NT 508 – Introduction to the Gospels
3 Credit Hours
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Location: Reformed Theological Seminary / DC Campus
Time: June 6 – 10, 2016; 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
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Introduction:
Christianity stands and falls on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God has revealed this good news (euangelion) to us in four-fold form, the canonical books known to us as the gospels. So now that we have them, how do we interpret them? This is the question that is laid upon our shoulders during this course. My goal is that you go away from this course with the tools and abilities to interpret the gospels in order to preach them and in turn edify God’s people. The gospels were written to change the lives of their readers, this is our task.

This course will give consideration to the four canonical gospels in the New Testament. It will pay close attention to issues of genre, narrative dynamics, theological development, Jewish and Roman backgrounds, and historical-critical matters. During this course, we will develop a responsible reading strategy that interacts with the four gospels and with the cultures in which they find themselves.

Learning Objectives:
- Strengthen your faith in Jesus. One of my primary objectives is that you leave with a passion for the biblical Jesus that can inform your ministry.
- Provide tools to see the gospels not as dry history but as engaging historical-literature so that this engagement will find itself in the pulpit and the hearts of God’s people.
- Understand critical challenges to the gospels and the presuppositions that inform those challenges.
- Demonstrate engagement with the gospels in a constructive way that deals seriously with the texts but always has an eye on the present.
- Understand the gospels in their Jewish and Roman contexts. These two socio-historical worlds inform the gospel writers, therefore, we must see them couched within those contexts in order to experience the world-changing impact they had on the 1st Century.

Approach:
- This class will function as a lecture with some hybrid elements of seminar format. Each day will end with one hour of discussion on the pre-course reading. For this reason, it is absolutely vital that you complete ALL of the ‘pre-course’ readings prior to the start of class. The success of the class depends upon this! . . . and so does your grade 😊
- Our focus will be on reading the gospels as theoretically informed readers. We will consider the implications the gospels had on the 1st century audience and the implications they have for us.
- The Kingdom of God, as presented to us by H. Ridderbos, will be the theological paradigm through which the gospels will be understood. We will take time understanding the view of the
Kingdom of God present in the Old Testament and the minds of early gospel readers. We will give consideration to this paradigm as we look at our various contexts.

• Because this class is only one week of face to face time, we cannot look in depth at each gospel. Instead I will provide short lectures on the fundamental differences between the gospels, as well as history of gospel reception; then, we will use the gospel according to Mark as the ‘test-case’ for our interpretive model.

Grade Breakdown & Assignment Due Dates:

• Final Exam (Take Home, Open Notes): 30% - Due: July 30th
• Final Paper (7-8 Pages) and Devotional (1 Page): 30% - Due: July 15th
• Individual Online Presentations and Responses: 30% - Due: Presentation – July 1st; Response: July 7th
• In Class Participation: 10%

Required Reading:

(Highlighted sections must be read before meeting in class)

I expect that all students will have read the required pre-course material before seminar discussion begins. This is VERY important to your grade

Purchase These Books:

• Students must read through the Gospel According to Mark and the Gospel According to John in any translation two times. Once before class begins, and once following the lectures.
• The Coming of the Kingdom, Herman N. Ridderbos. P&R Publishing, 1962 (Pages 3-527)
• Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, Joel B. Green, et. al, eds. IVP Academic, 2013 (Read articles listed below)
  o “Gospel, Genre”, R. A. Burridge
  o “Gentiles”, K. R. Iverson
  o “Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Teaching”, B. J. Pitre
  o “Christ”, M. F. Bird
  o “Languages of Palestine”, M. Graves
  o “Lord”, B. Witherington III and K Yamakazi-Ransom
  o “Parable”, G. P. Anderson
  o “Resurrection”, K. L. Anderson
  o “Son of God”, A. Winn
  o “John, Gospel of”, C. S. Keener
• The following articles, from the 1993 edition of the Dictionary are required readings and will be available as scans on the Canvas site.
  o “Preaching from the Gospels”, S. Greidanus
  o “Gospels, Historical Reliability”, C. Blomberg
• Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction, Jonathan T. Pennington. Baker Academic, 2012 (chs. 3, 5, 8 - 10)
The Following Required Readings do not need to be purchased; I will provide scanned copies through Canvas:

  - “Jewish History, 331 BCE-135 CE” by Martin Goodman, pgs. 507-513
  - “Judaism and Jewishness” by Shaye J. D. Cohen, pgs. 513-515
  - “Jewish Movements of the New Testament Period” by Daniel R. Schwartz, pgs. 526-530
- **Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect**, Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner, eds. Society of Biblical Literature, 2011 (Pages 19-43)
- **Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower**, Christopher Bryan. Oxford University Press, 2005 (Pages 11-76)

Recommended Resources, but not required:

- **Interpreting the Parables**, Craig Blomberg. IVP Academic, 2012
- **Jesus is the Christ**, Michael F. Bird, IVP Books, 2012

Course Outline (Subject to change before June):

**Monday, June 6th, 2016**

- 8:30 – 10:00 Introductory Matters / Dating / Authorship
- 10:00 – 10:20 Break
- 10:20 – 12:00 Framing a Reformed Approach / Critical Questions
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 – 2:40 Questions of Genre and Dependency
- 2:40 – 3:00 Break
- 3:00 – 4:20 1st Century Historiography / Why Presuppositions Matter
- 4:20 – 4:30 Break
- 4:30 – 5:30 Seminar discussion on Historiography and the Gospels

[Required Readings: Tropics of Discourse selections; “Gospels (Historical Reliability)” Dictionary entry]
Tuesday, June 7th, 2016
8:30 – 10:00  The Quest for the Biblical Jesus
10:00 – 10:20  Break
10:20 – 12:00  The Kingdom of God as Foundation: The Coming of the Kingdom
12:00 – 1:00  Lunch
1:00 – 2:40  The Kingdom of God as Foundation pt. 2: The Present Kingdom
2:40 – 3:00  Break
3:00 – 4:20  The Kingdom of God as Foundation pt. 3: The Future Kingdom
4:20 – 4:30  Break
4:30 – 5:30  Seminar discussion on the Gospels in the setting of Empire
[Required Readings: Jesus and Empire selections; “Apocalyptic Teaching” Dictionary entry]

Wednesday, June 8th, 2016
8:30 – 10:00  Gospel as Narrative: Mark as Paradigm
10:00 – 10:20  Break
10:20 – 12:00  The Kingdom/Empire of God and the Empire of Rome
   Seeing the Gospels as Roman History
12:00 – 1:00  Lunch
1:00 – 2:40  The Kingdom of God and the Old Testament.
   Seeing the Gospels as Jewish History
2:40 – 3:00  Break
3:00 – 4:00  Understanding the use of the Old Testament in the Gospels
4:00 – 4:10  Break
4:10 – 4:30  Lab – Interpreting the Gospels – Mark 6:17-29
4:30 – 5:30  Seminar discussion on Intertextuality
[Required Readings: Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew]

Thursday, June 9th, 2016
8:30 – 10:00  Elements in the Gospels (Parables)
10:00 – 10:20  Break
10:20 – 12:00  Lab – Reading Parables
12:00 – 1:00  Lunch
1:00 – 2:40  Elements in the Gospels (Conflicts)
2:40 – 3:00  Break
3:00 – 4:00  Lab – Reading Intertexts
4:00 – 4:10  Break
4:30 – 5:30  Seminar discussion on gospel narratives.
[Required Readings: Mark as Story selection]
Friday, June 10th, 2016

8:30 – 9:30  The distinguishing character of Matthew
9:30 – 9:40  Break
9:40 – 10:20 Lab – Interpreting the Gospels Wisely – Mark 16:1-8, or 20?
10:20 – 12:00 The distinguishing character of Mark
12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
1:00 – 2:40 The distinguishing character of Luke
2:40 – 3:00 Break
3:00 – 5:30 The distinguishing character of John / Closing Comments

Assignment Requirements:

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be an open notes/open book exam. The exam will be available on Canvas and will have a three-hour time limit. It will consist of two sections – section one will have 10 terms/concepts from which you must pick 7 and provide a short answer/definition for. Section two will have 5 essay questions from which you will pick 2. Your answer for each essay question should be no less than one paragraph, but no greater than one page.

**Final Paper:** The final paper will be a 7-8 page paper analyzing a chosen pericope in one of the four gospels. The goal of the paper is to show how your pericope fits into the narrative context of the gospel, and how that pericope contributes to the Gospel’s narrative purpose. In addition to this academic paper, you must submit a 1-2 page devotional on your chosen pericope. This devotional should be written on a popular level (e.g. a blog post) and should show how your academic paper relates to God’s people.

**Individual Presentations:** In my experience, presenting on a topic is the best way to learn the ‘ins and outs’ of that particular topic. Because we are limited in our time together, we are going to do electronic-presentations and responses. You will be required to pick one topic below and prepare a 15 minute presentation on that topic, accompanied by a handout. Your presentation should include an analysis of the topic/problem, a fair summary of scholarship that has been done on that topic, and your resolution of the topic/problem with a defense of that resolution.

As Presenter: Your presentation must be done on Prezi. Create your slides with relevant information, then record lecture material using the device’s sound record function. You will provide a link to the Prezi on the course Canvas page. The presentation should be no less than 7 minutes and no more than 12 minutes. I will provide instructions for this in class.

As Observer: View 1 presentation and provide a one-paragraph write-up that explains what you learned from the presentation and how it helped you understand the gospels more clearly. This paragraph should be posted underneath the presentation in the Canvas discussion (more on this in class).
### Individual Presentation Options:
- The Secrecy of Jesus in the gospel of Mark
- The fulfillment of Redemptive History according to Matthew
- Explain the Herodian dynasty in light of the Gospel texts.
- Who are the women at the cross?
- What is the Gospel of Thomas and how does it relate to Gospel studies?
- What is the Imperial Cult and how does it relate to Gospel studies?
- Is the ‘Virgin Birth’ based on a mistranslation?
- How does John differ from the Synoptics?
- Was Jesus really a carpenter?
- What do the gospels mean when they say that Judas ‘betrayed’ Jesus?
- Was Jesus’ earthly ministry really three years?
- What is oral tradition and how does it work in the Gospels?
- How does Luke characterize women?
- What is the Gospel of Peter and how does it relate to Gospel studies?
- Who is the Son of Man?
- Did Jesus exist?
- When was Jesus born?
- Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew
- What do the gospels mean when they say that Judas ‘betrayed’ Jesus?
- Was Jesus’ earthly ministry really three years?
- Was Jesus really a carpenter?
- Do the infancy narratives match up with Christmas traditions?
- Others to be added later if needed

### In Class Participation:
I expect that all students will have read the required pre-course material before the commensurate seminar discussion. This is VERY important to your grade. Unfortunately, due to the structure of the course we cannot discuss each individual reading the week after it is assigned; however, I still need you to be conversant with the material so that our discussions can be fruitful. Therefore, I recommend you keep a reading log to jot down notes, thoughts, or important quotes that you may want to bring up in class. This will also provide you with a reference to look back on as well as a means of interacting with the text in a more thorough manner. There is a ‘course participation guide’ available on Canvas for you to see the grading standard for participation level.

### Final Paper Guide
- Paper must be 7-8 pages excluding title page, bibliography, etc. The 7-8 pages must be original research.
- The paper must be uploaded to Canvas by the deadline listed on page 2 of the syllabus. Submit the paper as either a PDF or Microsoft Word file (preferably a Word file).
- Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words must be typed out, not transliterated.
- Paper should include an introduction with a clearly-stated thesis statement.
- Paper should be clearly argued and articulated.
• Paper should deal fairly with secondary literature. In other words, you should thoroughly engage both liberal and conservative scholarship. I strongly suggest you engage the *Hermeneia* commentary of the gospel you are working with.
• Paper should have at least seven total references. References of the following kind are acceptable:
  o Academic monographs
  o Articles in scholarly journals
  o Academic commentaries
  o Reformed literature (academic)
  o Literature from any century is fine (i.e. early Christian, reformation, medieval, enlightenment, or modern literature); however, at least 5 sources must be newer than 1950.
  o **DO NOT** use popular level literature
• Paper should employ footnotes that are single spaced and 10-point font.
• Each page (after title page) should be numbered according to SBL style guide.
• Paper must employ 12 point font, 1 inch margins on each side, and ½ inch indentation. **DO NOT** include a space after each paragraph; be aware that MS Word does this automatically.
• All documentation must be done according to the standards in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, both the footnotes and the bibliography.
• Proofread your paper. Ensure all typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors have been corrected.

**Devotional Guide**
• Your devotional should be 1-2 pages, double spaced.
• The style of writing should be similar to a blog-post or a popular level book.
• Proofread your paper. Ensure all typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors have been corrected.
• Provide footnotes when necessary.

**Final Test Guide**
• The final test will consist of two sections.
  o Section one will be a list of (10) terms from which you will pick (7) and provide a definition. Your definition should demonstrate that you have read and critically engaged with all of the required course readings.
  o Section two will be a list of (5) essay questions from which you will pick (2) and provide an answer. Your answer should demonstrate that you have read and critically engaged with all of the required course readings.
• Because this is an open-book / open-notes test, I expect you to interact with the various views that were presented by both me and your readings. Quotations are not expected, but will be looked upon favorably. The authors you interact with should be fairly treated.
• Grammar and logic will be important in this exam.
• There is a final exam study guide available on Canvas. All questions on the final exam can be found on the study guide.

In Class Participation Guide
• For in class participation I expect you to be engaged in the lectures and discussions.
• During the lectures, I will mark you down if you are checking e-mail, facebook, or any other website during the class.
• Computers/electronic devices are allowed, but I expect your wi-fi connection to be turned off.
• During the seminar discussion, I expect everyone to contribute to the conversation. You must make at least one productive comment.
• I expect all students to have read the pre-course material and interact with that material during the seminar discussion.

Late Policy
• The deadlines are listed in the Grade Breakdown on page two of the syllabus.
• I expect all assignments to be turned in no later than 11:59 PM EST on the day the assignment is due.
• Assignments turned in after the deadline, for any reason, will be marked down 10% per day. There will be no exception to this policy. Please give yourself a large enough window so that you submit the assignment on time. I suggest setting your deadline one week earlier.
### Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-Students will engage with different positions toward theological issues in the Gospels and be graded by articulating differences in conversation and written exam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-In depth reading, lectures, and labs on identifying key exegetical issues present in Scripture and working through the history of interpretation to know the original meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-We will give serious consideration to the present and historical challenges presented to a reformed understanding of the Kingdom of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>-Lectures emphasize the glory of the resurrected Christ and his role in life and theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-Readings and discussions focus on the way Scripture challenges our life and practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>-Readings contain scholars from several traditions. Lectures emphasize the need to properly represent positions and learn from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-Lectures and lab work focuses on application of the Word to God’s people. Use of Narrative Criticism will show the importance of preaching the Gospels with passion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>-We will talk briefly about liturgy practice in Early Judaism and Early Christianity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>-The Bible is our subject of study, which naturally lends itself to Shepherding, though it is not the</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Church/World</strong></td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td><strong>Minimal</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- In assigned texts, students will be challenged to consider the application of the Gospels to the Church’s role in public issues.</td>
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Addendum (A)

Course Reading Checklist:

Pre-Course Required Readings: (Read these selections before we meet together)

- Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays of Cultural Criticism*, pages 81-120 (Scan)
- Craig Blomberg, “Gospels (Historical Reliability)” article in 1993 DJG (Scan)
- B. J. Pitre, “Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Teaching” article in 2013 DJG
- G.N. Stanton, “Q” article in 2013 DJG
- Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, pages 1-54 (Scan)
- Ulrich Luz, “Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew” (Scan)
- Iverson and Skinner, *Mark as Story*, pages 19-43 (Scan)
- Gospel of John
- Gospel of Mark

Other Required Readings: (Read these selections before you take the final exam)

- Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels Articles:
  - “Gospel: Genre” by R.A. Burridge
  - “Gentiles” by K.R. Iverson
  - “Christ” by M.F. Bird
  - “Languages of Palestine” by M. Graves
  - “Lord” by B. Witherington III and K. Yamazaki-Ransom
  - “Parable” by G.P. Anderson
  - “Preaching from the Gospels” by S. Greidanus
  - “Resurrection” by K.L. Anderson
  - “Son of God” by A. Winn
- Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, chs. 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 (Focus on chs. 8, 9, 10)

- Jewish Annotated NT Articles:
  - “Jewish History, 331 BCE – 135 BCE” by Martin Goodman (Scan)
  - “Judaism and Jewishness” by Shaye Cohen (Scan)
  - “The Synagogue” by Lee Levine (Scan)
  - “Jewish Movements of the New Testament Period” by Daniel Schwartz (Scan)
  - “The Septuagint” by Leonard Greenspoon (Scan)
- Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method*, pages 29-83 (Scan)
- Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, pages 11-76 (Scan)
- Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, pages 3-527
- Gospel of Mark
- Gospel of John