



Discovering the Gospels and Acts
Religion 211 Fall 2008
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Audience

This class is especially designed for non-majors in the department of Philosophy and Religion. Majors are required to take REL 220, followed by OT/NT courses at the 300 level. Those persons undecided about a major may count either REL 211 or REL 212 toward a major, but must also take REL 220 and a 300 level Bible class.

Objectives

The objective of this class is to master the content of the first five books of the New Testament, to understand how and why they were written, and to be able to understand their meaning for today.

Specifically, the student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

1. List the major events in the life of Jesus and in the book of Acts in chronological order.
2. Place the didactic passages in their narrative framework.
3. Explain the facts we know about the composition of the Gospels and Acts, and discuss the major interpretations of those facts.
4. Explain sound hermeneutical principles for interpreting the Gospels and Acts.
5. Understand any given passage in the Gospel and Acts in the light of what it said to its original hearers, and explain its meaning for today.

Texts:

1. *The Harmony of the Gospels* (NASV). Edited by Thomas and Gundry.
2. John Drane. *Introduction to the New Testament*.
3. *Discovering the Gospels and Acts*. ("WB" in Schedule and Assignments)

Methodology

Quizzes

Because mastery of the content of any passage is fundamental to understanding its meaning, induction will be the main method of instruction at the beginning of this course. The student will be sent to the Biblical text repeatedly to discover what it actually says. Half-remembered Sunday school lessons will not suffice. Only a fresh and thorough encounter with the text will provide the background necessary to understand God's word to us. In this first section of the class a substantial portion of each hour will be spent in answering questions and discussing problems raised by that session's homework. Hence it is imperative that each student do that homework. Only through regular, diligent completion of the assignments will the student profit from the course. It will take the average student between two and three hours to complete the homework for each class session. Daily quizzes on the homework will encourage the early mastery of the content of the Gospels and Acts. At the completion of the workbook assignments the instructor will collect them to make sure all questions are answered. Quiz grades will be lowered by a factor related to the amount of uncompleted work. Students may check their completed answers in the workbook with other students, but must not copy each others' answers. In addition to the quizzes there will be three unit exams over the lecture material and reading assignments.

After we have mastered the content of the Gospels and Acts, we will discuss how and why these works were written. Here the course will be more like the traditional lecture course, with the students reading secondary sources, and the instructor pointing out the most important ideas.

Papers

Students will submit 1250-word research papers exegeting a difficult passage. Each paper should be in proper academic form and use English correctly. The instructor will not read any paper farther than the tenth solecism, spelling mistake, or typographical error. To assist the students to write a satisfactory paper, the instructor will work with them through all phases of the research process and provide help through his website. Further requirements are listed there and are considered to be part of this syllabus.

Exam

The final exam will test the student's ability to identify the problem and the solution for the various hard passages listed at the end of the syllabus. Students who wish to see their papers and final exams must call for them at the professor's office or include a self-addressed stamped envelope with their exams.

Grades

The final grade will be determined by four factors: the quizzes and unit exams, the preparation of the research paper, the research paper itself, and the final exam. In order to be eligible to write the paper, a student must maintain a 75% average on the quizzes and unit exams. A student who notifies the instructor that she will miss a class at least two days in advance in writing may take that quiz without penalty. A student who misses a class without giving the instructor the required notice and misses a quiz may take a make-up after a payment of \$10 to the Childcare Ministry of the Free Methodist Church.

The instructor reserves the right to investigate suspected cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of dishonesty by any means he deems necessary, including retesting the student. Copying another student's work whether on the workbook, a quiz, an exam, or a paper is cheating. Students may compare answers on workbooks only after they have done the required work individually. The instructor will be the sole judge in any case of suspected dishonesty, and reserves the right to determine the punishment when he is convinced the student has been dishonest. The normal penalty for dishonesty is to fail the course. Because of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20) students should not expect that mercy extended to students in the past in matters of cheating or academic requirements will be a precedent or a requirement in their own cases.

What is the difference between working together and cheating in the workbook and take-home exams?

Working together begins with working while cheating involves avoiding work. Answering some questions and having another student answer other questions, and then submitting all the answers as one's own is cheating. Students are working together only when they begin by working individually and then compare the results, changing their own work only after they understand why their partner's answers are better than the ones they discovered on their own. In other words, in order to work together with another student, one must complete each of the following steps:

1. Individually read all of the assigned material.
2. Individually write an answer to every question.
3. Compare one's answers with the partner's answers.
4. If the answers differ, determine which are better.
5. Fully understand why the different answer is better.
6. Change the original answer to reflect one's own improved understanding of the question and its answer.

Any collaboration other than these six steps in the proper order is cheating. Working together involves more effort than working alone, because it requires that the individual fully completes the assignment before collaborating with a partner. If the student's goal is to save time and minimize effort, working together is not an effective strategy because the latter four steps of the process require additional time and effort. Students, however, are encouraged to work together because the extra time spent discussing the question with the partner often results in a better understanding of the subject.

The quizzes, the preparation of the paper, the paper itself, and the exam will each make up 1/4 of the final grade. An average on the quizzes and tests of 0-74% will be worth no points, 75-79% .25 points, 80-84% .5 points, 85-89% .75 points, 90-94% .88 points, and 95-100% 1 point. Each of the last four stages of the paper preparation will be worth .25 points, and must be done sequentially. The student may not go on to the next stage until she has completed the previous one successfully. No paper will be considered without the necessary preparation. For the paper and exam, F = 0, D = .25, C = .5, B = .75, and A = 1. For the final grade 3.75 points are necessary for an A, 3.5 for an A-, 3.25 for a B+, 3 for a B, 2.75 for a B-, 2.5 for a C+, 2 for a C, 1.75 for a C-, and 1.5 for a D.

College policy permits no student more than 3 absences from this course without penalty. Additional absences may result in a reduction of the final grade at the discretion of the instructor. Late work may be accepted at the discretion of the instructor, usually with a 50% reduction in grade for every class session missed.

The instructor expects proper behavior and attire for the class. Eating and drinking are not allowed, nor are hats, muscle shirts, or other clothing which detracts from the seriousness of academic endeavor.

Schedule and Assignments (may be modified if necessary)

| Date | Lecture | Assignment | Evaluation | Paper stage |
|-------------|--|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Sep 5 | What difference does Jesus make? | | | |
| Sep 8 | Why do we need to interpret the Bible? | WB 1 | 9 point quiz | Passage |
| Sep 10 | Bibliographic instruction | WB 2 | 9 point quiz | |
| Sep 12 | Sample exegesis: The infancy narratives | WB 3 | 9 point quiz | |
| Sep 15 | Text criticism and hard passages | Drane 1 & 2 | 18 point quiz | Bibliography |
| Sep 17 | What kind of Messiah were the Jews expecting? | Drane 3 | 9 point quiz | |
| Sep 19 | Pray for Iraq | | | |
| Sep 22 | Pray for Iraq | | | |
| Sep 24 | Pray for Iraq | | | |
| Sep 26 | Catch up day | WB 4-7 | 36 point quiz | Issues |
| Sep 29 | Stages in the ministry of Jesus | Drane 6 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 1 | Stages in the ministry of Jesus | Drane 7-8 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 3 | The message of Jesus | Drane 9 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 6 | Why did Jesus hide his identity? | WB 8 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 8 | How dumb were the disciples? | WB 9 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 10 | How did Jesus pray? | WB 10 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 13 | What difference does the Bible make? | Drane 10 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 15 | Why did people oppose Jesus? | Drane 11 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 20 | Why did Jesus call a woman a dog? and Review for first unit exam | WB 11 | 9 point quiz | Thesis |
| Oct 22 | First unit exam and sample exegesis: The Sermon on the Mount | | 105 point unit exam | |
| Oct 24 | Unique features of Matthew | WB 12 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 27 | Unique features of Mark | WB 13 | 9 point quiz | |
| Oct 29 | Unique features of Luke | WB 14 | 9 point quiz | Rough outline |
| Oct 31 | Unique features of John | WB 15 | 9 point quiz | |
| Nov 3 | Why did Luke write Acts? | WB 16 | 9 point quiz | |
| Nov 5 | When and why were the gospels written? | WB 17 | 9 point quiz | |

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| Nov 7 | Q and the two-source theory | Drane 4 | 9 point quiz | |
| Nov 10 | The case for Matthean priority | Drane 5 | 9 point quiz | Paper |
| Nov 12 | How was Jesus crucified? | WB 17 | 9 point quiz | |
| Nov 14 | Did Jesus rise from the dead? | WB 18 | 9 point quiz | |
| Nov 17 | Is Luke an accurate historian? | WB 19 | 9 point quiz | |
| Nov 19 | Online class: Why did Luke write Acts? | | | |
| Nov 21 | Online class: Who wrote John's gospel? | | | |
| Nov 23 | Why did people become Christians? | WB 20-21 | 18 point quiz | |
| Dec 1 | Review for second unit exam | Drane 12 | 9 point quiz | |
| Dec 3 | Second unit exam and Review for 3 rd unit exam | WB 22 | 9 point quiz 105 point exam | |
| Dec 5 | Third unit exam and review for final | Drane 13 | 9 point quiz 105 point exam | |
| Dec 8 | Further review for final | | | Workbook |
| Dec 10 | Final exam 1-3 PM | | | |

Possible Hard Passages

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|------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Matt 5:17 | Matt 23:14 | Mark 11:23 | Luke 12:33 | John 7:8-10 |
| Matt 5:29 | Matt 24:34 | Mark 11:26 | Luke 14:26 | John 7:53-8:11 |
| Matt 5:39 | Mark 3:28-9 | Mark 13:30 | Luke 16:1-13 | John 12:22-3 |
| Matt 6:13 | Mark 5:39 | Mark 14:61-2 | Luke 16:16 | John 19:23-4 |
| Matt 7:6 | Mark 8:12 | Mark 16:17-8 | Luke 17:36 | John 19:36-7 |
| Matt 10:23 | Mark 9:1 | Luke 2:2 | Luke 17:37 | John 20:17 |
| Matt 10:34 | Mark 9:50 | Luke 4:20-30 | Luke 22:36-8 | John 20:22 |
| Matt 16:18 | Mark 10:18 | Luke 7:28 | John 2:3-7 | Acts 2:44-5 |
| Matt 16:28 | Mark 10:25 | Luke 10:18 | John 2:12-22 | Acts 8:37 |
| Matt 18:11 | Mark 11:14 | Luke 11:23 | John 5:4 | Acts 21:4 |
| Matt 19:9 | | | | |