

## **EMB 1501: Introduction to the New Testament – Part I**

Tuesday 14:00-17:00

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### **Purpose**

This course is the first part of a two-part introductory survey. The course acquaints the student with a number of common and significant issues that scholars and other students of the New Testament gospels have experienced when reading these texts – in other words, a foretaste of the feast to come for those who would continue in this line of inquiry.

**Outcomes** – By the end of this course the student will be able to:

1. Describe each of the canonical gospels as a distinctive narrative
2. Demonstrate acquaintance with the manuscript tradition of the New Testament and with the Synoptic Problem (Two Document Hypothesis)
3. Contrast original and contemporary contexts of the canonical gospels and explain how habitual ways of reading these texts may be problematical or promising
4. Practice a committed critical style of theological conversation with the biblical text, especially vis-à-vis Christology

**Student Assessment** will be based upon:

1. Regular attendance with informed participation in plenary discussion (10 %)
2. Constructive and insightful contribution to small-group work (15%)
3. Timely and proper completion of four written assignments (75%)

### **Textbooks**

1. *The Christian Bible* (including the Apocrypha; preferably, the Revised Standard Version or the New Revised Standard Version)
2. Burton H. Throckmorton. *Gospel Parallels*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992
3. Raymond E. Brown, S.S. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1997
4. Bart D. Ehrman. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012

## Course Outline

- | <b>Tragedy</b> | <b>Gospel of Mark</b>  |
|----------------|--|
| 1.             | 15 September 2015: Introduction / Myth Criticism<br>Ehrman 1-16; Brown 3-47                |
| 2.             | 22 September 2015: Historical Criticism: Who? When? Where?<br>Ehrman 88-104; Brown 126-170 |
| 3.             | 29 October 2015: Text-Criticism: What?<br>Ehrman 17-28; Brown 48-54; Throckmorton x-xxvi   |
| <b>Comedy</b>  | <b>Gospel of Matthew</b>   |
| 4.             | 06 October 2015: Redaction Criticism<br>Ehrman 114-130; Brown 171-224                      |
|                | <i>FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE</i>  |
| 5.             | 13 October 2015: Synoptic Problem<br>Ehrman 105-113; Brown 831-840; Throckmorton §§ 1-10   |
| 6.             | 20 October 2015: Second-Temple Judaism<br>Ehrman 49-68; Brown 74-125                       |
| *              | 27 October 2015: <i>READING WEEK (no class)!</i>   |
| <b>Romance</b> | <b>Gospel of Luke</b>  |
| 7.             | 03 November 2015: Redaction Criticism, Again<br>Ehrman 134-153; Brown 225-278              |
|                | <i>SECOND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE</i>   |
| 8.             | 10 November 2015: Ideological Criticism: Feminism<br>Brown 27-28 (#11)                     |
| 9.             | 17 November 2015: (Greco-) Roman Empire<br>Ehrman 29-48; Brown 55-70                       |

**Satire (Irony)                      Gospel of John**

10.    24 November 2015:    Comparative Criticism  
         Ehrman 184-197; Brown 333-382

THIRD WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE

11.    01 December 2015:    Theological Criticism: Anti-Judaism  
         Ehrman 92-93; 435-438
12.    08 December 2015:    The Quest(ion) of the Historical Jesus  
         Ehrman 237-258; Brown 817-830

- \*      15 December 2015:    FOURTH WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE

**Written Assignments**

*1. First (due 06 October 2015):* In 2-3 pages – double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point type – discuss ONE of the ways in which the Gospel of Mark was a “surprising” text to you. Be sure to explain WHY you found it surprising: for example, the basis on which you were expecting to read a different kind of story; and HOW exactly the surprise presented itself to you in the text. In other words, what kind of a story did you expect to read in the Gospel of Mark versus the kind of story that you found there? If you were not surprised in any way, explain why and show how this understanding has been confirmed. Answering the question of “why” should clarify your exegetical presuppositions, which is to say “the (canonical) gospel” which you have carried around in your head. “How” you were surprised by the Gospel of Mark means describing with reference to chapter and verse where exactly in the text the indicated surprise occurred as well as elaborating the manner in which it happened. Assume for the purposes of this paper that Mark 16:8 was the “more original” ending of the text.

*2. Second (due 03 November 2015):* In 3-5 pages – double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point type – discuss the Gospel of Matthew, first, by comparing it with the Gospel of Mark and, then, by comparing the Gospel of Matthew with at least one other Second-Temple Jewish text. Make sure that you address the following issues:

- i)*      How is Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew different than Jesus in the Gospel of Mark? Be sure to refer to specific texts (chapter and verse) in both books. For example, you might compare: Matt 1:1-2:23 and Mark 1:1; or Matt 3:1-4:17 and Mark 1:2-13; or Matt 13:1-52 and Mark 4:1-34; or Matt 27:32-61 and Mark 15:21-47; or Matt 27:62-28:20 and Mark 16:1-8. N.B. these examples are not the only important texts to be considered!
- ii)*     Be sure to explain why AND how the Two-Source (Two-Document) Hypothesis is or is not important for the preceding comparison.

- iii) Identify some of the ways in which the Gospel of Matthew is a typical Second Temple (Early Jewish) writing. How does this similarity form part of your answers to the first two questions? What, if anything, is different in the Gospel of Matthew vis-à-vis these other (Second Temple/Early Jewish) texts?

3. *Third (due 24 November 2014)*: In 3-5 pages – double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point type – explain why you agree and / or disagree with the author of the Gospel of Luke that he (or she) has written a “better” gospel (cf. Luke 1:1), taking as your exegetical focus the question of how women are depicted in the Gospel of Luke and how both men and women readers of the text might be affected by such a portrayal. In your discussion, be sure to consider both those aspects of the text which strongly support your conclusion, and those aspects which appear to argue against it.

4. *Fourth (due 15 December 2015)*: In 2-3 pages – double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point type – discuss “who Jesus (really) is” according to the four canonical gospels. Be sure to provide a summary description of the figure of Jesus as he distinctively appears in each of them. Explain, then, how the modern quest for the historical Jesus is a function of the canonical “Jesus-es” and why you think that this quest matters and / or makes no difference to the question of “who Jesus (really) is.” What role, if any, does the Gospel of John play in your answer?