Jesus and the Gospels (NT 3320)
Monday 7–9:40 PM

Aims of the Course
1. Students will increase their mastery of the content, literary structure, and primary concerns of the New Testament Gospels and of Jesus’ life, ministry, teachings, death, and resurrection as presented therein.

2. Students will gain in their appreciation of the Gospels and other ancient writings (especially the Pauline letters) as historical evidence for Jesus’ life and teachings.

3. Students will identify the central theological convictions expressed in the Gospels and explore their continuing importance for Christian faith and discipleship.

Required Texts
1. A recent translation of the Bible (e.g., ESV, RSV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, NJB, REB). Two excellent tools for study are the HarperCollins Study Bible and the NIV Study Bible, which afford the reader quick access to representative mainline Protestant and evangelical lines of interpretation, respectively.

2. Richard Burridge, Four Gospels, One Jesus (Eerdmans).


Course Requirements
1. Prompt attendance and participation in class discussion informed by the assigned reading. [10% of course grade]

2. Keeping a “Reader’s Log” (1–2 pp. per week minimum) recording your observations of each Gospels’ plot, characterizations, themes, theological concerns, and questions for further exploration (NOT your personal, subjective, or emotional responses to reading the Gospel). The instructor may request the log to be presented for review at any class meeting; the log will be requested for review at least twice in the course of the semester. [20% of course grade]

For each Gospel considered as a whole, your “Reader’s Log” should focus on such questions as the following:

1. The plot, i.e., the sequence of pivotal events that make up the course of Jesus’ life, and especially his ministry and passion, as presented in each Gospel. On which events does each Evangelist lay the greatest stress, and what clues to the interpretation of the events’ significance does each offer?

2. The characterization of key figures in the narrative of each Gospel (e.g., John the Baptist, Jesus, his, disciples and opponents both individually and
as groups, the crowds, etc): what are their strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and key roles played in the sequence of pivotal events (see above under 1)?

(3) The form and substance of Jesus’ teachings: What subjects did Jesus teaching address? In what literary forms does Jesus cast his teaching in each Gospel: parable? dialogue? extended discourse?

For individual passages (or “pericopes”) in each Gospel, the following sorts of questions may be considered:

(1) How does this passage fit into the narrative of the particular Gospel in which it appears, as you observed in your Log during the first five weeks of class? At what point in the Gospel narrative does it appear, and how does it fit into the narrative of Jesus’ life?
(2) What other passages in this particular Gospel exhibit interest in the same theme(s) developed in this passage?
(3) What do these passages suggest to us about the life and ministry of Jesus?

3. Completion and submission of two (2) brief essays. A discussion question will be announced for most weeks of class to focus discussion at the following meeting. Beginning with the topic announced for September 21, the student may write an essay of two to three pages (2–3 pp.) addressing this question. Two (2) such essays must be completed by November 30. [30% of course grade]

4. Completion of two in-course examinations on Oct. 26 and Dec. 11. [40% of course grade]
COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug 24  The Evangelists’ Portraits and the Figure of Jesus
Burridge, chapter 1; Bauckham, chapter 1

Aug 31  Scrutinizing the Portraits: Christ is Risen
Mark 16 and parallels (in Aland Synopsis)
Bauckham, chapters 2–3

Sept 7  [Labor Day — No Class Meeting]

Sept 14  “Religious Liberty,” AGST/First Things Lecture
 Robert Wilken, Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia
 University Avenue Church of Christ, 7 PM

Sept 21  Mark 1–9
Burridge, chapter 2

Sept 28  Mark 10–16
Bauckham, chapter 4

Oct 5  Matthew 1–15
Burridge, chapter 3

Oct 19  Matthew 16–28
Bauckham, chapter 5

Oct 26  Exam 1

Nov 2  Luke 1–12
Burridge, chapter 4

E. P. Sanders, “The Life of Jesus” (Reserve shelf of Worley Library)

Nov 16  John 1–21
Burridge, chapter 5; Bauckham, chap. 6

Nov 23  No Class Meeting

Nov 30  Jesus in History and Faith
Burridge, chapter 6; Bauckham, chapters 7–8

Dec 11  Exam 2