

THE FOUR GOSPELS (BI612DM – Fall 2018)

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the four canonical gospels as the principal witness for the life and teaching of Jesus handed on to us in writing. Special attention is devoted to appreciating the inter-relatedness of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), how they differ from John's gospel, and how the tensions generated by those differences enable us to enter more fully into the mystery of our faith.

At the graduate level, this course exposes students to current scholarly research on the gospels. Special attention is devoted to the Jewish context of Jesus. In accordance with the instructions of the Pontifical Council for Religious Relations with Jews, misconceptions about Jews and Judaism are identified and corrected. Pastoral challenges in teaching and preaching the gospels are also addressed and integrated into the coursework.

Learning Objectives

Successful completion of this course will result in the following outcomes:

- **Identify** the distinctive ways in which each evangelist narrates the life of Jesus and presents his teaching
- **Understand** the synoptic problem and its implications for reading and interpreting Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- **Appreciate** how the theology of each gospel contributes to the faith of the church

Materials and Access

- **REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:** A.-J. Levine and M. Z. Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. [N.B. You must purchase the **second** edition (NOT the 2011 first edition) as it contains substantially more scholarly essays.]
- All other assigned readings are indicated in the course schedule (below) and are available for free on the Internet.

Coursework and Grading Procedures

There are two types of graded coursework, each of which will contribute to your final grade.

- **Discussions (40%):** The central learning activity of the course is online interaction with your peers. Each module contains a discussion prompt for you to reflect on and respond to (3% x 12 weeks = 36% + 4% for summaries). Discussion will be within small groups assigned by the facilitator and will be conducted in the forums on the course management page. One member of the group will be responsible for writing up a **summary** of the group's discussion (2% x 2 summaries = 4%). Responsibility for writing the summary will rotate with each module so that each group member will write two summaries over the course of the semester. Please download the discussion guidelines from the "Resource Materials" tab at the bottom of the course management page and review them for expectations and grading standards.
- **Literature Review (36%):** Each week you will post a brief review of one of the JANT essays (3% x 12 weeks = 36%), identifying in what way it might help us understand the gospels or their background. You are encouraged to bring this information to bear on your forum discussions. Please download the literature review guidelines from the "Resource Materials" tab at the bottom of the course management page and review them for expectations and grading standards.
- **Essays (24%):** You will write two short (10-15 page) essays (12% x 2 = 24%). The first essay will be an **exegetical** essay on a passage from the synoptic gospels that is found in at least two of the gospels (i.e., Matthew and Mark, Luke and Mark, Matthew and Luke, or all three). The second essay will be a **pastoral** essay that explores ways of preaching on a lectionary text from the gospels. Please download the essay guidelines from

the “Resource Materials” tab at the bottom of the course management page and review them for expectations and grading standards.

Course Schedule

PART ONE: The Gospel according to Mark

MODULE 1: Introduction (September 10 – September 16)

- **Listen:** Module 1 Lectures
- **Read:** Mark 1:1-15; Levine, “Bearing False Witness” (JANT, pp. 759-763)
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** How does Mark 1:1-15 illustrate Saint Augustine’s dictum that “the books of the Old Testament with all their parts, caught up into the proclamation of the Gospel, acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament and in turn shed light on it and explain it” (*Dei Verbum*, Article 16)?

MODULE 2: From Galilee to Jerusalem (September 17 – September 23)

- **Listen:** Module 2 Lectures
- **Read:** Mark 1:16-10:52
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** Which “hearers of the word” within Mark 1:16-10:52 illustrate one of the four soil types described in the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:14-20)? Explain your reasoning for each identification.

MODULE 3: From Temple to Tomb (September 24 – September 30)

- **Listen:** Module 3 Lectures
- **Read:** Mark 11:1-16:20
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** Extend your application of the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:14-20) to Mark 11:1-16:20. Do the dysfunctional soil types in the parable help us to analyze what happens in Jerusalem? How might the different endings of Mark be analyzed in terms of the parable?

PART TWO: The Gospel according to Matthew

MODULE 4: A New Moses (October 1 – October 7)

- **Listen:** Module 4 Lectures
- **Read:** Matthew 1:1-7:29
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** How do the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) align the person praying with the types of people who belong to the kingdom (Matthew 5:3-12)? When we pray this prayer, are we praying for Beatitude?

MODULE 5: Scribes Trained for the Kingdom (October 8 – October 14)

- **Listen:** Module 5 Lecture
- **Read:** Matthew 8:1-20:34
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** Can Matthew’s narrative of the Twelve’s formation provide models (or principles) for the formation of ecclesial leaders today? Which aspects of this narrative (i.e., insertions, expansions, relocations, deletions) do you find to be most valuable in this regard?

MODULE 6: A New David (October 15 – October 21)

- **Listen:** Module 6 Lectures
- **Read:** Matthew 21:1-28:20
- **Review:** one JANT essay

- **Discuss:** How does the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25:31-46) align with the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11)? (How do the specific behaviors listed in the parable correspond to the dispositions that identify those who belong to the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount?)

PART THREE: The Gospel according to Luke

MODULE 7: The Prophet of Liberation (October 22 – October 28)

- **Listen:** Module 7 Lectures
- **Read:** Luke 1:1-9:50
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** What can Luke's portrayal of prophetic inspiration teach us about the church's prophetic vocation? How does prayer fit into this since most inspired persons in the story prophesy before, during, or after praying?)

MODULE 8: The Teacher of Mercy (October 29 – November 4)

- **Listen:** Module 8 Lecture
- **Read:** Luke 9:51-19:28
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** How does one of Luke's unique parables (pick one of the ten to write about) illustrate the major themes of Jesus' teaching in the Big Interpolation (Luke 9:51-19:58)?

MODULE 9: The Suffering and Ascendant Messiah (November 5 – November 11)

- **Listen:** Module 9 Lecture
- **Read:** Luke 1:29-24:53
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** What are the implications of the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-32) for how we proclaim the Gospel today, both to the faithful as well as to those who do not yet recognize Jesus to be the Christ?

PART FOUR: The Gospel according to John

MODULE 10: The Word Became Flesh (November 12 – November 18)

- **Listen:** Module 10 Lectures
- **Read:** John 1:1-51; *Nostra Aetate*, Articles 1-2; *Dominus Iesus*
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** How does John's prologue inform the church's teaching (as articulated in *Nostra Aetate* and *Dominus Iesus*) concerning religious pluralism? How can we use John 1 to communicate this teaching today, both to the faithful as well as to those who do not yet recognize Jesus to be the Christ?

HOLIDAY BREAK (November 19 – November 25)

MODULE 11: The Book of Signs (November 26 – December 2)

- **Listen:** Module 11 Lectures
- **Read:** John 2:1-12:50
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** How does one of Jesus' signs (pick one of them to write about) illustrate the theology of John's prologue (1:1-18)?

MODULE 12: The Book of Glory (December 3 – December 9)

- **Listen:** Module 12 Lectures
- **Read:** John 13:1-21:25
- **Review:** one JANT essay
- **Discuss:** How does Jesus' commission in John 20:21 relate to his own mission (described and explained throughout John's gospel)? What did the Father send Jesus to do, and how are we to participate in that mission?

Ground your response in specific passages from John's gospel where Jesus (or the narrator) explains his mission.

ESSAY WEEK (December 10 – December 14)