CBS seeks to fulfill ACU’s mission to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world by providing leadership preparation and resources for effective worldwide ministry in the cause of Christ.

Class Description

This class will engage the text of Matthew, Mark, and Luke looking specifically at their literary relationships, witness to Christ, and unique messages. This course assumes that the biblical text is able to challenge and shape the class according to the needs, backgrounds, questions, and interests of the individuals in it, spiritually transforming people.

Class Objectives

By the end of the semester the student can:

A. Describe the so-called “Synoptic Problem” and evaluate strengths and weaknesses of proposed solutions,

B. Identify tensions in the accounts of the historical Jesus and defend a conservative Christian belief in Jesus and the “faith”fulness of the Gospels,

C. Understand the narrative structures, theological and literary themes, and unique messages of each of the Synoptics.

Contact Information:

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curt.niccum@acu.edu

Office Hours:

MW 1-3  
TR 9:30-11
We who say we love God: why are we not as anxious to be as perfect in our art as we pretend we want to be in our service of God? If we do not try to be perfect in what we write, perhaps it is because we are not writing for God after all. In any case it is depressing that those who serve God and love Him sometimes write so badly, when those who do not believe in Him take pains to write so well. I am not talking about grammar and syntax, but about having something to say and saying it in sentences that are not half dead. Saint Paul and Saint Ignatius Martyr did not bother about grammar but they certainly knew how to write.

The fact that your subject may be important in itself does not necessarily mean that what you have written about it is important. A bad book about the love of God remains a bad book, even though it may be about the love of God. There are many who think that because they have written about God, they have written good books. Then men pick up these books and say: If the ones who say they believe in God cannot find anything better than this to say about it, their religion cannot be worth much.

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Thomas Merton, from a meditation on 14 August 1947

Course Requirements

Class Attendance. Attendance and punctuality are expected. A student is permitted two unexcused absences for the semester, thereafter; each unexcused absence will lower the final grade at the rate of 50 points per absence. When tardy, students must report their presence to the instructor immediately after class (otherwise the student will receive an unexcused absence for the day). Two unexcused tardies count as one unexcused absence. In order to be excused for an absence or tardy, students must report their absence or tardiness and excuse to the instructor prior to the class to be missed. Excusing an absence or tardy remains at the discretion of the instructor. A student who leaves during class and returns will be marked for an unexcused tardy, unless excused by the professor; a student who leaves and fails to return will be marked for an unexcused absence. After six unexcused absences, the student will be dropped from the class.

Class Preparation (250 points). Preparation is critical for productive class discussion and student learning. Satisfactory completion of daily assignments will be evaluated through quizzes and/or other forms of assessment, typically ten points in value for each class period. Missed quizzes cannot be made up. For students who have made arrangements in advance for an excused absence, a brief assignment can be completed in order to receive a preparation grade for that day. The professor will decide the due date for each assignment so given.

Research Paper (200 points). A five page paper responding to a claim about the historical unreliability of the Gospels will be due at the beginning of class on March 25th. Specific details will be provided separately.

Tests (125 points @). Two exams will assess student knowledge of the material. Questions will generally consist of true/false and multiple choice questions, although at least one short answer or essay component will also typically be included.
Blog (100 points). The student must make at least ten informed comments on the course blog. A minimum of five must be responses to entries posted by the professor (maximum of one per entry) and five must be contributions to ongoing discussion through responses to other students’ comments. Each comment (up to a total of ten) will be worth up to ten points, graded on relevance to the topic, depth of thought, clarity of expression, and respect for others. Not all responses to posts count towards the ten minimum. Some posts will be informational in nature only (such as the “writing hints”).

Final Exam (200 points). The final will focus primarily on topics from the last part of the semester but will include at least one comprehensive component measuring student synthesis.

Administrivia

Incomplete Policy An incomplete may be granted if a student has not met the requirements of the course due to illness, an emergency, or some cause deemed reason-able by the professor; an incomplete is not given when a student has simply been negligent toward class requirements. An “I” is removed by the completion of the necessary work within the next long term or time approved in writing by the instructor, otherwise the “I” will become an “F” on the student's record.

Late Policy All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. Late work will not be accepted and will receive a “0.”

Technology Policy

1. The Course Blog will serve as the primary vehicle for communication. Posts related to class topics will be designed to create dialogue and share ideas. Student responses comprise 10% of the final grade (see above). Other entries will provide helpful information or humorous material. (Frequently the latter is humorous only to the professor.) Blog entries inviting graded student comments will be designated by an asterisk (*) in the title. Comments on other entries are welcome, but will not contribute toward the student “blog” grade.

Documents and PowerPoint presentations will be accessible on the blog. The site will also provide links to websites containing relevant material or items deemed of some interest to students.

Assignments will also be posted on the blog. These take precedence over information provided elsewhere, including the syllabus. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the professor if an assignment does not get posted.

Grading

A 900-1000 points

Excellent in nearly all aspects. Elegantly combines clarity and economy of expression. Flawless knowledge, deep comprehension, critical analysis and evaluation, creative synthesis and mature application. Full test answers, reflecting the entire breadth of the pertinent material to which the student has been exposed, with depth of comprehension, nuanced by broad reliance on primary sources. Creatively relates material to other areas of knowledge and practice, exhibiting a high level of interdisciplinary skill.

B 800-899 points

Good in most aspects, though not marked by superiority throughout. Accurate knowledge and good comprehension, exhibiting analysis and evaluation, good synthesis with perhaps the beginnings of application. Good but partial test answers, reflecting comprehension of at least all the crucial components of the material to which the student has been exposed, with good comprehension and regular reference to primary sources. Where appropriate, makes realistic application, showing some interdisciplinary sensitivity.

C 700-799 points

Competent in most aspects, with some lapses. General knowledge and comprehension. Somewhat deficient test answers, reflecting awareness of only one or two of the most crucial components of the material and scarcely nuanced by reference to the sources. Applications are fairly reasonable, but do not have much interdisciplinary creativity or appropriateness.

D 600-799 points

Exhibits effort, but marred by problems or flaws in thinking and development or use of primary sources. Applications are unrealistic and underdeveloped. Test answers provide little information, make major mistakes, and exhibit little or no developed thought.

F < 600 points
2. *Blackboard technology* (Bb) will be utilized in this course in a limited capacity. Grades will be updated regularly under Tools - Gradebook. Some documents will be posted on Blackboard, but greater use will be made of the course blog.

3. *Electronics*: Laptops are permitted in class for taking notes. Internet, Email and Instant Messaging should be off during class. Laptops are a great tool when used with self-discipline. If you cannot exercise self-discipline, turn off the laptop. If in the opinion of the instructor your laptop is a distraction to you or others, he reserves the right to ban your use of the laptop during classes. Abuse of this policy may also result in a “zero” for the preparation grade each day of offense.

4. *Cell Phones* should be turned to silent or airplane mode when in the classroom. If your phone rings in class, you will be marked as tardy; if you answer your phone, you will be marked for an unexcused absence.

5. *Other devices* (e.g., iPods, PDAs) are prohibited in class at the risk of an unexcused absence penalty. Foreign students, with permission from the instructor, may use electronic dictionaries for certain portions of the class and exams.

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**Required Textbooks**

New Testament (any version)


You will also need a set of color pencils or pens, preferably black, blue, red, and green.

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**Intellectual Property**

Copyright 2010: Abilene Christian University (the University) reserves all rights as to all class materials and lectures, whether distributed in class, on Blackboard, on the course blog, or by any other means. The University prohibits anyone from selling notes or being paid for taking notes without the express written permission of the professor and Provost. Violation of copyright may subject a person to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liabilities as well as disciplinary action by the University.
Academic Policy

Violations of academic integrity and other forms of cheating, as defined in ACU’s Academic Integrity Policy, involve the intention to deceive or mislead or misrepresent, and therefore are a form of lying and represent actions contrary to the behavioral norms that flow from the nature of God. Violations will be addressed as stated in the Policy, but any occurrence of dishonesty will result in expulsion from the course. While the university enforces the Policy, the most powerful motive for integrity and truthfulness comes from one's desire to imitate God's nature in life. Every member of the faculty, staff and student body is responsible for protecting the integrity of learning, scholarship and research. The full Policy is available for review at the Provost's office website (http://www.acu.edu/campusoffices/provost) and the following offices: provost, college deans, dean of campus life, director of student judicial affairs, director of residential life education and academic departments.

Americans with Disabilities Act

If you have a diagnosed disability, please notify Alpha Academic Services (674-2750) before or immediately after your first scheduled class meeting. After your disability has been verified, your instructor will work with you and Alpha Academic Services to provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that you have a fair opportunity to perform in the course.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Intro to Course</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>Mark 5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>History of the Synoptic Problem</td>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>Mark 11-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Literary Dependence</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>Markan Priority I</td>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>Markan Priority II</td>
<td>3/23</td>
<td>Matthew 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>“Q”</td>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>Matthew 5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>Other Gospels</td>
<td>3/30</td>
<td>Matthew 11-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Other Solutions</td>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>Matthew 19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>Mt-Lk Agreements against Mk</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>Matthew 26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>Source Criticism</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>Test #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>Form Criticism I</td>
<td>4/13</td>
<td>Luke 1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>Form Criticism II</td>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>Luke 5-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>Redaction Criticism I</td>
<td>4/20</td>
<td>Luke 10-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Test #1</td>
<td>4/27</td>
<td>Luke 20-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Mark 1-4</td>
<td>4/29</td>
<td>The Jesus Seminar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 5, 8:00-9:45