

## **EMB3654: The Gospel of Mark and Christian Origins**

Thursday 11:00-13:00

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this course is to facilitate a more detailed and a more comprehensive understanding of the Gospel of Mark both as early Christian text and as (post-) modern Christian scripture. Attention will be paid especially to issues of narrative composition, the historical contexts of interpretation, and the lingering ideology – or “theo-logic” – of the other possible world which the text projects.

### **Methodology**

The outline for the course indicates the order in which we will focus on different texts and aspects of the Gospel of Mark. It is assumed that students (and professor) will have read the whole story at least once (a week). Throughout the course we will be asking how what we discover about the Gospel of Mark “here” confirms and / or changes what we previously thought about the text as a whole.

The first half of each class will be conducted as a Bible Study focussed on the text for the week indicated in the course outline. Students should consult what is said about this text in at least two different scholarly commentaries on the Gospel of Mark (see appended bibliography below) in order to become aware of what other attentive readers have deemed to be significant questions vis-a-vis the text as well as possible answers to these questions. Students should also keep track of their own questions about the text and how they are inclined to answer these and why these answers make sense to them. In the second half of each class, there will be an informal “follow-up” lecture in which the professor will further develop selected observations about the topic for the day.

The two written assignments are opportunities for students to synthesize what they are learning about the Gospel of Mark as a whole and, in the final written assignment, to develop their own (exegetical) reading of a specific text or aspect of the Gospel of Mark. Students should consult with the professor regarding their focus for the final written assignment.

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

1. Describe the Gospel of Mark in greater detail and more comprehensively, including issues of narrative composition and the historical contexts of interpretation.
2. Discuss the Gospel of Mark both as early Christian text and as (post-) modern Christian scripture, including the problem of the political ideology projected by it.

### **Student Assessment**

1. Regular attendance with informed participation in classroom discussion (25 %)
2. Two written assignments (75% = 15% + 60%)

## Course Outline

1. 17 September 2015: Mark 1:1  
Beginning of God's Son's Gospel
  2. 24 September 2015: Mark 1:9-13 [6:1-6a]  
The Figure of John the Baptist
  3. 01 October 2015: Mark 16:1-8 [8:31; 10:45; 15:45]  
The Resurrection of Jesus
  4. 08 October 2015: Mark 15:33-39  
The Death of Jesus
- FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE*
5. 15 October 2015: Mark 13:24-31 [15:55-65]  
The (Apocalyptic) Son of Man
  6. 22 October 2015: Mark 10:17-31 [9:42-50; 10:13-16]  
The Kingdom of God
- \* 29 October 2015: *READING WEEK (no class)!*
7. 05 November 2015: Mark 8:11-9:29  
The Pivot (Anagnorosis + Peripeteia)
  8. 12 November 2015: Mark 7:24-30  
The Syrophenician Woman
  9. 19 November 2015: Mark 5:24-34  
The Woman with an Issue of Blood
  10. 26 November 2015: Mark 5:1-20  
The Gerasene Demoniac
  11. 03 December 2015: Mark 4:1-34  
Teaching „in Parables“
  12. 10 December 2015: Mark 2:1-3:6 [7:1-23]  
The Question of Judaism
- FINAL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE*

## Written Assignments

### 1. *First Written Assignment* (due 08 October 2015 = 15%)

In a paper of 3-5 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 point type) describe, first, how the Gospel of Mark begins (= Mark 1:1-15) and ends (= Mark 16:1-8) the story that it tells about Jesus of Galilee; and, then, develop this description of the beginning (prologue) and ending (epilogue) of the Gospel of Mark into a summary statement regarding the kind of story (or "genre") these most probably would frame. This is not meant to be a research paper but a synthesis of what you already know plus what you will have read and heard about the Gospel of Mark in the first three classes of this course. The purpose of the paper is to provide a provisional "theoretical" framework within which to read the rest of the intervening text.

### 2. *Final Written Assignment* (due 10 December 2015 = 60%)

In a paper of 12-15 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 point type) select, first, a specific episode or other unit of the Gospel of Mark that you consider to be a particularly "telling text" and explain why you deem it to be so. Then, describe in detail and with exegetical precision those features of this text which strike you as being especially important. Again, be sure to explain why you deem them to be so: i.e., how they make a significant difference to our understanding of this text and / or some aspect of the Gospel of Mark as a whole. Then, in conclusion, demonstrate how your reading of this "telling text" belongs to the overall story of the Gospel of Mark. In other words, if what you say about the text is true, it should "reverberate" elsewhere in the same work. This is meant to be a research paper. Students should consult with the professor regarding the choice of focus. The primary purpose, however, is not to rehearse the history of modern biblical scholarship on the text, but to demonstrate that the student has learned to read the Gospel of Mark itself with increased acumen and understanding.

## **Bibliography: Some Commentaries in English**

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