THEO 264-01 Synoptic Gospels

James Merritt
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Instructor Information

Course Instructor: James (Fred) Merritt
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Office Telephone: (513) 745-3219
(513) 907-2792 [Cell] to be used only in emergencies
Office: Hinkle Hall Room 114
Office Hours: Available for in-person by appointment for virtual meetings M-F, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. You can expect a response to email or voicemail within 24 hours M-F. Since I normally will not be on campus, any in-person appointment request must be made at least 48 hours before requested meeting date/time.

Course Information

Course Description

The goals of this course are five-fold:
1. To introduce students to the historical and cultural background of the canonical gospels;
2. To examine the nature of the relationship between the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as distinct from the gospel of John;
3. To explore the distinctive theological emphases of each of the synoptic gospels;
4. To provide students with the opportunity to read and dialogue with these texts from the perspective of the contemporary world; and
5. To introduce students to basic tools of and interpretive approaches to scripture study. A first step towards attaining these objectives is to consider the gospels individually, i.e. as distinctive writings, each with its own purpose and literary character. A second step is to develop the skill of asking questions the text is capable of answering and to exercise the patience and perception that will allow the text to answer the questions on its own terms. Our approach presupposes that the books of the Bible are religious documents, the foundation of Judaism and Christianity, i.e. their Scripture.

The course has nine modules, with scheduled assignments due throughout. Assignment due dates are normally Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday.
Course Learning Outcomes

After this course students will be able to:

- Integrate the historical and cultural background of the canonical gospels into their interpretive approaches of the Synoptic Gospels.

- Construct the nature of the relationships between the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as distinct from the Gospels of Thomas and John.
  Why aren’t the Gospels of Thomas and John considered as Synoptic Gospels?
  What identifiers are there in Matthew, Mark and Luke that are not in Thomas and John?

- Hypothesize distinctive theological emphases of each of the Synoptic Gospels.

- Re-imagine the Synoptic Gospels from the perspective of the contemporary world.

- The Synoptic Gospels for First Century people who were Agricultural people with Dyadic personalities.
  How do the Synoptic Gospels connect with us twenty-first Century people who are Technology based with Individualistic personalities?

- Devise some basic tools of interpretive approaches to scripture study.

Course Materials

**Required Texts**


Additional course materials will be made available through Canvas.

**Time Commitment Expectations**

This course is ten (10) weeks in duration with a few hours required prior to the beginning of the course for introductory activities, and is entirely online. Plan to spend a minimum of 10-12 hours per week (probably more during some weeks) working on the course. Students are expected to log on to the course 4-5 days per week to complete the required assignments. Try to let 48 hours be your maximum absence from the course.
If you find that you have any trouble keeping up with assignments or other aspects of the course, make sure you let the course instructor know as early as possible.

Technical Requirements

- Internet connection (DSL, LAN, or cable connection desirable)
- Access to Canvas through a supported Web browser (recent version of Firefox, Chrome or IE).
- Check your computer against Xavier’s suggested minimum computer requirements: [http://www.xavier.edu/ts/students/Computer-Recommendations.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/ts/students/Computer-Recommendations.cfm)

Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Canvas, contact the HELP Desk at (513) 745-HELP/4357 or visit the [HELP Desk Web site](http://www.xavier.edu).
Course Schedule

Each module consists of learning activities and the assignments listed below. Activities should be completed sequentially within the timeframe designated for each module. Activity and assignment details will be explained within the corresponding course modules in Canvas. If you have any questions, please contact the course instructor. Each module will open three days before it is scheduled to begin.

Start Here (opens October 3, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 10/9 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Discussion: Introduce Yourself</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: 10/10 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Quiz: Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 10/12 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Introduce Yourself</td>
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</table>

Module 1: Historical and Cultural Background (Oct. 12-25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 10/14 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Discussion: Honor and Shame in the First-Century Personality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: 10/16 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Honor and Shame in the First-Century Personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 10/25 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Quiz: Perception of Limited Good</td>
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Module 2: The Synoptic Gospels: An Introduction (Oct. 26-Nov. 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 10/28 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Discussion: The Social/Cultural World of Jesus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: 10/30 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – The Social/Cultural World of Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/1 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Quiz: In the Background of the Gospels</td>
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Module 3: Listen to the Gospel of Mark / Why Write a Gospel? (Nov. 2 - Nov. 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 11/4 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Online Conference: Hearing the Gospel of Mark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/6 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Jewish &amp; Gentile hearing the Gospel of Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/8 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Jewish &amp; Gentile hearing the Gospel of Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/8 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Quiz: Why Write a Gospel?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 11/11 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Discussion: Reading the Gospel of Matthew</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/13 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Reading the Gospel of Matthew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/15 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Quiz: Why Revise a Gospel?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 11/18 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Discussion: Reading the Gospel of Luke</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due: 11/20 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Reading the Gospel of Luke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 11/22 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Quiz: Why Expand a Gospel?</td>
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### Module 6: The Q Gospel / Sayings Gospel (Nov 23 - Nov 24)

| Due: 11/24 at 11:59 p.m. | Assignment: Essay on the Q Gospel / Sayings Gospel |

### Module 7: The Parables in the Synoptic Gospels (Nov 30 - Dec 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 12/2 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Assignment: Gospel Groups</th>
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<tr>
<td>Due: 12/2 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Comparing Mark, Matthew, &amp; Luke Parables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due: 12/4 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Comparing Mark, Matthew, &amp; Luke Parables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 12/5 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Assignment: Gospel Discussion Peer Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 12/5 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Comparing the Parables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due: 12/6 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Response – Comparing the Parables</td>
</tr>
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### Module 8: The Gospel of Thomas (Dec 7 - Dec 10)

| Due: 12/10 at 11:59 p.m. | Assignment: Essay on the Gospel of Thomas |

### Module 9: "Four" Gospels in Parallel (Dec 11 - Dec 17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due: 12/13 at 11:59 p.m.</th>
<th>Assignment: &quot;Four&quot; Gospel Parallels Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due: 12/15 at 11:59 p.m.</td>
<td>Discussion: Comparing &quot;Four&quot; Gospel Parallels</td>
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</table>
Due: 12/16 at 11:59 p.m.  
Assignment: "Four" Gospel Parallels Discussion Peer Review

Due: 12/18 at 11:59 p.m.  
Discussion: Comparing the “Four” Gospel Parallels

Note: The schedule is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. You are expected to check announcements regularly and adhere to the established course deadlines.

Grading Policy

Graded Course Activities

Major assignments for the course, as well as course participation, are required and will factor into your grade for the course. Each Assignment, Discussion, or Quiz is assigned a certain number of Points. The final grade will be determined by the sum of the actual number of Points earned divided by the total number of Points available.

Grading Guidelines / Scales: The Theology Department has adopted the following grading scale:

- F (=67 and below): insufficient to pass. With respect to class participation, the student shows lack of interest in the course, is frequently late or absent, and regularly demonstrates a lack of commitment to the class.

- D (=68-75): Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass. With respect to class participation, the student is minimally prepared for class and shows a lack of interest in the course material.

- C (=76-83): Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline). With respect to class participation, the student is inconsistently prepared for class and is infrequently engaged with the material.

- B (=84-91): Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard.) With respect to class participation, the student is prepared for class and demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the material.

- A (=92-100): Exceptional academic performance (that is, uncommonly high academic achievement, which demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, uncommon skills in critical analysis and effective communication, and imagination.) With respect to class
participation, the student is consistently well prepared for class, actively listens, and contributes thought-provoking insights.

Viewing Grades

All assignments are complete or incomplete. Feedback will also be provided.

Grade Posting Policy

In general, you should expect to receive feedback on assignments within 72 hours of submission. Exceptions to this will noted in the course announcements in Canvas.

Assignment Submission

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas or unless otherwise instructed.

Late Work/Make-Up Work

It is expected students will complete all assignments by the posted deadlines. Contribution from all students is crucial in an online course. Completing and turning in assignments late will impact your ability to keep up with the course and to benefit from the contributions of your fellow students. If there is an issue with completing an assignment on time, please contact the course instructor.

Incomplete Policy

Please contact the course instructor if you feel you are unable to complete the course requirements according to the deadlines.

Course Policies/Guidelines

Netiquette

The discussion boards are created to provide an opportunity for students to actively engage in meaningful conversation on a particular topic or issue. You are encouraged to provide your honest viewpoint, but be respectful of the views of your classmates.

Do’s

1. Do use correct grammar and spelling.
2. Do read the prompt, reflect on what you would like to say, and review what you’ve written before posting!
3. Do respect the privacy, beliefs, and opinions of your classmates.
4. Do challenge each other’s ideas but not each other personally.
5. Do remember to treat others as you would want to be treated.
6. Do stick to the discussion prompt at hand when posting to a forum.
7. Do use humor and sarcasm carefully. Students cannot see your facial expressions or hear any voice inflections.

**Don’ts**
1. Don’t type in ALL CAPS. This is regarded as shouting.
2. Don’t rant or flame. This is not the place to vent your anger or start a fight.
3. Don’t make inappropriate comments. Objectionable, sexist, or racist language will not be tolerated.

In the discussion forums you will post assignments and discuss your work with others in the class or in your groups. These are public forums, so whatever is posted can be seen by everyone in the course, including the instructor. If you want to send a private message, use individual email. The Class Lounge discussion forum is a public space for conversation with your classmates on any topic or question.

**University Policies**

**Academic Honesty Policy**

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited, as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

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Students with Disabilities

Any participant who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should notify the course facilitator and contact Cassandra Jones in the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 or e-mail jonesc20@xavier.edu to coordinate reasonable accommodations.