criticism. 2. Evaluate each of the methodologies in terms of the legitimacy of their goal and the strengths and weaknesses of their approach. 3. Define the nature, working-assumptions, purpose, and method of literary criticism in general and narrative criticism in particular. 4. Produce an evangelical response to the issues raised by these critical approaches. 5. Apply a given methodology to a particular section of gospel text.
<p style="text-align: center;">W E E K 3</p> <p>Narrative Criticism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of language • Characters, events, settings 	<p>Read Camery-Hoggatt, 1-12; Powell, 1-101.; Merenlahti, 61-130</p> <p>At the conclusion of these lectures and reading assignments, you should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the literary and stylistic characteristics of the Gospel of Mk and assess the significance of these features for interpretation. 2. Evaluate the contribution that an understanding of Mark’s beginning and ending makes to a right interpretation of his its message. 3. Using the narrative perspective of characterization, construct a profile of specific characters or character groups in Mark’s Gospel. What role do these portrayals of characters serve in Mark’s story of Jesus?
<p style="text-align: center;">W E E K 4</p> <p>Narrative Criticism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Reading Experience • Ambiguity, Polyvalence • Anointing Woman 	<p>Read Camery-Hoggatt, 47-174; Rhoads, 39-97;</p> <p>At the conclusion of these lectures and reading assignments, you should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the connection between the commissioning episode and the H-B episode. 1. Discuss the significance of narrative order in Mark’s account of the H-B episode. 2. Use socio-cultural backgrounds to explain the incident of the anointing woman. 3. Describe the function of the Anointing Woman episode in Mark’s Gospel. 4. Using the narrative features described by C-H and Rhoads identify other examples from Mark’s Gospel and demonstrate their exegetical significance.
<p style="text-align: center;">W E E K 5</p> <p>Mark & Literary Criticism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Text to Sermon • Reader-Response Criticism • Feminist Criticism • Social Criticism 	<p>Read Rhoads, 98-150; Camery-Hoggatt, 177-262; Anderson, 50-84; 103-135; 135-159.</p> <p>At the conclusion of these lectures and reading assignments, you should be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a sermon using the strategies presented by C-H that derive the rhetoric of the sermon from the rhetoric of the text. 2. Evaluate the stated and unstated assumptions that Fowler makes regarding the reader of Mark’s Gospel. 3. Evaluate the conclusions that Anderson makes regarding the dance of Salome at Herod’s banquet. 4. Develop a reasonable cognitive grid that will help someone determine what is valuable from the feminist perspective and what is dangerous 5. Apply the general concepts related to the social structures and strictures in the first-century world noted by Rhoads to other passages in Mark’s Gospel..

IX. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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D. Literary Approaches

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F. Sermon on the Mount

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G. Miracles

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DISCLAIMER: Citation of the works in this bibliography **DOES NOT** constitute endorsement (by the professor or AGTS) of any positions adopted therein.