

NS500: NEW TESTAMENT 1: GOSPELS (4 units)

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DESCRIPTION:

This Internet-based course introduces the nature, the background, and the message of the four New Testament Gospels. Particular attention will be given to the so-called synoptic problem, the historical context of the Gospels, the kingdom of God, the “problem” of the historical Jesus, and the individuality of each Gospel.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students successfully completing this course will have (1) a knowledge and understanding of the New Testament Gospels; (2) understanding of the literary features of the Gospels; (3) understanding of the historical and cultural situations in which the Gospels were written; (4) increased ability in interpreting the Bible; (5) a sense of the nature of the Bible as both human word and divine revelation; (6) an appreciation of new ways of reading scripture; (7) more enthusiasm for reading the Bible; (8) improved ability to use the Bible in ministry; and (9) motivation towards a deeper obedience to scripture in their own lives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Students successfully completing this course will (1) become acquainted with various second-temple, non-canonical writings, (2) become acquainted with and use the standard NT and specifically Gospel exegetical tools, (3) analyze selected Gospel texts critically and responsibly, (4) read about various aspects of Gospel theology and discuss them with class colleagues, (5) listen to alternative perspectives fairly and sympathetically, (6) read the ancient text with accountability for a given contemporary context, (7) present their ideas clearly, responsibly, and persuasively, and (8) see themselves as both called to and capable of the task of biblical interpretation.

RELEVANCE FOR MINISTRY: The life and works of Jesus of Nazareth constitute the core datum of the Christian faith. Much of the church's “memory” of this event, together with four of the earliest interpretations of the meaning of that memory, are deposited in the New Testament Gospels. Increased understanding of these documents on their own terms is absolutely essential for faithfully proclaiming the Gospels' significance for the church and the world today.

COURSE FORMAT: Conducted online, the ten weekly lessons align with Fuller's academic calendar. The course involves reading, writing, use of libraries and other resources, and interactive discussion. Each week students and the instructor will interact with the material through journaling, threaded discussions, and web-based research.

REQUIRED READING:

- 100 pages (minimum) of “primary texts” (syllabus will have suggestions)
- Aland, K., ed. *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*. Revised. UBS, 1985.
- Douglas, K. L. *The Black Christ*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994. [134 pp.]
- Hanson, K., and D. Oakman. *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*. Fortress, 1998. [235 pp.]
- Potok, C. *The Promise*. Fawcett, 1990. [384 pp.]
- Powell, M. A. *Fortress Introduction to the Gospels*. Fortress, 1998. [173 pp.]
- Wright, N. T. *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*. IVP, 1999. [202 pp.]
- Various written lectures and articles (mostly online)

RECOMMENDED READING: List provided in the online syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1 Reading of all material assigned in weekly lessons; subject to four bi-weekly quizzes and a final exam (24%)
- 2 Weekly threaded discussions, journaling, web surfing and research (31%)
- 3 Three papers: (a) thoughtful response to reading non-canonical primary texts (2000 words max); (b) detailed redactional analysis of a Gospel text (2000 words max); (c) critical reflection on interpreting the Gospels in light of history, culture, and criticism (2000 words max) (45%)

PREREQUISITES: None.

RELATIONSHIP TO CURRICULUM: MDiv: NT1; MAT: Biblical Studies; MACL: NT1; Ministry Focus Elective in MA in Global Leadership program.

FINAL EXAMINATION: Yes.