

SC-540

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS – 2021

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Class modality: online via Canvas and (occasionally) email: ledonne@gmail.com

Office Hours: To be arranged with students upon email request

Email Policy: Please check your HartSem email account regularly.

I. Course Description

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are the earliest surviving accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus. This course will provide a detailed examination of these texts, paying special attention to the distinctive portrait of Jesus that each Gospel presents. We will study these biblical texts in their ancient contexts with attention to their sociological, literary, and theological underpinnings.

II. Objectives

To help students:

- Gain an in-depth comprehension of the Synoptic Gospels
- Explore the historical and social background from which each Gospel derives
- Articulate the similarities and differences among the various portraits of Jesus in the Synoptics
- Critically evaluate secondary scholarship (monographs, articles, essays, commentaries, etc.) by asking questions and challenging arguments based on the student's own biblical analysis

III. Identified Seminary Learning Outcomes:

- To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one's own religion.
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.

IV. Required Texts

1. Bible: New Revised Standard Version

2. Pheme Perkins, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); ISBN: 978-0802865533

3. Anthony Le Donne (ed.), *Mark's Christology: Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021); ISBN 978-0-310-53870-7.

V. Recommended Texts

The following books are recommended. Students may wish to purchase them for their personal libraries. Portions of the following will be provided in pdf form via Canvas.

1. Chris Keith and Larry W. Hurtado, *Jesus among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); ISBN: 978-0801038952

2. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press; Reprint edition, 1996); ISBN-13: 978-0807010297

VI. Course Requirements and Assessments

1. Method of Determining Grade: Your grade will be determined based on the following calculation:

eWorkbooks – 20% (due weekly)

Discussion Forums – 20% (due weekly)

Christology in Mark's Gospel review – 30% (due October 9th)

Final Paper – 30% (due TBA)

A. eWorkbooks are due weekly (with a few exceptions) over the course of the semester. These will be submitted via Canvas in the form of a Word document or pdf. This document will contain three elements: (1) a bullet-point summary of the specified reading; (2) a short reflection on the reading; (3) three critical questions for group discussion. See Canvas for an example of this assignment.

B. Discussion Forums are due weekly (with a few exceptions) over the course of the semester. The student is expected to contribute to class regularly via Canvas by writing thoughtful and respectful comments that demonstrate engagement with the course material.

C. *Christology in Mark's Gospel* review: The student will write a (approx.) 600-word book review of the book *Christology in Mark's Gospel: Four Views*. For this assignment, the student will choose from three options:

1. Compare and contrast the chapters by Huebenthal and Hurtado.

2. Compare and contrast the chapters by Kirk and Winn.
3. Compare and contrast all four primary authors: Huebenthal, Hurtado, Kirk, and Winn. (In choosing the third option, the student may omit the portions written by Le Donne and Keith.)

This review should (a) introduce the topic(s) covered – 100 words; (b) briefly summarize the contents of the chapters – 200 words; (c) offer a critical assessment of each author’s strengths and weaknesses – 200 words; (d) explain which author has the better argument(s) – 100 words.

Consult the final page of this syllabus for a better understanding of how this assignment will be evaluated.

D. Final Paper: The student will write a (approx.) 1200-word paper on *one* of the following topics. You may choose:

1. Compare, contrast, and evaluate the portrayals of Jesus’ temptation in the Synoptics (Mark 1:12-13, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13). Consult and cite at least ten commentaries as a demonstration of seminary-level research. Included in the ten commentaries *must* be selections from the following series: Word Biblical Commentaries; Anchor/Yale Bible Series; New International Critical Commentaries. Consult with the library staff on these and other resources. The following webpage might prove useful: <https://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Temptations.htm>
2. Read Howard Thurman’s short book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Answer: which Synoptic Gospel is most foundational for Thurman’s interpretation of Jesus? Construct your argument based on specific examples from Thurman’s book. (The student is responsible for acquiring a copy of *Jesus and the Disinherited*.)
3. Suggest a different topic to the professor for approval. Good topics will consider texts, themes, or distinctives from each of the three Synoptic Gospels. Consult and cite at least ten commentaries as a demonstration of seminary-level research. Included in the ten commentaries *must* be selections from the following series: Word Biblical Commentaries; Anchor/Yale Bible Series; New International Critical Commentaries. Consult with the library staff on these and other resources.

This final paper is rubric free. Structure your essay logically and coherently using a consistent and recognizable style.

VII. Learning Resources and Expectations

Hartford Seminary Grading Scale

Master's Students:

A (95-100) - Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) - Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

B+(87-89) - Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.

B (83-86) - Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B- (80-82) - Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+ (77-79) - Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.

C (70-76) - Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.

F (below 70) - Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

*Grades range from A to C and F; A+'s and C-'s are not part of the grading system.

**On a 4.0 GPA scale – A (4.00), A- (3.66), B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.66), C+ (2.33), C (2.00) and F (0.00). A grade point average of no less than B- (2.66) is required to maintain good standing. The minimum G.P.A. required for graduation is 2.75.

DMin students: High Pass (95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass (70-82), and Fail (below 70)

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. **Plagiarism exists when:** a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web

based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

Appropriate Classroom Etiquette:

The student is expected to engage with others thoughtfully and respectfully.

Inclusive Language:

Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

Extensions:

Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

Official Handbooks:

For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>

CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

The course schedule is detailed on the Canvas webpage dedicated for this purpose.

THIS FORM INDICATES THE CRITERIA BY WHICH THE PROFESSOR WILL GRADE YOUR *Christology in Mark's Gospel* review.

Review Evaluation Sheet

To: _____

From: Dr. Anthony Le Donne

I. The following criteria are rated according to these symbols:

0 = Lack of effort; 1 = Inadequate; 2 = Adequate; 3 = More than adequate; 4 = Superior

Demonstration of knowledge of selected work	0	1	2	3	4
Awareness of authors' aims and perspective	0	1	2	3	4
Treatment of significant issues	0	1	2	3	4
Fairness in handling the author's point of view	0	1	2	3	4
Organization of statements/presentation	0	1	2	3	4
Accuracy of statements/presentation	0	1	2	3	4
Written presentation:					
Literary style	0	1	2	3	4
Spelling/grammar	0	1	2	3	4

II. The following need(s) attention if checked:

- 1. The review needs more balance.
- 2. The review is too long.
- 3. Number pages consecutively throughout.
- 4. The review is not sufficiently thorough.
- 5. The review uses direct quotations too much rather than summarizing.
- 6. The review needs to have been proofread by someone proficient in English grammar.
- 7. The student needs to read the assignment directions more carefully.

GRADE: