

EMB 3654 / 6654 HS: The Gospel of Mark and Christian Origins
Winter 2020 (Thursday 9:00-11:00am)

Prof. Leif E. Vaage EC 202: 416-585-4532
Office hours: by appointment
E-mail: leif.vaage@utoronto.ca

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to facilitate a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the Gospel of Mark both as early Christian text and as late-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 another 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 the students (as well as the professor) will have read the whole gospel at least once (a week). Throughout the course we will be asking how what we are discovering about the Gospel of Mark confirms and / or changes what we previously thought about it.

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 about their topic before beginning work on 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 late-modern Christian scripture, including the problem of the political ideology projected by it.

Student Assessment

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

Grading System

A+ (90-100)
A (85-89)
A- (80-84)
B+ (77-79)
B (73-76)
B- (70-72)

Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

Late work. Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. A penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor. The absolute deadline for the course is the examination day scheduled for the course. Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm>

or college grading policy.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at

<http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>

The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a

direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* and the Graduate program Handbooks (linked from

<http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks>

and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871>.

A student who plagiarizes in this course will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges

http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm.

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of *Behaviour on Academic Matters*

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>.

Back-up copies. Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.

Obligation to check email. At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN system. Information is available at www.utorid.utoronto.ca. The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. *Students should check utoronto email regularly* for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Email communication with the course instructor. The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. *All email communications from students should be sent from a utoronto email address.* Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the

instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses.

Written Assignments

1. First Written Assignment (due 23 January 2020 = 15%)

In a paper of 2-3 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 point type) discuss the ending of the Gospel of Mark (16:1-8), specifically as the conclusion to a "gospel." This is not a research paper but a summary statement of your point of view coming into this course and after a couple of classes. The purpose of the paper is to articulate, provisionally, the operative "theoretical" framework within which you will be trying to develop a better understanding of the Gospel of Mark.

2. Final Written Assignment (due 09 April 2020 = 60%)

In a paper of 10-12 pages (double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 point type), choose a particular episode or topic in the Gospel of Mark which you take to be especially "telling" for that work's overall purpose. Be sure to explain in the paper why you think that this is so. Students should consult with the professor before beginning to work on the paper. Describe with exegetical precision those features of the text or topic which strike you as especially important. Again, be sure to explain why you think that these are so: e.g., how they make a significant difference to the development of a given theme in the text. Finally, demonstrate how your reading of the text or topic illuminates the storyline of the Gospel of Mark as a whole. In other words, if what you find there is exegetically true and "telling," the implications should "reverberate" throughout the Gospel of Mark as a whole. This is a research paper. Its primary purpose, however, is not to rehearse the history of modern biblical scholarship but to show that the student has learned to read the Gospel of Mark with increased acumen and general comprehension.

Textbooks

There is no assigned textbook for the course. Each student, however, should choose two different commentaries on the Gospel of Mark to accompany their reading of this biblical book throughout the course and be prepared each week to indicate what is said in these about a given text or topic under discussion in class. A list of possible commentaries in English is appended below. Students should note the publications cited in their chosen commentaries in support of a given interpretation and plan to read some of those as well. This will be especially helpful as research for the final written assignment. A second list of additional bibliography on particular texts and topics is also appended below.

Course Outline

1. 09 January 2020: Beginning at the end: Mark 16:1-8
What can this mean in a "gospel"?

2. 16 January 2020: What kind of a “story” is the Gospel of Mark?
Can a “gospel” be a “tragedy”?
3. 23 January 2020: When / where / why / by whom was Mark written?
What is “historical” interpretation?

FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE
4. 30 January 2020: The “violent” figure of Jesus in Mark (1:1-16:8)
Where the tale ‘turns’: anagnorosis + peripeteia (8:11-9:29)
5. 06 February 2020: The “(un)entitled” figure of Jesus in Mark (9:2-13:36)
Son of God / Man / David / Mary (cf. 6:3)
6. 13 February 2020: The “passive” figure of Jesus in Mark (14:1-16:8)
The sense of the end
- * 20 February 2020: *READING WEEK (no class)!*
7. 27 February 2020: Starting over: the “pre-figure” of John (1:1-15; 6:14-29)
In my beginning is my end?
8. 05 March 2020: Unlearning with Jesus (1:21-4:35; cf. 11:1-13:36)
What do the parables “exemplify”?
9. 12 March 2020: Flunking discipleship (1:16-14:72; 16:7)
The Twelve and Jesus’ family
10. 19 March 2020: But you can go home again! The so-called minor characters
Alternative models of discipleship, church, etc.
11. 26 March 2020: The meaning of miracles (5:1-20, 24b-34; 7:24-30)
Have you had yours today?
12. 02 April 2020: And “Judaism” (2:1-3:6; 7:1-23)?
The historical Jesus?
- 09 April 2020: FINAL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE

Bibliography: Some Commentaries in English

- Gould, Ezra P. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark*. ICC, 27. 3rd ed. New York: Scribner's, 1901.
- Swete, Henry B. *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan, 1920.
- Rawlinson, A.E.J. *St. Mark: With Introduction, Commentary and Additional Notes*. Westminster Commentaries. London: Methuen, 1925.
- Carrington, Philip. *According to Mark: A Running Commentary on the Oldest Gospel*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- Cranfield, C.E.B. *The Gospel according to St. Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963.
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- Achtemeier, Paul. *Mark*. Proclamation Commentaries. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986.
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- Evans, Craig A. *Mark 8:27-16:20*. WBC, 34b. Dallas: Word, 2001.
- Witherington, Ben. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Donahue, John R., S.J., and Daniel J. Harrington, S.J. *The Gospel of Mark*. Sacra Pagina, 2. Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 2002.

Some Additional Bibliography

- ACHTEMEIER, Paul J. The Origin and Function of the Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 198-221 [Mark 4:35-8:26].
- AHEARNE-KROLL, Stephen P. "Who are my Mother and my Brothers?" Family Relations and Family Language in the Gospel of Mark. *Journal of Religion* 81/1 (2001): 1-25 [Mark 3:20-35].
- BAILEY, James L. Experiencing the Kingdom of God as a Little Child: A Rereading of Mark 10:13-16. *Word & World* 15 (1995): 58-67 [Mark 10:1-12, 13-16].
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