

NT 352: The Gospel of Mark

Fall 2007

Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Ph.D.

sahearne-kroll@mtso.edu

740-362-3368

Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this seminar we will discuss the second Gospel in detail in its literary, social and cultural context. We will also explore the many unique dimensions of the Gospel in order to determine Mark's understanding of Jesus, God, the disciples and Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

COURSE GOALS:

1. To examine the Gospel of Mark as a complete narrative that communicates to its audience as such.
2. To examine the Gospel of Mark in its ancient literary, social and cultural context.
3. To examine individual stories within the Gospel to determine how they fit into the larger narrative.
4. To employ various critical methods of biblical interpretation in order to help understand the narrative in its ancient context and in today's North American context.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To describe the basic narrative flow of the Gospel of Mark.
2. To be able to articulate a critical interpretation of any passage in the Gospel of Mark.
3. To articulate the main themes and possible social issues that Mark is trying to communicate.
4. To articulate Mark's perspective on the relationship among Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection and the role they play in salvation.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

1. Attendance at all class sessions; the only exception being a serious personal illness or family situation that needs your attention (e.g., serious illness, death, injury, etc.).
2. Careful preparation of all assigned reading with an **EMPHASIS ON THE PRIMARY TEXTS** (i.e., the reading from the particular passage from Mark for that session). The primary literature should be prepared first and foremost *before* reading the secondary material.
3. Attentive and active participation in all class sessions. This is a seminar, which means that you must come ready to participate in class discussion in order for this class to be a success.

GRADING:

Your grade will consist of the following assignments:

1. Active preparation and participation in the course (40%)
2. Proposal for term paper or project due Monday October 15th (15%)
3. 12-15 page term paper or project report due on Dec. 10th (35%)
4. Oral Performance of the Gospel (10%).

FORMAT OF EACH CLASS SESSION:

This class will be conducted as a seminar, which is basically one long discussion facilitated by the professor. There will be occasional mini-lectures, but the majority of the meetings will be discussion of the material at hand. You should come to each class session with the following completed in this order:

1. You should read carefully and critically the section from Mark assigned for the class. By carefully, I mean you should read with attention to literary context, to characterization, and to details of how the story is told. By critically, I mean you should read by not taking anything for granted. You should ask difficult questions of the text (e.g., “Why does Jesus call the Syrophenician woman a dog in ch. 7?” “Why do the disciples repeatedly misunderstand who Jesus is?” “Why does Jesus call Peter ‘Satan’ in ch. 8?”), and try to think of as many answers to these questions as possible. You should also read the text through the lens of the social and cultural realities of the ancient world (e.g., social setting of the story, social location of the characters, what people thought about exorcism and healing, what people understood about blood, what Greco-Roman deities or religious phenomena might be important to consider in understanding Mark’s rhetoric, etc.).
2. You should formulate, preferably in writing (a paragraph or two) your understanding of what the passage means.
3. You should then, and only then, read the secondary readings assigned for the class, including the sections of the commentary corresponding to assigned passage. Ask critical questions of the author whenever you disagree with what he/she thinks. Try to figure out his/her perspective, why he/she might be arguing what he/she does, and then critique it.
4. Formulate at least two questions or issues you wish to discuss in class and bring them to class.

We will begin each class by going around the group and giving everyone a chance to raise the questions he/she prepared for class (#4). Then we will begin the discussion, which will be based upon your questions. I, of course, will also bring issues to class that I think are important to raise.

FINAL PAPER OR PROJECT:

The final paper should be executed in two stages:

1. **Paper/Project Proposal:** No later than Monday October 15th, you should submit a proposal for your final paper/project of no longer than two double-spaced pages. The proposal should contain an initial thesis statement and description for the plan of your paper. An initial bibliography of primary and secondary sources is required. Please submit the proposal to me by uploading it to your folder in the course Sharepoint site. I will return it to that folder by the next class and you may download it at your leisure. **FORMAT FOR THE PROPOSAL:** Typed, double-spaced, 12-point Times, Times New Roman or some similar size font, no larger than 1.25 inch margins, no more than 2 pages, no less than 1 page, free of errors.
2. **Final Paper/Project:** No later than Monday December 10th, you should submit a 12-15-page paper/project report (same format as short papers with regard to font, margins, etc.) that follows through with the feedback you received from me regarding the proposal. (Note: 12-15 pages means that you have **NO LESS THAN 12 full pages and NO MORE THAN 15 full pages.**)
 1. **Project:** For this option, you can do anything of your choosing that clearly demonstrates critical engagement with the Gospel of Mark. Use your imagination to create something that will directly or indirectly impact your future ministry, speak to a cultural situation that you think can be informed by some aspect of the Gospel, or inform your own thinking and acting in response to the Gospel. Whatever you choose to do, you must submit a final report of the project that meets the following minimal requirements:
 - a. The report must be 12-15 pages.
 - b. The report must describe the nature of the project in detail.
 - c. The report must **CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE CRITICAL AND CONSISTENT ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GOSPEL OF MARK;** in other words, you must ground your

project in the Gospel, justify the nature and structure of your project as related to something in the Gospel, and use secondary sources from critical biblical or theological studies to inform your project.

2. **Term Paper (required for MTS students)**: The 12-15 page paper can be on any topic dealing with the Gospel of Mark. You can do a close exegetical reading of one passage, a discussion of one section of the Gospel, or a thematic study of one theme that runs through a large portion, if not the whole, of the Gospel. You can also do a social or historical study on one aspect of the Gospel that might illuminate a passage or section of the Gospel as a whole. This is a research paper, so you should consult a variety of solid secondary sources (e.g., critical dictionaries, commentaries, monographs, essays in books, and articles in peer reviewed journals) and incorporate them into your argument in a careful and critical way. Remember, however, that this is a paper on Mark, not a book report on the secondary sources. You must argue your opinion about Mark. The use of secondary sources should aid you in effective argumentation of your opinion. If you simply report what other people say about your topic, then you will not have successfully completed the assignment. **PLEASE BE MINDFUL THAT THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WILL NEED THE SAME SOURCES THAT YOU ARE USING. IF POSSIBLE, WORK AS MUCH AS YOU CAN IN THE LIBRARY WITHOUT TAKING OUT ALL THE BOOKS ON MARK.** Use ATLA's online religion index. Many journals are now on line in electronic form. You can now print out many articles directly from the computer rather than having to make copies. Use this valuable resource!

Your essay **must** contain:

- (a) A well-formed thesis statement placed somewhere in the introductory paragraph;
- (b) A main body that demonstrates your thesis in a clear and logical way that makes regular reference to John;
- (c) A conclusion that summarizes your argument and offers the implications of your thesis for further study of John.

Grading of the project and essay will be based upon the three elements just mentioned as well as:

- (a) Clarity of presentation, which includes well-formed sentences and paragraphs that hang together throughout the essay to communicate your points well;
- (b) Level of knowledge of the topic you chose to write about;
- (c) Comprehension of the Gospel's articulation of the topic you chose to write about;
- (d) Proper use of the English language (spelling, grammar, syntax, punctuation and usage). **BEWARE: I WILL TAKE OFF 0.25 POINTS FOR EACH OF THESE TYPES OF ERRORS; THESE POINTS ADD UP QUICKLY SO PROOFREAD YOUR PAPERS VERY CAREFULLY.**

COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS:

The primary way that I will communicate with the class is through email. I may change the assignment that is due for a particular class, or I will notify you regarding a change in the schedule for the class. Therefore, it is very important that you **CHECK YOUR EMAIL EVERY DAY** for notices regarding the class. If there is a change of assignment that I communicate through email, it is the student's responsibility to complete this assignment on time.

SHAREPOINT WEBSITE:

The syllabus and written assignments will be posted on the course Sharepoint website (<http://academics.mtso.edu>), which is new to MTSO this year. You will be able to download the readings that are not in the required books. There will also be some other potentially useful documents on the website. They will help you review grammar and syntax and give you some orientation towards good secondary sources from which to draw.

COURSE BOOKS:

All books listed below will be put on reserve in the library.

Required Books:

Donahue, John R. and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Sacra Pagina; Liturgical Press) ISBN: 0-8146-5804-0.

Anderson and Moore = Anderson, Janice Capel and Stephen D. Moore, *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992)

Rhoads = Rhoads, David, *Reading Mark, Engaging the Gospel* (Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004) ISBN: 080063649X.

Juel = Juel, Donald, *A Master of Surprise: Mark Interpreted* (Augsburg Fortress) OUT OF PRINT, BUT MAY BE ABLE TO FIND ON USED BOOK WEBSITES (e.g., www.abebooks.com; www.bibliofind.com, etc.). I will put this book on reserve for you to copy essays as needed.

Euripides, *Bacchae*. Translated by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998) ISBN 9780872203921

OR online at <http://www.mala.bc.ca/~Johnstoi/euripides/euripides.htm> or

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Aabo%3Aatl%2C0006%2C017&query=1>.

Supplemental Reading:

Boring, M. Eugene. *Mark: A Commentary*. New Testament Library; WJK Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0664221072.

Recommended Reading:

Gaventa et al. = Gaventa, Beverly, et al., *The Ending of Mark and the Ends of God: Essays in Honor of Donald Harrisville Juel* (WJK Press, 2005) ISBN: 664227392.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Monday Aug. 27th

Introduction to the course and the performance of the Gospel of Mark.

Recommended Reading:

Holly Hearon, "The Implications of Orality for Studies of the Biblical Text," pp. 3-20 in Horsley, et al.; Whitney T. Shiner, "Memory Technology and the Composition of Mark," pp. 147-165 in Horsley et al.; Richard Horsley, "A Response to Robert Gundry's Review of Hearing the Whole Story," *JSNT* 26 (2003): 151-69.

Monday Sept. 10th

Primary Reading: Mark 1; Euripides *Bacchae*

Secondary Reading:

Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, 1-21; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Jews," *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (4, 1999): 393-408; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Mark and His Readers: The Son of God among Greeks and Romans," *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2, 2000): 85-100.

Optional Reading: Rhoads, 1-43

Monday Sept. 17th

Primary Reading: Mark 2:1-3:6

Secondary Reading:

John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First Century Judaism," *New Testament Studies* 38 (1992): 448-66. Mary Ann Tolbert, "Is it Lawful on the Sabbath to Do Good or to Do Harm: Mark's Ethics of Religious Practice," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 23 (1996): 199-214.

Monday Sept. 24th

Primary Reading: Mark 3:7-4:33

Secondary Reading:

Juel, 45-63; John R. Donahue, "How Does a Parable Mean?" pp. 1-27 in *The Gospel in Parable*; Whitney T. Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric*, 199-215.

Monday Oct. 1st

Primary Reading: Mark 4:35-5:43

Secondary Reading:

Juel, 65-75; Rhoads, 140-75.

Monday Oct. 8th

Primary Reading: Mark 6

Secondary Reading:

Janice Capel Anderson, "Feminist Criticism: The Dancing Daughter," pp. 103-134 in *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*; Suzanne Watts Henderson, "'Concerning the Loaves': Comprehending Incomprehension in Mark 6:45-52," *JSNT* 83 (S, 2001): 3-26.

Monday Oct. 15th

Outline for Term Paper Due

Primary Reading: Mark 7:1-8:21

Secondary Reading:

Rhoads, 63-94

John C. Poirier, "Purity Beyond the Temple in Second Temple Judaism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122 (2003): 247-65; Jonathan Klawans, "Idolatry, Incest, and Impurity: Moral Defilement in Ancient Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods* 29 (1998): 391-415.

Monday Oct. 22nd

Primary Reading: Mark 8:22-9:50

Secondary Reading:

Narry F. Santos, "Jesus' Paradoxical Teaching in Mark 8:35; 9:35; and 10:43-44," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (625, Ja-Mr 2000): 15-25; Joanna Dewey, "'Let Them Renounce Themselves and Take Up Their Cross': A Feminist Reading of Mark 8:34 in Mark's Social and Narrative World," pp. 23-36 in *A Feminist Companion to Mark* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff; Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004).

Monday Oct. 29th

Primary Reading: Mark 10

Secondary Reading:

Richard Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel*, 203-230; Rhoads, 44-62; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Significance of Mark 10:45 Among Gentile Christians," *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997): 371-82.

Monday Nov. 5th

Primary Reading: Mark 11-12; Ezekiel 39:21-47:12 (skim 39:48-42:20 and 45-46)

Secondary Reading:

Paul Brooks Duff, "The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco-Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem," *JBL* 111/1 (1992): 55-71; Dan Bahat, "The Herodian Temple," pp. 38-58 in *Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Monday Nov. 12th

Primary Reading: Mark 13-14

Secondary Reading:

John K. Riches, "Conflicting Mythologies: Mythological Narrative in the Gospel of Mark," *JSNT* 84 (2001): 29-50; Juel, 77-88; Review Adela Yarbro Collins' two articles on "Son of God".

Monday Nov. 19th

Thanksgiving Break; No Class

Monday Nov. 26th

Primary Reading: Mark 15:1-16:8

Secondary Reading:

Whitney T. Shiner, "The Ambiguous Pronouncement of the Centurion and the Shrouding of Meaning in Mark," *JSNT* 78 (2000): 3-22. Donald Juel, "A Disquieting Silence: The Matter of the Ending," pp. 1-13 in Gaventa, et al.; Brian Blount, "Is the Joke on Us? Mark's Irony, Mark's God, and Mark's Ending," pp. 15-32 in **Gaventa**, et al.

Monday Dec. 3rd

Performance of the Gospel of Mark

Primary Reading: Preparation of assigned passages

Secondary Reading:

David J. Lull, "Interpreting Mark's Story of Jesus' Death: Toward a Theology of Suffering," pp. 1-12 in *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1985; C. Clifton Black, "The Persistence of the Wounds," pp. 47-58 in S. A. Brown and P. D. Miller, eds., *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, "Challenging the Divine: LXX Psalm 21 in the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Mark," pp. 119-48 in Tom Shepherd and Geert van Oyen, eds., *Mark's Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus*. Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2006.

Monday Dec. 6th

Final Exam Week; No class; Term paper due by 3pm in my office.