

Syllabus for
The Gospel of Mark
NTL652

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Office #: 311

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, other material will be provided through Blackboard.)

Dowd, Sharyn. *Reading Mark*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000.

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.

Hurtado, Larry. *Mark*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

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

Longenecker, Bruce. *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003. **(If you’ve already read this book and written a paper for me on it in one of my other classes, purchase the Theissen book below.)**

Theissen, Gerd. *The Shadow of the Galilean*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. **Purchase this book only if you’ve already read the Longenecker book above and written a paper on it in one of my previous classes.**

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.

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 seven times during this class, **including twice in two different translations by Friday, July 18.** Use one translation for each reading but do not use the same translation each time. Make sure you use at least four different translations for the seven readings. You may also count a hearing of the gospel (on CD or cassette tape) as a reading. By 11:00 PM CST on the due date of each reading, you must have posted a statement in the Reading Mark Forum in Blackboard saying that you have completed that day’s reading of Mark. Each reading counts 15 points toward your final grade, making all seven readings count 105 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.**

****Note Carefully**** **To save time**, as you read Mark, you should keep a running master list of *critical* questions and insights of comprehensive or theological significance that arise from a careful reading of the gospel text. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. These questions will later become a part of requirement 6 described below.

- 2. Longenecker/Theissen Reflection Paper:** If you **have not** read Longenecker's, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum* and written a paper based on it for me in a prior class, make Longenecker the basis for the following assignment. If you **have** read Longenecker and written a paper based on it for me in a prior class, make Gerd Theissen's, *The Shadow of the Galilean* the basis for the following assignment.

Read Longenecker/Theissen. Then read the Gospel of Mark carefully (this will count as your third reading of Mark). Assume for now that Theissen's novel captures the socio-historical, cultural, and especially the **political** feel of Jesus' first century setting in Mark's story or assume that Longenecker's 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, typed, and double-spaced, answering the following question: How does understanding Jesus against this background change the way I read the Gospel of Mark? Give specific examples from the text of Mark which sound different to you after having read Theissen or Longenecker. You may earn up to 100 points for this assignment. To submit your paper, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Longenecker/Theissen Paper assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file by 11:00 PM CST Monday, July 28.

- 3. Insights from Juel's, *The Gospel of Mark*.** After carefully reading Juel, 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 100 points for this assignment. To submit this assignment, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Juel Insights assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file. Submit this assignment by 11:00 PM CST on Friday, August 8. My teaching assistant will 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. Essay/Article Summaries.** You will read one essay (available in Blackboard) and one article (available in the NTS Library). The first will be located under the Course Documents tab. You will summarize the first reading assignment in no more than 200 words. You can find the second in the appropriate journal in the NTS library. You will summarize the second reading assignment in no more than 250 words. Do **not** offer a critical assessment; only summarize the material. For the specific content and due dates of these assignments, see the Class Master Schedule below. You may earn up to 20 points on the first summary and up to 25 points on the second summary. To submit these assignments, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Summary 1 and Summary 2 assignments. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description of the appropriate summary. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file. Submit these assignments by 11:00 PM CST on the due dates listed in the Class Master Schedule below. My assistant will be grading these assignments.

- 5. Fishbowl Discussion of Wright's, *The Challenge of Jesus* and Green and Baker's, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*.** You may earn up to 100 points (50 points for each fishbowl) by actively participating in a "fishbowl" discussion of a portion of one of these two books. The "fishbowl" will consist of a 15-30 minute seminar-type group discussion/critical analysis of a portion of these books with a number of your classmates. **You will not know which portion of these books you will participate in until the day of the discussion.** Hence, you should **read both books** in their entirety 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. These discussions will occur in the class sessions on August 20 and August 25.
- 6. Critical Reading Responses (CRR) to the Gospel and to the Commentary Reading.** You will prepare two critical reading responses of **1,500-1,750 words** each in which you critically engage a portion of Mark and the commentary reading associated with it. For the specific content and due dates of these CRR's, see the Class Master Schedule below.

These responses should have three sections: (1) *Critical* questions and insights of comprehensive or theological significance that arise from a careful reading of the gospel text itself **prior to** reading the selections from Dowd and Hurtado. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. These questions should be an **edited version** of your running master list of *critical* questions and insights that you generated during your seven readings of Mark. (2) *Critical* questions and observations that your reading of Dowd and Hurtado raises in your mind about the biblical text and/or vice-versa, critical questions and observations that reading the biblical text raises in your mind about the claims of Dowd and Hurtado. (3) A comparative section noting any significant disagreements or inconsistencies between Dowd and Hurtado as to how they address these critical issues. An example of an "A" quality CRR will be available for you in Blackboard under the under the Course Documents tab in the Guidelines Folder. It will be called "Model CRR."

To submit your assignments, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the CRR 1 or 2 assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file. Submit each CRR by no later than 11:00 PM CST on the dates listed on the Class Master Schedule below. You may earn up to 75 points for each CRR making them worth a total of 150 points. My teaching assistant will be grading your CRRs.

7. 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. You may earn up to 400 points on this exam. To submit your essay/paper, go into the Assignments Tab in Blackboard to the Final Exam assignment. Click on View/Complete Assignment at the bottom of the description. Then upload your assignment as an MS Word file. Submit your Final Exam by 11:00 PM CST on Wednesday, November 19.

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. 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.

105 Points	Reading Mark
100 Points	Longenecker/Theissen Reflection Paper
100 Points	Insights from Juel
45 Points	Essay/Article Summaries
100 Points	Fishbowl Discussion of Green and Baker and Wright
150 Points	Critical Reading Responses
400 Points	Final Exam

The following 1,000 point scale will determine letter grades.

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
07/18		2 Readings of Mark in 2 different translations
07/28		1 Reading of Mark Longenecker/Theissen Reflection Paper
08/01		1 Reading of Mark
08/08		1 Reading of Mark Insights from Juel
08/15		1 Reading of Mark Essay Summary 1: "Mark 11:1-20: The Fig Tree, the Temple, and the Nature of the Gospels" (available in Blackboard under Course Documents tab).
08/18	Intro/Approach/Mark 1:1-45	
08/19	Mark 2:1-3:35	1 Reading of Mark
08/20	Mark 4:1-5:43	Fishbowl 1 (Wright)
08/21	Mark 6:1-8:21	
08/22	Mark 8:22-10:31	
08/25	Mark 10:32-11:32	Fishbowl 2 (Green & Baker)
08/26	Mark 12:1-13:37	
08/27	Mark 14:1-15:24	Article Summary 2: "The 'New Creation,' the Crucified and Risen Christ, and the Temple: A Pauline Audience for Mark," <i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i> 1 (2007): 171-91.
08/28	Mark 15:25-16:8 (or 16:20?)	
10/03		CRR 1 (Mark 1:1-8:21; Dowd, 1-82; Hurtado, 1-132)
10/31		CRR 2 (Mark 8:22-16:8/20; Dowd, 83-171; Hurtado, 133-290)
11/19		Final Exam