

**Syllabus for
The Gospel of Mark
GRK652**

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I. Course Description and Objectives

Description:

This course is an “exegesis of representative passages of Mark so as to trace its account of the ministry of Jesus, and elucidate its message” (NTS catalogue).

Objectives: At the end of the course you will have:

1. Demonstrated a basic grasp of the content, literary features/movement, and theology of the Gospel of Mark.
2. Demonstrated a rudimentary understanding of the historical, socio-rhetorical, and literary background against which Mark’s gospel is best understood.
3. Demonstrated ability to: argue a coherent thesis on theological issues associated with the study of Mark and clearly articulate the implications of your thesis for the contemporary Church.

II. Required Textbooks and Other Material (In addition to the books below, several papers and lectures will be provided through Blackboard.)

France, R. T. *The Gospel of Mark* in the New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

Green, Joel B. and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament and Contemporary Contexts*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000.

Juel, Donald H. *The Gospel of Mark*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.

Longenecker, Bruce. *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003.

Wright, N. T. *The Challenge of Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999.

III. Helpful Websites

<http://www.ntgateway.com/mark/>

This is the Mark section of the NT Gateway site. It is one of the best sites on the Web for generally reliable information on Mark and the rest of NT studies.

<http://www.columbusmennonite.org/Bible/default.htm>

A website entitled “Windows into the World of Jesus: Studies in Mark’s Gospel,” by Daniel P. Schrock. While primarily designed as a study of Mark for laity, it also contains numerous helpful links to images and other background material that helps bring Mark to life. (It contains some especially useful and illustrative images of the Jerusalem Temple.)

<http://www.torreys.org/bible/>

This is another one of the best overall websites for NT studies in general.

<http://www.religiousstudies.uncc.edu/JDTABOR/indexb.html>

This is a website by James Tabor containing a variety of helpful info on the Jewish and Roman backgrounds to story of Jesus.

IV. Requirements (All references to time below are CST. Late assignments will not be accepted.)

Note: Almost all the assignments below involve using the online classroom software, Blackboard, in some way. To find out how to complete the task the assignment asks you to do, go into the Blackboard website at <http://blackboard.nts.edu>. Sign in by using the user name and password sent to you by the IT department here at NTS. (If you do not have a user name and password, email blackboard@NTS.edu immediately and they will send them to you.) From there, click on the “Help” button in the blue space at the top of the page. Next, click on “Online Blackboard Student Manual.” In this manual you should be able to find instructions on any task that you will be required to do.

1. Reading Mark. You must read Mark through (preferably in one sitting but **in no more than two** sittings) at least three times during this class, **including twice in two different translations by July 24.** Use one translation for each reading but do not use the same translation each time. By 11:00 PM on July 24, you must have posted a statement in the Reading Mark Forum in Blackboard saying that you have completed that day’s reading of Mark. Your third reading of Mark is to be completed in conjunction with your reading of Longenecker as described in assignment 2 below. Each reading counts 10 points toward your final grade, making the three readings count 30 points toward your final grade. **You cannot “make up” any of this reading. You can only get credit for what you actually read by the due date listed on the Class Master Schedule below. Since these are basically “give away” points, this is an all or nothing assignment. You do not get credit for partial reading.**

- 2. Longenecker Reflection Paper:** Read Longenecker's, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Then read the Gospel of Mark carefully (this will count as your third reading of Mark). Assume for now that Longenecker's historical novel captures the socio-historical, cultural, and especially the **political** feel of the first century setting in which Mark's Gospel would have been first heard. Write a 750-1,000 word paper answering the following question: How does understanding Jesus against this/these background(s) change the way I understand the Gospel of Mark? Give **specific examples from the text of Mark** which sound different to you after having read Longenecker. You may earn up to 70 points for this assignment. Post this paper to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard as an attached Microsoft Word file by 11:00 PM on Tuesday, August 3.
- 3. Insights from Juel's, *The Gospel of Mark*.** After carefully reading Donald Juel's, *The Gospel of Mark*, briefly describe 25 insights you gained from the book that you consider to be significant. The book has 11 chapters. Make sure you draw at least 2 insights from each chapter (11 x 2 = 22) **noting the chapter and page number from which you are drawing the insight**. The remaining 3 may come from anywhere in the book. You may earn up to 50 points for this assignment. You must post it to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard as an attached Microsoft Word file by 11:00 PM on Friday, August 13. My assistant, Kara Lyons, will probably be grading this assignment. An example of an "A" quality "Insights" assignment from another course will be available for you in Blackboard under the under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder. It will be called "Model Insights Assignment."
- 4. Fishbowl Discussion of Green and Baker's, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross* and Wright's, *The Challenge of Jesus*.** You may earn up to 100 points by actively participating in a "fishbowl" discussion of one of these two books. The "fishbowl" will consist of a seminar-type group discussion/critical analysis of one of these books. One-half of the class will discuss Green and Baker and the other will discuss Wright. **You will not know which group you will participate in until the day of the discussion.** Hence, you should **read both books** carefully. I will provide you with questions to help you focus your reading. They will be located in Blackboard under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder and will be called "Fishbowl Focus Questions." I would strongly encourage you to take careful notes, making use of these to guide your reading. **I will not simply give these points away because you show up in class that day.** You must make regular contributions during this discussion period in a way that demonstrates an understanding of, **and a critical engagement with**, the book your group discusses. This discussion will occur in the first class session on August 31 with a session for each book lasting approximately 75 minutes.
- 5. Original Translation of Mark 1-9.** You will prepare an original translation of Mark 1-9. It should contain the Greek text, your own translation of the text, footnotes on significant textual problems and footnotes on unusual and/or theologically significant grammatical constructions. In addition to this, you should read the commentary by France and engage in some dialogue with it in your footnotes, particularly when there is a significant issue that arises from the translation of the text.

Your translation of chapters 1-5 should be placed in my mailbox at NTS by no later than 4:00 PM on Monday, September 6 and your translation of 6-9 should be placed in my box by 4:00 PM on Monday, September 13. You may earn up to 100 points for each translation making them worth a total of 200 points.

- 6. Final Examination.** There will be one exam during the semester. It will be a take-home essay exam, synthetic in nature. On it, you will be responsible for the material we've covered in class for the entire semester as well as the assigned reading. I will give you the exam the last day of class and it will be due three weeks later. You may earn up to 300 points on this exam. It must be posted as an attached Microsoft Word file to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by 11:00 PM on Friday, October 1.
- 7. Optional Major Paper on Jesus' Death in Mark.** If you decide to try for an A in this class, you must write the following paper. **Note carefully: Writing this paper will not guarantee you an A. It will simply enable you to earn an A if, in my judgment, your overall work in this class is A quality.** In order to have a chance at earning an A, you will write a paper that **argues a thesis** with regard to the following question: **What significance does Mark attach to the death of Jesus by the way he tells his story?** You should begin your paper with a specific thesis statement that explicitly answers this question. You should then carefully argue for your thesis in light of the historical/political, social, inter-textual, literary, and theological information that may be relevant to it.

Failure to cite and interact with all your textbooks (especially Green and Baker and Wright) and other class resources will result in an automatic and substantial grade reduction. You should proceed with your paper by following the guidelines given by Joel Green in the document, "Some Comments on Research Papers." It is located in Blackboard under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder. **I will assume you have read and followed Green's directions when I grade your paper.** (Since this is not a paper which requires you to do additional research, I will judge the "research" aspect of your paper on the basis of how well you make use of the sources you have from the class reading and lectures.) The paper should be approximately 2,500-3,500 words. It should be broken down according to Green's outline, except that you should include 1-2 pages after summarizing your argument in which you draw out the implications of your argument for the Church today.

While the paper should generally follow Turabian style, you may consult the *SBL Handbook of Style* for proper form for footnotes, abbreviations, etc. You may also use the assigned paper, "A Pauline Audience for Mark," located in Blackboard under the Course Documents tab as a general guide as to how this paper should look in terms of style. You may earn up to 250 points for this assignment. You must post it as an attached Microsoft Word file to the Digital Drop Box in Blackboard by Friday, October 15 at 11:00 PM.

V. Summary of Grading Policy

A Word About Grading: Evaluation in this kind of course, by its very nature, involves an element of subjectivity. It involves someone who is an expert in the field making a judgment on the kind of work you produce. That is a part of what you are paying for in this class. The primary factors I take into account in assessing “good solid graduate work,” the sort of work to which I assign a “B” are (1) ability to demonstrate a breadth and depth of understanding of the material engaged; (2) ability to engage this material **in a critical way**; (3) ability to exhibit how the material is related to a larger theological and ecclesial context. If you demonstrate a **consistent** ability to do these things in all your coursework, you can expect to receive a B. If you demonstrate consistent ability to do them **incisively and with excellence**, you can expect to receive an A (assuming you are doing the optional paper). If you demonstrate an ability to do these things **often, but not consistently**, you can expect to receive a C. (Hence, I assume that a C means “average,” or “satisfactory” work. It does **not** mean “bad” or “unsatisfactory.”) If you **seldom** demonstrate an ability to do these things, you can expect to receive a D.

30 Points	Reading Mark
70 Points	Longenecker Reflection Paper
50 Points	Insights from Juel
100 Points	Fishbowl Discussion of Green and Baker and Wright
200 Points	Original Translation
300 Points	Final Exam
250 Points	Optional Major Paper

The following 750 point scale will determine letter grades for those aiming at a maximum grade of B:

B	750-600
C	599-525
D	524-450
F	449-0

The following 1,000 point scale will determine letter grades for those aiming at a maximum grade of A:

A	1,000-900
B	899-800
C	799-700
D	699-600
F	599-0

VI. Policy on Attendance and Tardiness

You are expected to attend class regularly and participate in the daily discussions. Attendance will be taken daily. I will abide by any attendance policy set by the NTS catalogue. An absence will only be excused in accordance with the guidelines established in the NTS catalogue.

VII. Class Master Schedule (Subject to change at my discretion)

CRR= Critical Reading Response to Scripture and Commentaries

Date	Topic for Class	Assignments Due
07/24		2 Readings of Mark in 2 different translations
08/03		1 Reading of Mark Longenecker Reflection Paper
08/13		Insights from Juel
08/31	Intro/Fishbowl/Mark 1:1-13	Fishbowl Discussion: Green and Baker; Wright
09/01	Approach/Mark 1:14-3:35	Lecture in Blackboard: "Mark 11:1-20: The Fig Tree, the Temple, and the Nature of the Gospels"
09/02	Mark 4:1-5:43	
09/03	Mark 6:1-8:21	
09/06	Mark 8:22-10:31	Original Translation 1 Read Johnson paper in Blackboard: "A Pauline Audience for Mark"
09/07	Mark 10:32-11:32	
09/08	Mark 12:1-13:37	
09/09	Mark 14:1-15:24	
09/10	Mark 15:25-16:8 (or 16:20?)	Papers in Blackboard: Hurtado, Thomas/Alexander, Wall
09/13	CRR 2	Original Translation 2
10/01		Final Exam
10/15		Major Paper