Introduction:
Christianity stands and falls on the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God has revealed this good news (euangelion) to us in four-fold form, the canonical books known to us as the gospels. So now that we have them, how do we interpret them? This is the question that is laid upon our shoulders during this course. My goal is that you go away from this course with the tools and abilities to interpret the gospels in order to preach them and in turn edify God’s people. The gospels were written to change the lives of their readers, this is our task.

This course will give consideration to the four canonical gospels in the New Testament. It will pay close attention to issues of genre, narrative dynamics, theological development, Jewish and Roman backgrounds, and historical-critical matters. During this course, we will develop a responsible reading strategy that interacts with the four gospels and with the cultures in which they find themselves.

Learning Objectives:
• Strengthen your faith in Jesus. One of my primary objectives is that you leave with a passion for the biblical Jesus that can inform your ministry.
• Provide tools to see the gospels not as dry history but as engaging historical-literature so that this engagement will find itself in the pulpit and the hearts of God’s people.
• Understand critical challenges to the gospels and the presuppositions that inform those challenges.
• Demonstrate engagement with the gospels in a constructive way that deals seriously with the texts but always has an eye on the present.
• Understand the gospels in their Jewish and Roman contexts. These two socio-historical worlds inform the gospel writers, therefore, we must see them couched within those contexts in order to experience the world-changing impact they had on the 1st Century.

Approach:
• This class will function as a lecture with some hybrid elements of seminar format. Each day will end with one hour of discussion on the pre-course reading. For this reason, it is absolutely vital that you complete ALL of the ‘pre-course’ readings prior to the start of class. The success of the class depends upon this! . . . and so does your grade 😊
• Our focus will be on reading the gospels as intentional readers. We will consider the implications the gospels had on the 1st century audience and the implications they have for us.
• The Kingdom of God, as presented to us by Ridderbos, will be the theological paradigm through which the gospels will be understood. We will take time understanding the view of the Kingdom
of God present in the Old Testament and the minds of the early readers. We will give consideration to this paradigm as we look at our various contexts.

- Because this class is only one week of face to face time, we cannot look in depth at each gospel. Instead I will provide short lectures on the fundamental differences between the gospels, as well as history of gospel reception; then, we will use the gospel according to Mark as the ‘test-case’ for our interpretive model.

**Grade Breakdown:**

- Final Exam (Take Home, Open Notes): 30% - *Due: Nov. 30th*
- Final Paper (10-12 Pages): 30% - *Due: Nov. 13th*
- Individual Online Presentations and Responses: 30% - *Due: Presentation – Oct. 30; Response: Nov. 6th*
- In Class Participation: 10%

**Required Reading:**

*(Selections highlighted and marked with an asterisk * must be read before meeting in class)*

I expect that all students will have read the required pre-course material before seminar discussion begins. This is VERY important to your grade.

**Purchase These Books:**

- Students must read through the *Gospel According to Mark* and the *Gospel According to John* in any translation two times. Once before class begins, and once following the lectures.
- *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green, et. al, eds. IVP Academic, 2013 (Read articles listed below – Total: 117 Pages)
  - “Gospel, Genre”, R. A. Burridge
  - “Gentiles”, K. R. Iverson
  - “Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Teaching”, B. J. Pitre *
  - “Christ”, M. F. Bird
  - “Languages of Palestine”, M. Graves
  - “Lord”, B. Witherington III and K Yamakazi-Ransom
  - “Parable”, G. P. Anderson
  - “Q” G. N. Stanton and N. Perrin*
  - “Resurrection”, K. L. Anderson
  - “Son of God”, A. Winn
- The following articles, from the 1993 edition of the Dictionary are required readings and will be available as scans on the Canvas site.
  - “Preaching from the Gospels”, S. Greidanus
  - “Gospels, Historical Reliability”, C. Blomberg*
The Following *Required Readings* do not need to be purchased; I will provide scanned copies through Canvas:

  - “Jewish History, 331 BCE-135 CE” by Martin Goodman, pgs. 507-513
  - “Judaism and Jewishness” by Shaye J. D. Cohen, pgs. 513-515
  - “The Synagogue” by Lee I. Levine, pgs. 519-521
  - “Jewish Movements of the New Testament Period” by Daniel R. Schwartz, pgs. 526-530
  - “The Septuagint” by Leonard Greenspoon, pgs. 562-565
- *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower*, Christopher Bryan. Oxford University Press, 2005 (Pages 11-76)

Recommended Resources, but not required:

- *Jesus is the Christ*, Michael F. Bird, IVP Books, 2012
Course Outline:

Monday, Oct. 5th, 2015
8:30 – 10:00 – Introductory Matters / Dating / Authorship
10:00 – 10:20 - Break
10:20 – 12:00 – Framing a Reformed Approach / Critical Questions
12:00 – 1:00 - Lunch
1:00 – 2:40 – Questions of Genre and Dependency
2:40 – 3:00 - Break
3:00 – 4:20 – 1st Century Historiography / Why Presuppositions Matter
4:20 – 4:30 – Break
4:30 – 5:30 – Seminar discussion on Historiography and the Gospels
   [Required Readings: Tropics of Discourse selections; “Gospels (Historical Reliability)” Dictionary entry]

Tuesday, Oct. 6th, 2015
8:30 – 10:00 – The Quest for the Biblical Jesus
10:00 – 10:20 - Break
10:20 – 12:00 - The Kingdom of God as Foundation: The Coming of the Kingdom
12:00 – 1:00 - Lunch
1:00 – 2:40 – The Kingdom of God as Foundation pt. 2: The Present Kingdom
2:40 – 3:00 - Break
3:00 – 4:20 – The Kingdom of God as Foundation pt. 3: The Future Kingdom
4:20 – 4:30 – Break
4:30 – 5:30 – Seminar discussion on the Gospels in the setting of Empire
   [Required Readings: Jesus and Empire selections; “Apocalyptic Teaching” and “Q” Dictionary entries]

Wednesday, Oct. 7th, 2015
8:30 – 10:00 – Gospel as Narrative: Mark as Paradigm
10:00 – 10:20 - Break
10:20 – 12:00 – The Kingdom/Empire of God and the Empire of Rome
   Seeing the Gospels as Roman History
12:00 – 1:00 - Lunch
1:00 – 2:40 – The Kingdom of God and the Old Testament.
   Seeing the Gospels as Jewish History
2:40 – 3:00 - Break
3:00 – 4:00– Understanding the use of the Old Testament in the Gospels
4:00 – 4:10– Break
4:10 – 4:30 – Lab – Interpreting the Gospels – Mark 6:17-29
4:30 – 5:30 – Seminar discussion on Intertextuality
   [Required Readings: Palimpsests selections; Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality selections]
Thursday, Oct. 8th, 2015
8:30 – 10:00 – Elements in the Gospels (Parables)
10:00 – 10:20 - Break
10:20 – 12:00 – Lab – Reading Parables
12:00 – 1:00 - Lunch
1:00 – 2:40 - Elements in the Gospels (Conflicts)
2:40 – 3:00 - Break
3:00 – 4:00 – Lab – Reading Intertexts
4:00 – 4:10 – Break
4:30 – 5:30 – Seminar discussion on gospel narratives.

[Required Readings: Mark as Story selections]

Friday, Oct. 9th, 2015
8:30 – 9:30 – The distinguishing character of Matthew
9:30 – 9:40 - Break
9:40 – 10:20 – Lab – Interpreting the Gospels Wisely – Mark 16:1-8, or 20?
10:20 – 12:00 – The distinguishing character of Mark
12:00 – 1:00 - Lunch
1:00 – 2:40 - The distinguishing character of Luke
2:40 – 3:00 – Break
3:00 – 5:30 – The distinguishing character of John / Closing Comments

Assignment Requirements:

Final Exam: The final exam will be a take home exam. I will provide the exam to you on the last day of class and you must return it to me via mail or scanned file by the deadline listed above. You will have two hours to complete the exam. The exam will consist of a series of 5 essay questions from which you will pick 2. Your answer for each essay question should be no less than one paragraph, but no greater than one page. Following the essay questions there will be a list of terms from the lectures that you must define. You are allowed to use notes and readings for the exam.

Final Paper: The final paper will be a 10-12 page paper dealing with a chosen pericope in one of the four gospels. The paper must consist of two elements: 1) an exegesis of the passage using the tools developed in this class (and others that you have developed in your seminary training); and 2) a narrative analysis of how the passage that you chose fits into the ‘big picture’ of the gospel it is found in. For example, if you pick Mark 7:1-23, you will need to first (in roughly 5 pages) analyze the pericope. You could provide a historical/textual analysis of how purity rules and structures were being used by Jesus, or show how Intertextuality illuminates the way Jesus deals with the 5th Commandment. Then (in roughly 5 pages) you must show how the concept dealt with in the pericope that you chose (purity or the 5th Commandment) fits within the larger narrative of Mark’s gospel. We will spend time in class demonstrating how this is done through three separate ‘labs’ on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. I will also provide an example.
**Individual Presentations:** In my experience, presenting on a topic is the best way to learn the ‘ins and outs’ of that particular topic. Because we are limited in our time together, we are going to do electronic-presentations and responses. You will be required to pick one topic below and prepare a 15 minute presentation on that topic, accompanied by a handout. Your presentation should include an analysis of the topic/problem, a fair summary of scholarship that has been done on that topic, and your resolution of the topic/problem with a defense of that resolution.

**As Presenter:** Your presentation must be done on Prezi. Create your slides with relevant information, then record lecture material using the device’s sound record function. You will provide a link to the Prezi on the course Canvas page. The presentation should be no less than 7 minutes and no more than 12 minutes. I will provide instructions for this in class.

**As Observer:** View 1 presentation and provide a one-paragraph write-up that tells what you learned from the presentation and how it helps you understand the gospels more clearly. This paragraph should be posted to the Canvas page.

**Individual Presentation Options:**
- The Secrecy of Jesus in the gospel of Mark
- The Synoptic ‘Problem’
- The question of ‘Q’
- What do the gospels mean when they say that Judas ‘betrayed’ Jesus?
- The fulfillment of Redemptive History according to Matthew
- Was Jesus’ earthly ministry really three years?
- What is historiography and how does it shape our reading of the gospels?
- What is Intertextuality and how does it shape our reading of the gospels?
- What is Rhetorical Criticism and how does it shape our reading of the gospels?
- Explain the Herodian dynasty in light of the Gospel texts.
- Why is it important to understand the Imperial reign of Rome to understand the gospels?
- Others to be added later.

**In Class Participation:** I expect that all students will have read the required pre-course material before the commensurate seminar discussion. This is VERY important to your grade. Unfortunately, due to the structure of the course we cannot discuss each individual reading the week after it is assigned; however, I still need you to be conversant with the material so that our discussions can be fruitful. Therefore, I recommend you keep a reading log to jot down notes, thoughts, or important quotes that you may want to bring up in class. This will also provide you with a reference to look back on as well as a means of interacting with the text in a more thorough manner.
Final Paper Guide

- Paper must be 10–12 pages excluding title page, bibliography, etc. The 10-12 pages must be original research.
- The paper must be submitted electronically to patrick.stefan@du.edu by the deadline listed above. Submit the paper as either a PDF or Microsoft Word file.
- Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words must be typed out, not transliterated.
- Paper should include an introduction with a clearly-stated thesis statement.
- Paper should be clearly argued and articulated.
- Paper should deal fairly with secondary literature. In other words, you should thoroughly engage both liberal and conservative scholarship. I strongly suggest you engage the *Hermeneia* commentary of the gospel you are working with.
- Paper should have at least seven references of the following kind:
  - Academic monographs
  - Articles in scholarly journals
  - Academic commentaries
  - Reformed literature
  - Literature from any century is fine (i.e. early Christian, reformation, medieval, enlightenment, or modern literature); however, at least 5 sources must be newer than 1950.
- Paper should employ footnotes that are single spaced and 10 point font.
- Each page (after title page) should be numbered according to SBL style guide.
- Paper must employ 12 point font, 1 inch margins on each side, and ½ inch indentation. DO NOT include a space after each paragraph; be aware that MS Word does this automatically.
- All documentation must be done according to the standards in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, both the footnotes and the bibliography.
- Proofread your paper. Ensure all typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors have been corrected.

Final Test Guide

- The final test will consist of a series of (5) questions from which you will pick (2). These questions will gauge your ability to critically interact with the material that has been both read and discussed in class.
- Because this is an open-book / open-notes test, I expect you to interact with the various views that were presented by both me and your readings. Quotations are not expected, but will be looked upon favorably. The authors you interact with should be fairly treated.
- Grammar and logic will be important in this exam.
- Using 12 point font and 1 inch margins, each essay question should be answered in no less than one paragraph and no more than one page. The purpose of these restrictions is to get you to cogently define and argue your position.
- A sample question might be: “Given your interaction with material on the historical reliability/unreliability of the gospels and the philosophy of historiography, how do you reconcile the gospels as history, and the gospels as narrative?”
• Following the essay questions I will ask you to define roughly 10-15 terms.
• These definitions should take up no more than three sentences. I will not give you the answer I am looking for. I want to hear your understanding of the subject.
• On the first day of class I will give you 25 terms that may be included on the test. From this list, I will ask you to define 10-15.
• A sample question might be: “Define Rhetorical Criticism”

In Class Participation Guide
• For in class participation I expect you to be engaged in the lectures and discussions.
• During the lectures, I will mark you down if you are checking e-mail, facebook, or any other website during the class.
• Computers/electronic devices are allowed, but I expect your wi-fi connection to be turned off.
• During the seminar discussion, I expect everyone to contribute to the conversation. You must make at least one productive comment.
• I expect all students to have read the pre-course material and interact with that material during the seminar discussion.

Late Policy
• The deadlines are listed in the Grade Breakdown above
• I expect all assignments to be turned in no later than 11:59 PM EST on the day the assignment is due.
• Assignments turned in after the deadline, for any reason, will be marked down 10% per day. There will be no exception to this policy. Please give yourself a large enough window so that you submit the assignment on time. I might suggest setting your deadline one week earlier.
## Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</strong></td>
<td>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reformed Theology</strong></td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sanctification</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desire for Worldview</strong></td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Winsomely Reformed</strong></td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preach</strong></td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shepherd</strong></td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addendum (A)

Course Reading Checklist:

Pre-Course Required Readings: (Read these selections before we meet together)

- Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays of Cultural Criticism*, pages 81-120 (Scan)
- Craig Blomberg, “Gospels (Historical Reliability)” article in 1993 DJG (Scan)
- B. J. Pitre, “Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Teaching” article in 2013 DJG
- G.N. Stanton, “Q” article in 2013 DJG
- Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, pages 1-54 (Scan)
- Ulrich Luz, “Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew” (Scan)
- Iverson and Skinner, *Mark as Story*, pages 19-43 (Scan)
- Gospel of John
- Gospel of Mark

Other Required Readings: (Read these selections before you take the final exam)

- Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels Articles:
  - “Gospel: Genre” by R.A. Burridge
  - “Gentiles” by K.R. Iverson
  - “Christ” by M.F. Bird
  - “Languages of Palestine” by M. Graves
  - “Lord” by B. Witherington III and K. Yamazaki-Ransom
  - “Parable” by G.P. Anderson
  - “Preaching from the Gospels” by S. Greidanus
  - “Resurrection” by K.L. Anderson
  - “Son of God” by A. Winn
- Jonathan Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, chs. 3, 5, 8, 9, 10 (Focus on chs. 8, 9, 10)
- *Jewish Annotated NT* Articles:
  - “Jewish History, 331 BCE – 135 BCE” by Martin Goodman (Scan)
  - “Judaism and Jewishness” by Shaye Cohen (Scan)
  - “The Synagogue” by Lee Levine (Scan)
  - “Jewish Movements of the New Testament Period” by Daniel Schwartz (Scan)
  - “The Septuagint” by Leonard Greenspoon (Scan)
- Anderson and Moore, *Mark and Method*, pages 29-83 (Scan)
- Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, pages 11-76 (Scan)
- Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, pages 3-527
- Gospel of Mark
- Gospel of John