

(subject to minor changes prior to beginning of term)

Dr. Nick Meyer | nmeyer5@uwo.ca

Wednesdays 9:30-12:30 | Rm ###

A. Course Description

The course encourages students to apply methods of interpretation learned in the introductory course. General issues pertaining to all three Synoptic Gospels will be considered, followed by treatments of each Gospel separately. Basic issues such as genre, authorship, date, place, and characteristic themes will be addressed, while an emphasis will be placed upon Christology and use of Scripture. Students will also be introduced to early Christian interpretation of the Gospels as well as to the Apocryphal Gospels.

B. Course Goals

This course will assist students to grow in the following knowledge, skills, and attitudes:

Knowledge

- deep acquaintance with the distinctive themes, concerns, and theological contributions of each of the Synoptic Gospels
- familiarity with the scholarly discussion surrounding the origins, genre, and study of the Synoptic Tradition
- familiarity with the traditions of the Church regarding the interpretation of the Gospel tradition

Skills

- ability to read the Synoptic Gospels well as Christian Scripture, which requires:
 - attention to the plain sense of the texts as recovered through close reading and historical investigation
 - attention to their appropriation of Scriptural symbols and tradition
 - attention to the theological substance of the text and its reception in the Church
- ability to make effective use of this literature both in the promotion of the gospel and in the building up of the saints

Attitudes

- the cultivation of a generous Catholic approach to the study and interpretation of Scripture, that is, one which is guided by the major Church documents on scriptural interpretation and the Living Tradition of the Church and one which is informed by ecumenical biblical scholarship
- the cultivation of a love of Scripture which is consonant with the fundamental command articulated by Jesus in the Gospels, namely, to love God and neighbour

C. Course Materials

Required – readily available through the usual sellers; print copies are highly recommended

- Burridge, Richard A. *Four Gospels, One Jesus?: A Symbolic Reading*. 3rd edition. London: SPCK Publishing, 2013.
- Gathercole, Simon, ed. *The Apocryphal Gospels*. London: Penguin Classics, 2022.

Recommended

- Green, Joel B., Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Second edition. The IVP Bible Dictionary Series. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2013.
- Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016.
- A Synopsis of the Four Gospels, such as Crook, Zeba A. *Parallel Gospels: A Synopsis of Early Christian Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Relevant volumes in *The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*, Baker Academic.

D. Course Evaluation

Notebook 20%

Students will keep a notebook in which they document important information and insights from each week's readings. Furthermore, for each Gospel covered, they should have a section on background (date, authorship, etc), structure, distinctive themes, and stylistic features. They will submit a digital copy *prior* to each class. Each week's notes should be the equivalent of at least one type-written page, 12 pt. font.

Synoptic Exercises 25%

Students will complete five synoptic underlining exercises, as indicated in the course schedule. Instructions will be distributed in the first weeks of class. Exercises will be graded based upon demonstrated understanding of the nature of the exercise and care in the completion of the assignment.

Research Essay 30%

Students will write a 10-page essay on a text from one of the Synoptic Gospels. While they may choose to focus on a passage as it appears in any one Gospel, they should also demonstrate an awareness of any significant differences where there are parallel accounts. Their essay should relate the text to the overall narrative aims of the Gospel, describe its role in its specific narrative setting, and address any ambiguities of interpretation, providing a rationale for the one chosen. They will consult and reference at least four modern academic commentaries. Students will thus demonstrate an ability to engage with modern scholarship on the Gospels in an effort to uncover the plain sense meaning of the text in a carefully written research paper.

Formatting and style should follow the guidelines available at the following page on the [Seminary Website](#) (proceed to "Style Guide").

Cumulative Assignment 20%

Students will write a cumulative assignment in which they will demonstrate the level of their success in meeting the course goals through several carefully written short essays.

E. Course Schedule

September 11: Setting of the Synoptic Gospels: History, Geography, and Politics in First Century Judea

- Read the first nine articles linked to here: “[A Portrait of Jesus’ World](#)”

September 18: Origins and Study of the Synoptic Gospels: Early Traditions, Modern Theories, Modern Approaches

- Burridge, “Four Gospels,…” pp. 1-33
- International Q Project, Introduction and Text, pdf on website
- Mark Goodacre, “[Ten Reasons to Question Q](#)”

September 25: Mark’s Gospel

- The Gospel of Mark
- Nicholas Perrin, “Mark, Gospel of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 553-566, pdf
- Helen K. Bond, “Mark’s Gospel as the First Biography,” at [The Bible and Interpretation](#)

Synoptic Exercise #1: The Baptism of Jesus and Preaching of John

October 2: Mark’s Gospel, cont’d

Burridge, “The Roar of the Lion – Mark’s Jesus,” pp. 35-65

Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 1-6, 15-24, 61-62, 70-73

October 9: Matthew’s Gospel

- The Gospel of Matthew
- Jeannine K. Brown, “Matthew, Gospel of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 570-584

Synoptic Exercise #2: Stilling the Storm

October 12-20 Fall Reading Week

October 23: Matthew’s Gospel, cont’d

- Burridge, “The Teacher of Israel – Matthew’s Jesus,” pp. 67-99

Synoptic Exercise #3: The Syro-Phoenician Woman

October 30: Luke’s Gospel

- The Gospel of Luke
- Joel B. Green, “Luke, Gospel of” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 540-552

Synoptic Exercise #4: The Transfiguration

November 6: Luke's Gospel, cont'd

- Burridge, "The Bearer of Burdens – Luke's Jesus," pp. 101-131

Synoptic Exercise #5: The Death of Jesus

November 13: Interpretation of the Gospels in the First Millennium

- "Interpreting the New Testament," xi-xix, by Robert Luis Wilken, and "An Introduction to Matthew," xx-xiv by Daniel H. Williams, in *Matthew: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018. Online [here](#).
- In class we will look at a sample of interpretations of texts from Matthew's Gospel

Major Essay Due

November 20: Apocryphal Gospels: Supplementary Gospels

- Gathercole, "Introduction," ix-xxxvi
- The Protoevangelium of James, Gathercole, pp. 3-21
- The Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Gathercole, pp. 29-39
- The Gospel of Peter, Gathercole, pp. 205-211

November 27: Apocryphal Gospels: Subversive Gospels

- The Gospel of Thomas, Gathercole, pp. 45-70
- The Gospel of Judas, Gathercole, pp. 192-204
- The Gospel of Truth, Gathercole, pp. 319-337

December 4: Wrap Up

- Burridge, "...One Jesus?" pp. 165-182