

NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION

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New Testament 1: Synoptic Gospels ISP-NTX500

SUMMER, 2026

JULY 13 – 17, 9AM – 12PM PST

PURPOSE

This course is a comparative study of the Synoptic Gospels on the basis of the English text. The Gospels' characteristics, themes, theology, portrayal of Jesus, and literary context will be discussed.

PREREQUISITES

N/A

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES

- Gain confidence in reading and understanding the synoptic gospels
- Understand the unique contributions of each synoptic gospel
- Engage in and present in written form a responsible exegetical paper comparing a passage that occurs in 2 (or 3) synoptic gospels.
- Engage in a spiritual and theological reflection on a gospel passage

FORMAT AND CONTENT

The course will run from Monday to Friday, July 13–17, from 9-12 (PST), constituting 15 hours of class time. There is a required textbook that will be read for the course, 3 reflection assignments, and one major research paper.

TEXTS

Perkins, Pheme. *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.

RESERVES

Blomberg, Craig L. *Jesus and the Gospels: An introduction and Survey*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.

Griffith-Jones, Robin. *The Four Witnesses: The Rebel, the Rabbi, the Chronicler, and the Mystic*. San Francisco, Cali.: Harper, 2000.

Licona, Michael R. *Why Are There Differences in the Gospels?: What We Can Learn from Ancient Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

- Malina, Bruce J. and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Throckmorton, Burton Hamilton. *Gospel Parallels: a Comparison of the Synoptic Gospels: with Alternative Readings from the Manuscripts and Noncanonical Parallels*. 5th ed. ed. Nashville, Tenn.: T Nelson, 1992.
- Watson, Francis. *The Fourfold Gospel: a Theological Reading of the New Testament Portraits of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016.

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Attendance** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.
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 metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation**
 - 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.
 - 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.

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.

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. Please do your utmost to stay engaged during our time together on Zoom.

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.

CALENDAR

July 13

- Introduction to the course
- textbook Ch.1

July 14

- The origin of the synoptic gospels
- textbook chs. 2–3

July 15

- Unique characteristics of each synoptic gospel
- textbook ch. 4

July 16

- synoptic readings pt. 1

- textbook ch. 5

July 17

- synoptic readings pt. 2
- textbook ch. 6

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

1. Read through the Gospel of Mark	5%	JUL 11
<i>Read through the Gospel of Mark in one sitting</i>		
2. Complete reading of Perkins text	15%	AUG 5
3. Passage 1 Reflection	15%	AUG 10
<i>In 750–1,000 words, write a personal reflection* on a particular passage in conversation with the textbooks and your local context and Indigenous worldview.</i>		
4. Passage 2 Reflection	15%	AUG 20
<i>In 750–1,000 words, write a personal reflection on a particular passage in conversation with the textbooks and your local context and Indigenous worldview.</i>		
5. Passage 3 Reflection	15%	AUG 30
<i>In 750–1,000 words, write a personal reflection on a particular passage in conversation with the textbooks and your local context and Indigenous worldview.</i>		
6. Research Paper	35%	SEP 30
<i>Submit a formal research paper of 8–9 pages on a passage of your choice from the synoptic gospels, preferably a story that occurs in all three synoptic gospels, or at least two of them. Be sure to use VST's recommended formatting for citations. The bibliography for your paper should consist of 2–3 academic commentaries and 4–7 journal articles, essays, or monographs, and your two textbooks.</i>		

* A personal reflection essay should connect your learning from the assigned prior readings to your life experience. The learning should be significant and relevant, and statements should be based on evidence and supported with examples. Include points on why and how your attitudes and behaviours may be changed, and consider also how your character and skills may be affected. And of course it should be well written.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE PASSAGES CHOSEN SHOULD BE DIFFERENT FOR ASSIGNMENTS 3 THROUGH 6.

COMMENTARIES FROM THE NON-WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

Despite the fact that most of Christianity now resides in the majority world, the bulk of biblical scholarship is still created by western scholars (residing primarily in Europe and North America). While western scholarship is an incredible wealth of information, we often risk primarily listening to and dialoguing with western, largely male, scholarship. Consulting with these other voices will help you to engage with the diverse range of voices in biblical scholarship.

- The Asia Bible Commentary Series. Currently 6 volumes for the New Testament. [Amazon](#) [Logos](#)
- Esau McCaulley, et al. *The New Testament in Color*. [Amazon](#)
- Segovia, Fernando F., and Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah. 2009. *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*. Vol. 13. Bloomsbury. [Amazon](#)
- Adeyemo, Tokunboh. 2006. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive. [Amazon](#) [Logos](#)
- Newsom, Carol A, Sharon H Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. revised edition. 2012. [Amazon](#) [Logos](#)
- Brian K. Blount, CH Felder, CJ Martin, and EB Powery, eds. *True to Our Native Land: an African American New Testament Commentary* (Fortress Press, 2007). [Amazon](#) [Logos](#)
- Wintle, B. (2015). *South Asia Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. [Amazon](#) [Logos](#)