

**Fall 2019**  
**Interpreting the Synoptics and Acts**  
**NT 6251**  
**Three Semester Hours**

*Instructor:* Joshua W. Jipp  
*Class Meeting Location:* TBA  
*Class Time:* Monday, 6:00 – 8:30  
*Office:* Kantzer 150  
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### **I. Course Description**

A study of the Synoptics and Acts with emphasis on developing the skills necessary to be effective interpreters of these texts. Students will evaluate various critical approaches to the Gospels and to the life of Christ, recognize the historical reliability of the Synoptics and Acts, analyze central theological themes, exegete selected Greek passages, and further refine the methodological skills they learned in NT 5251-5252. Prerequisites: NT 5000 and NT 5252.

### **II. Student Learning Outcomes**

As a result of this course, students should be able to:

1. articulate the complexities of moving from the historical person of Jesus to the composition of the four Gospels.
2. understand the potential benefits and pitfalls of various Gospels methods and will be able to practice such methods as redaction criticism and narrative/literary analysis.
3. improve their ability to read the Synoptics and Acts in the Greek language.
4. grow in their ability to understand how narrative makes meaning.
5. know the distinct literary, thematic, and theological contribution of each NT composition.
6. understand the critical importance the Gospels and Acts play (or *should play*) in contemporary Christian discipleship, ethical/moral formation, and thinking about social-cultural matters.
7. use the Synoptics and Acts as resources for theological reflection, preaching and teaching, pastoral leadership, and pastoral care.
8. describe and evaluate how the Synoptics and Acts have been read and used in non-majority traditions, including liberation theology, black theology, Pentecostal traditions, and Anabaptist peace traditions.

### **III. Course Texts**

David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*. Third edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. (=MS)

Jonathan T. Pennington. *Read the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. (=JTP)

Justo Gonzalez. *The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. (=JG)

Joshua W. Jipp, *Reading Acts*. Cascade Companions. Eugene, OR: Cascade. (=RA)

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED (individual articles placed on Moodle)

Joel B. Green (editor). *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. (=DJG)

\*On Moodle: Sections from Willie James Jennings. *Acts. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Westminster John Knox, 2017.

#### IV. Course Requirements

1. Greek Reading and Course Participation Grade – Your course participation grade will be determined through a variety of factors: attendance, participation in classroom discussions, group participation, and *especially your preparation to read/translate Greek in class*. Each class period we will devote approximately 20 minutes to working through a Greek text together as a class (these texts are underlined on the syllabus). You must come to class prepared to translate these texts. In addition, you are required to spend 30 minutes per week “reading” the non-underlined portions of the NT in the Greek text. More on this in class. On each quiz, I will have a question that will ask you to indicate how much time you spent “reading” the non-underlined portions of the Greek text. 15%
2. Quizzes – About every other week we will begin class with a 10-minute quiz. This quiz will examine your ability to translate Greek (already prepared together in class) *and* content from the lectures and reading. The quizzes are non-cumulative. The quizzes will be given during the first ten minutes of class, and therefore your timeliness is crucial. You are allowed to drop one quiz. Therefore, there are no make-ups unless your absence is excused by the Dean of Students. 20%
3. Five short writing assignments – Each student will write five papers responding to a specific question or issue. These papers should be 5-7 pages (double-spaced). Instructions are given for each writing assignment. Papers deserving of an A will demonstrate appropriate use of Greek language *and* relevant required course readings. These are not research papers; I’m primarily interested in seeing *you* engage the question and provide your own interpretations/explanations. 30%

- a. How does Jesus interpret the Torah in the Gospel of Matthew? What are the theological and ethical ramifications of your observations?
  - b. With the help of *Mark as Story*, examine the *characterization* of Jesus in both Mark 1:16 – 3:6 and 8:22 – 10:56. What are the similarities and differences in the characterization of Jesus? Reflect upon why the disciples have a difficult time understanding Jesus' identity in 8:22 – 10:56. How should Mark's characterization inform our Christology and discipleship.
  - c. How does Jesus' Nazareth synagogue sermon (Luke 4:16-30) function as a thesis or manifesto for Jesus' teaching and ministry *throughout the entire Gospel of Luke*? A good paper will examine both the details and pattern of Luke 4:16-30 *as well as* the way in which the scene provides a hermeneutical window into the rest of Luke's Gospel. This means that after you have studied Luke 4:16-30 you will need to engage in a slow, thoughtful reading of the rest of Luke's Gospel to see how this pattern is worked out by Luke.
  - d. How do the Gospels function as resources for how we think about mass incarceration, relationships with immigrants and refugees, consumer capitalism/wealth and possessions, and/or leadership. Pick *one* topic.
  - e. For Acts, choose one of the following. You may write an extra paper for up to 3% extra credit.
    - i. In what ways are the expansions in the people of God surprising? Stated another way, what episodes would have surprised a Jewish reader of Acts as s/he saw *who and what kind of people* were included as God's people. Conclude with some reflection upon the implications of this for contemporary churches/ecclesiology.
    - ii. What role does the resurrection of Jesus play in the Acts of the Apostles? What are some implications for our understanding of church and discipleship for today?
4. Group Presentation on non-majority interpretations of Jesus – Students will be divided into groups. Each group will be assigned a specific interpreter or tradition and the required reading for this interpreter/tradition. The professor will help guide you with respect to the readings of each tradition. Groups will also be responsible for choosing 10-15 pages of reading that they would like the rest of the class to read. This must be determined at least one week before the group teaches the class. Each group will give a 30-minute presentation *and* lead a class discussion that will introduce the rest of the class to this interpreter/tradition. Student groups should be attentive to: a) the role that Jesus and the Gospels play within the overall construction of the interpreter's theology; b) the practical-life implications Jesus has for the church or society within the interpreter's proposal; c) the methods the interpreter uses (or does not use); d) reflecting upon what s/he has learned *and* how we should evaluate the proposal. 15%

5. Final exam – a final exam will be administered during finals week. The exam will test: a) your ability to synthesize and reflect upon, through essay-form, the entire course, and b) your ability to translate one of the passages previously worked on in the course. More information TBA. 20%

## V. Course Grading

Participation	15%
Quizzes	20%
Class Presentation	15%
Final exam	20%
Short Papers	30%

In this course, grades will be assigned on the following numerical scale.

A 96–100	B 87–89	C 77–80	F below 65
A- 93–95	B- 84–86	C- 72–76	
B+ 90–92	C+ 81–83	D 65–71	

Date	Topics	Reading	Assignment
8/21 (Monday classes meet on Wednesday)	From Jesus to the Gospels #1	JTP, pp. 1-142	
8/26	From Jesus to the Gospels #2	JTP, pp. 143-258	<u>Luke 9:28-36</u>  Acts 1:1-8
9/9	Matthew 1 – 4	Hays, “Torah Transfigured,” in <i>Reading Backwards</i> , pp. 35-53.  Allison, “Structure, Biographical Impulse, and the <i>Imitatio Christ</i> ,” pp. 135-155.	<u>Matthew 2:1-12</u>  Acts 1:9-14  <b>Quiz 1</b>
9/16	Matthew 5 – 7  Jesus and Anabaptist/Peace Traditions	Bonhoeffer, <i>Discipleship</i> , pp. 43-56.  Pennington, <i>Sermon</i> , pp. 87-103, 137-168.	<u>Matthew 5:17-20, 43-48</u>  Acts 1:15-20  <b>Paper A is Due</b>
9/23	Matthew 8 – 28	J.R. Donahue,	<u>Matthew 18:23-25</u>

	How Parables Mean	“The Parables of Matthew,” pp. 63-125.	Acts 1:21-26 <b>Quiz 2</b>
9/30	Mark 1 – 8:21 Interpreting Narrative	MS, pp. 1-8, 39-61	<u>Mark 1:1-15</u> Acts 2:1-13
10/7	Mark 8:22 – 10:56 How Narrative Means	MS, pp. 73-136	<u>Mark 10:35-45</u> Acts 2:14-28 <b>Paper B is Due</b>
10/14	Mark 11:1 – 16:20	MS, pp. 63-72, 137-152	<u>Mark 15:22-39</u> Acts 2:29-47 <b>Quiz 3</b>
10/21	Luke 1 – 9:50 Jesus and Latin American Liberation Theology	JG, pp. 1-44	<u>Luke 4:16-30</u> Acts 3:1-10 <b>Paper C is Due</b>
10/28	Luke 9:51 – 19:10 Jesus and African American Biblical Interpretation	JG, pp. 45-91	<u>Luke 16:19-31</u> Acts 3:11-26 <b>Quiz 4</b>
11/4	Luke 19:11 – 24:53	JG, pp. 93-129.	<u>Luke 24:28-35</u> Acts 4:1-12
11/11	Theology and Practical Application of the Synoptic Gospels Acts 1 – 13	Jipp, chs. 1- 4	Group Case Studies: Immigration, Incarceration, Wealth and Possessions, and leadership. Acts 4:13-22 <u>Acts 2:29-36</u> <b>Paper D is Due</b>
11/18	Acts 14 – 28 Pentecostal Theology /	Jipp, chs. 5-8	<u>Acts 10:34-48</u> Acts 4:23-31

	Traditions		<b>Quiz 5</b>
11/25 – SBL	No Class		
12/2 - Thanksgiving			
12/9 – Final exam			<b>Paper E is Due</b>