



# Jesus and the Gospels

Alliance University College

AUC Arts & Science / Canadian Bible College  
(REL-N 240)

Canadian Theological Seminary (NT-N 645)  
3 Credit Hours



Sept 8 -- Dec 12, 2004

Instructor: [Andy M. Reimer](#), PhD

[Texts/Assignments/In Brief/Unit Links &](#)

[Reading Schedule](#)

## What is this course all about?

This course covers the first four story-telling or narrative books of the New Testament, the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We will look at the contents of these books as well as different methods and techniques for studying these books. Curiously, while these books are the founding stories for the Christian community and make up nearly half of the NT, theologically they are often marginalized in favour of the NT letters. This course aims to reverse this trend by allowing the stories to be heard again and studied with a new set of lenses. This means a better understanding of the world in which these characters lived and these stories recorded and what terms like "Kingdom of God" meant to a first century Jew. In an age in which "story" or "narrative" is being rediscovered, it is critical that we be able to tell and retell the stories of and stories about Jesus. As members of the Christian community, the gospels contain "our story" on which we build our lives. It answers key questions like who are we, where did we come from, where are we now, and where are we headed.

Secondarily, we want to address some other issues of interest surrounding the gospels. For example, what is the connection between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of the four gospels? Or, how have others interpreted these stories in other sorts of medium?

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## What are we trying to accomplish?

- 1.) When we are done, you ought to have a working knowledge of the contents of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
- 2.) You should be able to understand key terms needed for understanding these books, e.g., "kingdom of God" or "eternal life", as well as knowing some minimal first century Jewish background for making sense of these texts.
- 3.) You should be able to use some basic techniques in interpreting the gospels: finding background material, teasing meaning out of a parable, situating events and sayings within their literary context and the larger plot, and comparing parallel accounts.
- 4.) You will have introductory knowledge of related aspects of gospel scholarship such as the 'quest for the historical Jesus' and interpretations of the gospels' story in visual art and film.

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## What books do I need?

You must select *one* of these for the "Book Report":

[Click here to see a more complete description of each of the following](#)

Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies in the Names Women of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000).

Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998).

Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

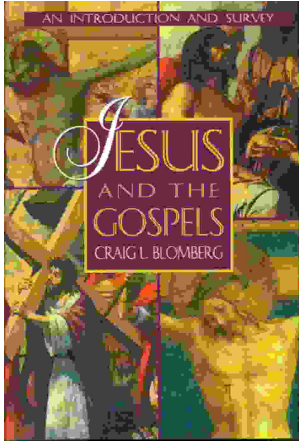
Graham Stanton, *Gospel Truth? New Light on Jesus and the Gospels* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1995).

Tom (N.T.) Wright, *The Original Jesus: The Life and Vision of a Revolutionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

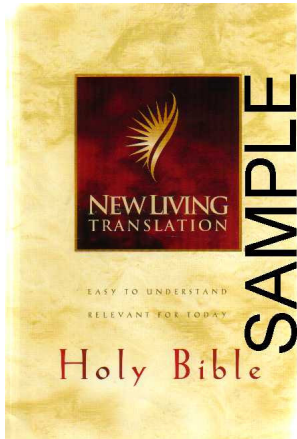
N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999).

I am willing to negotiate another option, but only if you have had a chance to review one of the above and your choice covers the appropriate subject matter at a satisfactory level for this course.

You **must** have the following (both College and Seminary Credit):



Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997)



Bible, translation of your choice. Click the sample to get my thoughts on various translations presently available.

You can order texts from AUC's official bookstore, Christian Publications in Calgary by emailing Winn Symes at the following address: [purchasing03@christian-pub.com](mailto:purchasing03@christian-pub.com)

[Click Here For Books You Might Find Helpful For Doing Assignments](#)

[Click Here For Additional Books Which You Would Find Interesting If You Enjoy The Course or Would Like Advice On Purchasing Commentaries On The Gospels](#)

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## What do I have to do?

### *Regular Classroom Duties:*

This course is broken into 6 two week "units" as well as an opening session. The course is designed to give you a week to read the assigned textbook pages for the given unit and the instructor's "virtual lectures". You will then have a week in which to carry on a discussion with your fellow online students based on the set of questions at the end of the "virtual lecture". You will be marked on your ability to keep up with the required reading and on your level of contribution to the class discussions. I would suggest that *anything less* than three visits to a "Discussion Room" would be seen as falling short of serious engagement with your fellow students--although you will also be marked on the thought and effort put into your responses as well. I will evaluate your "reading" mark for the ongoing reading requirements on the basis of...

an email to me informing me that you have indeed read the required biblical text, appropriate section of the Blomberg text, and the virtual lecture.

The reading required for each of the six units is provided below under ... ["When do we do what?"](#)

### *Other Assignments:*

*In addition to the weekly reading, there is additional reading due by the end of the course (Dec 12):*

For College credit: Blomberg 187-197; Any three chapters of your choice between chapter 11-19 in Blomberg

For CTS credit: Blomberg 187-415

### *Book Review (Nov 27):*

I am expecting a 500 word review of your chosen additional course text (see above). A good review will list the title and author in an introductory paragraph to the book, an overview of its contents, remarks on its particular strengths and/or weaknesses as well as comments on why it was or was not valuable in your understanding of the gospels. Also, take the time to read some of your

fellow students' reviews and ask them questions about their particular books. A good week's discussion on the various books read after Nov 27 would make the whole exercise valuable for you and your fellow students.

*Parable Assignment (Oct 23):*

I am expecting a paper with an introduction and four sections. The introduction should simply offer a short summary of the parable. The first major section will offer any historical, cultural, or social background from ancient Palestine which is necessary for the modern reader to fully understand this parable. The second section will present some possible "meanings" which might have been picked up by the ancient reader, including especially any obvious connection between characters and items in the parable and the "real" world of the early listener. The third section will summarize what you believe to be the central point(s) of the parable within its context in the gospel in which it is found. The fourth section will be a modern parable which communicates the same central point. See the [sample](#) provided by the professor.

You may choose from one of the following parables:

Matthew 20:1-16 (The Workers in the Vineyard)

Matthew 21:33-41 (The Wicked Tenants)

Matthew 22:1-14 (The Wedding Banquet and the Guests)

Mark 12:1-9 (The Wicked Tenants)

Luke 15:11-32 (The Prodigal Son)

Luke 16:1-8 (The Dishonest[?] Manager)

Luke 19:11-27 (The King, the servants and the ten minas)

Besides commentaries and Bible dictionaries, these may be helpful if you can get your hands on them:

Bailey, Kenneth E., *Poet and Peasant*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.

Bailey, Kenneth E. *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke*. Combined Edition, Two Volumes in One. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976 and 1980.

Blomberg, Craig L. *Interpreting the Parables*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990. (*This one is actually worth purchasing while still in print*)

Length--1000 words (College & CTS) (Email final document directly to the instructor; Post Section 3 [Central point(s)] and Section 4 [Contemporary Parable] to the appropriate discussion room accessible by clicking on "Discussion" in the top menu)

*Comparison Assignment (Nov 8):*

Using primarily (or exclusively) the biblical text itself and any material you have picked up in this course, compare and contrast any *one* of the following. What is unique and what is shared by the two accounts? Do any of the differences match specific larger themes in their respective gospels? What is the overall effect of any differences? What does the overlap suggest? Remember, I am not interested in source criticism here (i.e., x must have copied y) but with the effect similarities and differences have on the contemporary reader trying to understand both gospels under consideration:

Jesus trial and death: Matthew 26:57-27:56 // Mark 14:53-15:41  
or Luke 22:54-23:49

Jesus burial and resurrection: Matthew 27:57-28:20 // Luke  
23:50-24:53

Length-- 1500 words (College); 2000 words (CTS) (Email directly to the instructor)

(CTS students may choose major paper option in which case you would not do this assignment)

*Contemporary Interpretations Group Project (Dec 4):*

Organize yourselves into pairs or groups of 3 and find a film or piece of artwork that represents Jesus in some fashion. Your local public library is a great place to rent some video "classics" which present various filmmaker's takes on Jesus and his life. Among the videos I found there which would fit this category are: *Jesus of Nazareth*, the *Greatest Story Ever Told*, and *Jesus of Montreal*. The internet is a great place to find

famous artwork representing Jesus. I have a personal fondness for Salvador Dali's representations of Jesus and found numerous sites with virtual galleries in which you can view his work. Pick any two items (same medium or mix 'n match) and describe and "interpret" the "interpretation" of Jesus. In particular, suggest ways in which the Jesus represented by the film maker or artist compares or contrasts to specific gospels. If your group has sharply contrasting opinions, you may of course express that in your final report as well. Length--2500 words (Post to appropriate discussion room accessible by clicking on "Discussions" in the top menu)

*Ministry Integration Reflection (Dec 12)(CTS-Only):*

In 750-1000 words reflect on how some facet of your ministry (e.g., preaching, teaching, counselling, or whatever ministry you are presently involved in) will be influenced, shaped, or transformed by some aspect of this course--be that lecture content, textbook reading, or Bible reading itself.

(You may choose a Major Paper Option in which case you would not do this particular assignment)

*Major Paper Option (topic by Nov 15; completion by Dec 6)(CTS-Only):*

If you have a topic related to any one or all of the four gospels that you really would like to spend time researching in depth, you may negotiate a major paper topic with the instructor. The topic must be confirmed by Nov 15 (although I would suggest a date well before then) and the paper completed by Dec 6. ***If you are doing this assignment, you do not have to do the Comparison Assignment or the Ministry Integration Reflection.*** You will be responsible to do quality research, which means you must have access to a reasonably good theological library (most university libraries will have the necessary resources but seminary libraries are superior) in order to do this paper.

Length--3000-3500 words

(If you do this assignment, you will not be expected to do the Comparison Assignment or the Ministry Integration Reflection assignment)

*In Brief...*

<b>Type of Assignment</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>CTS</b>
<a href="#"><u>Reading</u></a>	Read the assigned sections from the course texts and the four gospels, both the unit readings as well as the additional readings.	Unit Readings done by Sept 13, Sept 27, Oct 11, Oct 25, Nov 8, Nov 22, Dec 6 Final reading on Dec 12	10%	10%
<a href="#"><u>Discussion</u></a>	Contribute to the discussion questions which are raised for each unit.	Beginning start of second week of each Unit (see above reading dates)	15%	15%
<a href="#"><u>Parable Assignment</u></a>	1000 word essay on a parable following the instructions given.	Oct 23	20%	20%
<a href="#"><u>Book Review</u></a>	Read one of the optional texts and offer a 500 word review of the book for the rest of the class.	Nov 27	10%	10%
<a href="#"><u>Contemporary Interpretations Group Project</u></a>	A group project in which you present an art or film representation of Jesus to the rest of the class (approx. 2500 words)	Dec 4	20%	20%
<a href="#"><u>Comparison Assignment</u></a>	1500 word (College) or 2000 word (CTS) essay comparing two gospel texts following the instructions given.	Nov 8	25%	20%/-
<a href="#"><u>Ministry Integration Reflection</u></a>	750-1000 word on how course impacts personal ministry	Dec 12		5%/-
<a href="#"><u>Major Paper Option</u></a>	3000-3500 word essay Topic to be negotiated with instructor	Nov 15 / Dec 6		25%/-

**When do we do what?**

Simply click on the unit title you are interested in order to jump to the virtual lecture for the unit, discussion questions for that unit, and other related tidbits.



<b>Date</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>College-reading</b>	<b>CTS-reading</b>
Sept 8-19	<a href="#">Intro: Who is this person?</a>	Blomberg 5-53	Blomberg 5-71
Sept 20-Oct 3	<a href="#">Unit 1: Studying the Gospels</a>	Blomberg 384-388	Blomberg 73-111; 384-388
Oct 4-17	<a href="#">Unit 2: How do I read a gospel? Starting with Mark...</a>	Blomberg 115-125 Mark	Blomberg 115-125 Mark
Oct 18-31	<a href="#">Unit 3: What does Matthew tell us about Jesus?</a>	Blomberg 126-139; 392-396; Matthew	Blomberg 126-139; 392-396; Matthew
Nov 1-14	<a href="#">Unit 4: What does Luke tell us about Jesus?</a>	Blomberg 140-155 Luke	Blomberg 140-155 Luke
Nov 15-28	<a href="#">Unit 5: Isn't John the easiest to read?</a>	Blomberg 156-175 John	Blomberg 156-175 John
Nov 29-Dec 12	<a href="#">Unit 6: Varieties of Jesus's..."Historical" and Contemporary!</a>	Blomberg 179-187	Blomberg 179-187