

NT 500 SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

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An office in St. Andrew's Hall has been kindly made available to the instructor by the Dean of St. Andrew's Hall. The instructor will keep office hours and will be available for appointments in that office.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a critical study of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) and related literature (for example, The Gospel of Thomas) and the issues entailed in interpreting them in their ancient context and appropriating their meaning for multiple contemporary contexts. It is hoped that all students will develop an appropriately critical and respectful attitude towards the Synoptic Gospels as a key part of the scriptures of a major world religion, namely Christianity. Some students will also be aiming towards ministry in a variety of traditions within Christianity. For these students, the scriptures, including the Synoptic Gospels, will have a key role in shaping both their character as disciples of Jesus Christ and their ministry. Attention will therefore be paid from time to time to the complex issues that arise when an ancient text serves as scripture which shapes ministry in the contemporary world. As this is not a course that primarily concerns the various quests for the historical Jesus, the main focus of the course is on the appropriation of memories associated with Jesus as well as traditions arising from him. The course will explore the various uses of history, memory, tradition, and theology in the complex social matrices in which earliest Christianity began to emerge. Finally, it is hoped that the course will awaken respect for and in some students a desire to participate in the painstaking work of advanced Biblical scholarship.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Competence Objectives

- To demonstrate an introductory knowledge of the history of the New Testament period and an understanding of the Synoptic Gospels as historically rooted texts.
- To demonstrate a knowledge of the Greek alphabet and basic grammatical forms sufficient to recognize words in scholarly resources and to make use of those resources.
- To display an introductory knowledge of the content, arrangement, theological themes and major critical problems of the Synoptic Gospels.
- To demonstrate an awareness of the presuppositions and pre-understandings we bring to a study of Biblical texts.
- To demonstrate in an introductory way an understanding of the presuppositions and methods of various exegetical and hermeneutical approaches.
- To learn and to practice exegetical skills and to develop a set of exegetical questions with which one may approach Biblical texts.

- To apply major critical approaches in an introductory manner in an exegetical paper.

Format

One three-hour class weekly, mixed lectures, exercises and discussion periods.

Content

September

16 Introduction to the Course, Introduction to Hermeneutical Issues, The Language of the New Testament

23 The Language of the New Testament Continued, The History of the New Testament Era, Manuscripts and Versions, The Work of Textual Criticism. Read the Gospel of Mark.

30 The Synoptic Problem – Source Criticism. Read the Gospels of Matthew and Luke,

October

Critical Methods

7 The Pre-history of the Text and its Genres – Form Criticism

14 The Evangelists as Theologians: Redaction Criticism. Students should have completed reading *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism* by this point.

21 Literary Approaches to the gospels: Narrative Criticism

28 Reading week – no classes

November

4. The Turn to the Interpreter and the Interpretive Community: Reader Response Criticism, Liberation and Feminist Readings. **Note:** Before this class students ought to have read *In Memory of Her* pp.1-154, 315-334

11. The Bible as the Church's Book: A Canonical Approach, Read INT pp. 589-608

An overview of the Synoptic Gospels

18. Matthew (Reread the gospel of Matthew) Note: By this point students ought to have completed reading *Shadow of the Galilean*.

25. Mark (Reread the Gospel of Mark).

December

2. Luke (reread the Gospel of Luke).
9. Examination week. All assignments due December 11.

Expectations, Assignments and Evaluative Criteria

*Please do not come to class without your Bible! Always bring A land's Synopsis (see below) and be sure that you are in a position to annotate your copy of the work.

1. 80% class attendance, evidence of preparation for class and class participation This means that absence for more than two sessions, in whole or in part, will constitute a Not Approved for the course. In the case of absence, the student will submit a 2-page single spaced précis of the prior week's lecture, submitted at the start of the following class. It is expected that comments and questions will show adequate preparation, an understanding of the assigned readings and exercises and a readiness to apply readings to interpretive questions and insights. 10% of total grade.
2. Weekly, one page journal reflection exercises focusing on the material covered in the lecture of the week. They will not be graded, but submission will be recorded. In order to gain credit for this course assigned exercises must be submitted by the start of each meeting date and any missed assignments must be completed by the last day of class. Journals must be submitted electronically. Please attend to the rubrics outlined in the guide to email submissions, which will be distributed early in the term. It is expected that reflections will show personal involvement with the material, understanding of the concepts involved and clear and concise writing. Imagine that you are explaining to an intelligent teenager what you are thinking and why it is important. 15% of grade
3. One 3000-3750 words/ 12-15 page word paper (Text to Interpretation) that uses 10 bibliographical entries beyond the course texts as research resources on either a parable, a miracle story, a pronouncement story, or on other material sometimes called "legendary" (birth, passion, resurrection, transfiguration narrative), as that pericope relates with primary reference to one Gospel narrative. Papers that are less than or exceed 10% of the assigned length (not including bibliography) will be returned for remediation. Sheets with bibliography on each of these genres and descriptions of what constitutes a Text to Interpretation paper will be distributed in class. The paper is due Friday, 11 December. This is a strict deadline and only in exceptional cases will there be extensions beyond this date. Students are encouraged to begin their work on their papers early in the term and to familiarize themselves with the Academic Calendar in requesting extensions. Email submissions are required except in extraordinary circumstances and must conform to protocol regulations defined by the instructor. Only PDF or Microsoft Word versions will be accepted. VST requires students to adhere to the stylistic protocols outlined in Kate L. Turabian, et al., eds. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, Eighth Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). An electronic citation guide may be found at www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Bibliographies that do not conform to that or another recognized format will be returned for correction. This is a research paper. Students are strongly encouraged to use resources available at Regent College as well as UBC, and to begin their research before Reading Week. All electronic resources must be properly cited. It is expected that students will display an

understanding of the material at a level appropriate to an introductory graduate level course.
50% of grade

4. A weekly posting to the course-dedicated website listing 2 library or electronic resources related to further study of the focus of that week's lecture. It is expected that the resources thus gathered will be of potential assistance to other students in the class. 5% of grade

5. A final exam during exam week that will comprise Greek alphabet recognition, Synoptic passage identification, definitions, and short essay questions from a list of optional questions. It is expected that answers will be accurate, clear and concise. 20% of grade

Course Policies

1. Attendance For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For on-campus students, this means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason. For distance students, this means attending class through Adobe Connect synchronously with class with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason.

2. Reading and assignments Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.

3. Academic honesty Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.

4. Inclusive language In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of titles and metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.

5. Assignment and Course Evaluation

This course follows the normal grading policies of VST. Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.

Major individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.

For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

6. Late assignments Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

If three or more of the course assignments are submitted late, without the permission of the instructor, the final grade will be reduced by one mark (a B+ becomes a B) with further reductions possible for very late assignments.

7. Limitation on use of social media Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand. Use of electronic devices for other purposes such as social media is disrespectful of fellow students, the instructor and the material.

8. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

Bibliography

In some instances students may secure used copies of these books by on-line distributors.

Note: Our primary texts are the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke.

Please also note that Aland's Synopsis is required for the first day of class.

Required:

A Bible – preferably a critical study Bible in a translation of choice (for example, NRSV; NIV; New English Bible; etc.), but no paraphrases and no pocket-sized editions. An excellent Bible for the study of the Synoptic Gospels is Amy Jill-Levine, ed., *The Annotated Jewish New Testament*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) ISBN 978-0195297706

Students may use in class Bible texts found in specialized programmes such as Bibleworks or equivalent.

Aland, Kurt. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Hendrickson, 2006). ISBN 978-1598561777

Fredriksen, Paula and Reinhartz, Adele. *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002) ISBN 978-0664223281

Pregeant, Russell. *Engaging the New Testament: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998). ISBN 978-0800631154

Schussler-Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) ISBN 978-0824513573

Theissen, Gerd. *Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest for the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) ISBN 0800639006

Recommended:

Soulen, Richard N. *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: John Knox/Westminster, 2003). ISBN 978-0664223144