2014

265-01/02 The Gospel of Mark

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Course Description: This course introduces students to the first gospel of the New Testament, commonly called the Gospel of Mark. To understand a gospel text, one must understand the historical milieu in which it was written; the purpose the text strove to serve; the manners in which the text was transmitted and received; and the multiplicity of ways the text has been interpreted, studied, and translated. In this course, students will read the gospel using the tools of historical criticism, narrative criticism, reader-response criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and source criticism.

Course requirements: There is a considerable amount of dense, yet fascinating reading for this course. Students will need to read the Gospel of Mark a minimum of three times before the end of the four weeks of class, and thereafter to read specific pericopes (passages) in preparation for in-class explication and discussion. Substantive secondary readings are assigned thematically and often can be spread out over several weeks. See below for the reading schedule, which is meant to be a rudimentary guide. The instructor will identify specific pericopes for in-class discussion one class period before they are to be prepared. Students who do not attend class with the requisite reading completed will find themselves at a severe disadvantage. This is not a "blow-off" course!

Attendance There are no points awarded for attending class, as this is a basic requirement. Miss class at your own peril.

Reading report/discussion guides, in-class explication exercises, and participation: (400 points) These will assist students in contextualizing secondary reading, documentary films, and specific pericopes to be explored in class. Students are encouraged strongly to purchase a binder in which to keep these materials, along with the extensive number of handouts/PowerPoints associated with this course. Relevant guides/in-class exercises will be turned in to the instructor with each exam. Students are expected to participate in class discussion, and to post comments on Blackboard (more about this as the semester unfolds).

Guides to be handed in as required assignments (due at the time of correlating exams):

1. Reading Report on Marcus Borg’s Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary (250 points)

2. Narratology and Reader-Response Criticism Guide #1 (75 points)
3. Narratology and Reader-Response Criticism Guide #2 (75 points)

Three exams (150 points; 250 points; and 350 points, respectively). The first exam will cover historical criticism/Christology; the second exam will concern narratology and reader-response criticism; the final exam will focus on the Passion narratives, utilizing a variety of interpretive methods. Students also have the option of writing a final paper.

**Points for exams and assignments subject to change**

**Core Curriculum Requirements**: The course meets one or more requirements of the core curriculum by setting the following goals (with methodology explained):

GOAL 1: Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally

GOAL 2: Students will be critical thinkers by describing the historical, cultural, mythological, and social contexts of texts, works of art, and theories.

GOAL 3: Students will be creators of new knowledge and expression by utilizing their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems.

GOAL 4: Students will think historically in order to understand the past on its own terms and to understand how societies have changed over time.

GOAL 5: Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today's world.

**Course texts:**


**Course participation and attendance**

Missing more than 5 class periods (unexcused) will result in course failure. Excused absences require a note from the appropriate department (if a University-related event) or a doctor. Please, do not “kill off” your grandparents to get out of class. Lying about deaths/funerals can come back on you in really embarrassing ways.

Participation entails more than just filling a chair. Students **shall not** surf the Internet. Doing so is incredibly disrespectful to your fellow students, and to the professor. Cell phones are to be silenced; in fact, there is really no reason why you should have your phone in your hand at any point during the class. Students who violate this policy will be contacted by the professor, and repeated violations can result in expulsion from the course.

Students are to place a “nameplate” (a folded piece of paper with their name on it) in front of them before each class. We will address one another by name, and produce an atmosphere of intellectual rigor and camaraderie.

It is unacceptable for a few students to carry the weight of discussion in a class; sadly, this happens much too often. By design, this course requires each and every student to be prepared to speak and share insights. Students who consistently fail to meet these requirements (especially by being unprepared) may be expelled from the course.

If discussion is lacking, the professor reserves the right to add quizzes to the course. This may or may not add points to the overall grade, but could be used to detract points from the overall score. **Please, do not contribute to an atmosphere in which this draconian measure is necessary. Come to class prepared.**

**Plagiarism**

Xavier University has a stringent plagiarism policy, which is strictly enforced in this course. Students are advised to consult the following link to familiarize themselves with what constitutes plagiarism: [http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/)

There are some specific violations that will be caught with little to no effort by the professor:

1. **Sharing of work.** Each student is responsible for his or her own work. It is unacceptable for students to “divvy up” assignments, giving specific questions or projects to specific people in exchange for shared work. Violations will result in an
automatic 0 for the assignment, and may result in disciplinary actions that can culminate in expulsion from the University.

2. Acquiring materials from Internet sources and submitting them as one's own work. Look, if you can Google it, so can I. If you think you've found some obscure corner of the Internet concerning religion and theology about which I am unaware, you are wrong. If you pass off work that is not your own, may God have mercy on your soul.

3. Purchasing essays or assignments from an online provider. Most of these essays are written badly, and are easily detectable by someone with my training. I’m like a ninja when it comes to sussing out purchased work. Don’t do it.

It is pretty simple: Do your own work.

Course Reading Schedule

Subject to change: students are advised to read ahead

I. Module One: (Jan 15-Feb 19) Historical criticism: Reading the Gospel of Mark (again) for the very first time

PowerPoints utilized in this section (available on Blackboard): “Important Dates and Events in the Hebrew Bible”; “The Jewish Responses”; and “Important Terminology and Theological Concepts”

We also will view portions of the documentary film, Kingdom of David: The Saga of the Israelites; please print off a copy of the Historical Criticism Viewing Guide from BlackBoard

Readings: Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary. three readings of GMark

Homework: Reading Report. See BlackBoard for details

Feb 19: Exam #1 (Historical Criticism Review Guide is due at the time of the exam.)

II. Module Two: (Feb 21-Apr 9) Narratology and reader-response criticism: The story and the reader.

Be certain to follow the PowerPoint and Reading Guide for relevant Mark texts (available on BlackBoard).

**Please note that we do NOT have class on Wednesday, March 5 (Ash Wednesday)**

Readings: Anderson/Moore 29-58, 59-93; Borg Mark 17-51, 53-69, 71-87; Rhoads 98-136

Apr. 9: Exam #2 (Narratology and Reader-Response Criticism Reading Guides #1 and #2 are due at the time of the exam.)
III. Module Three: (Apr 11-May 2) Critical Hermeneutics

**PowerPoints utilized in this section:**

“New Testament Biblical Scholarship” and “Judas in Mark”


Secondary readings: Saari 18-55; Borg *Mark* 89-108; 66-81, 82-5, 100-17; 133-59; Crossan, entire book.

If time permits, we will view *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Module Three reading guide due on the last day of class; assignment TBD.

**Final Exam**

01: Friday, May 9 2:00-3:50

02: Wednesday, May 7 6:00-7:50

**Theology Department Grading Standards**

Grades indicate a professor’s assessment of a student’s academic performance and not a student’s effort. In accordance with University policy, letter grades in undergraduate theology courses mean the following:

A = 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)

B = Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard)

C = Satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets an average or standard level of competency in the discipline)

D = Minimal academic performance, sufficient to pass

F = Failure

In accordance with University policy, letter grades in graduate theology courses mean the following:
A = 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)

B = Good academic performance (that is, high quality academic achievement; demonstrated competency in the discipline above the average or standard)

C = Marginally satisfactory academic performance (that is, academic achievement that meets the minimum level of competency in the discipline)

F = Failure.

If a course uses number grades, an 8-point scale determines the final letter grade for the course: A=92-100; B=84-91; C=76-83; D=68-75; F-67 and below. Effective in fall 2005, plus/minus grading may be used in undergraduate as well as in graduate courses. If a theology professor chooses to use plus/minus grades in conjunction with number grades, the following scale applies: A=94-100; A-=92-93; B+=90-91; B=87-89; B-=84-86; C+=82-83; C=79-81; C-=76-78; D+=74-75; D=71-73; D-=68-70.

**The Grading of Objective and Essay Tests**

Grades reflect the accuracy, coherence, clarity and completeness of answers and essays.

**The Grading of Participation**

A = The student is consistently well prepared for class, actively listens and contributes thought-provoking insights.

B = The student is prepared for class and demonstrates thoughtful engagement with the material.

C = The student is inconsistently prepared for class and is infrequently engaged with the material.

D = The student is minimally prepared for class and shows a lack of interest in the course material.

F = The student shows lack of interest in the course, is frequently late or absent, and regularly demonstrates a lack of commitment to the class.

**The Grading of Writing Assignments**

Writing assignments are evaluated according to content, use of theological sources/resources and expression of ideas.
Sources and/or resources in theological work include the following: scripture, Christian tradition (theological and spiritual writings of the past, documents from church councils, papal encyclicals, bishops’ pastoral letters, contemporary theological writing), human experience/knowledge/reasoning and the "sense of the faithful" within the Christian community. The sources/resources should be used with critical intelligence, historical sensitivity and imagination.

**Content**

A = The essay clearly states a thesis, develops it with careful analysis, insight, and originality; and supports and defends the argument substantially and concretely with appropriate reference to and reflection on sources/resources.

B = The essay adequately defines a thesis and supports it sufficiently and consistently; it defends the argument, is accurate, and exhibits familiarity with sources/resources and reflection on them.

C = The essay lacks a clear thesis, may contain inaccuracies, and/or fails to exhibit familiarity with or reflection on the sources/resources.

D = The essay lacks a thesis, contains inaccuracies, and/or does not refer to appropriate sources/resources.

F = The essay is dishonest or bears little or no relation to the assignment.

**Interpretation**

A = Demonstrates keen understanding of the cultural and historical context of the sources/resources used in the essay and a parallel understanding of the situation to which they are being applied. When appropriate, assesses well other interpretative options, explains interpretive choices made in the essay and exhibits creativity or originality.

B = Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the cultural and historical context of the sources/resources used in the essay and a parallel understanding of the situation to which they are being applied. When appropriate, makes reference to other interpretive options.

C = Analysis is inadequate or lacking in one of the two aspects above. Does not consider other interpretative options.

D = Analysis is inadequate in both aspects above.

F = Little to no interpretation given.

**Organization**
A = Essay progresses in carefully ordered stages; transitions effective; paragraphs and sentences coherent.

B = Essay’s purpose generally clear; transitions usually coherent; paragraphs and sentences usually coherent.

C = Essay’s purpose apparent, but incompletely carried out; or paragraphs ineffectively developed; or transitions too abrupt; sentences sometimes incoherent.

D = Purpose not always apparent; paragraphs poorly developed; transitions abrupt or unclear; sentences sometimes incoherent.

F = Purpose not apparent; paragraphs incoherent, or undeveloped; transitions lacking; sentences incoherent.

**Mechanics/Expression**

A = Conforms to standard usage or rarely diverges from it in respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Creative and precise word choice.

B = Infrequently diverges from standard usage in respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Appropriate word choice.

C = Occasionally diverges from standard usage in respect to grammar, punctuation and spelling. Occasionally inappropriate, vague, or unidiomatic word choice.

D = Fairly frequently diverges from standard usage in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Inappropriate word choice gets in the way of the reader’s understanding.

F = Frequently and seriously diverges from standard usage in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Inappropriate, vague, or unidiomatic word choice.