NT 511 The Gospel of Mark

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I. General Description:
The course description, as published in the ATS catalog, reads: “As a basic course in Inductive Bible Studies, [this course has as] its primary purpose…to enable the student to begin developing an inductive approach to Bible study, especially in the areas of observation and interpretation. Parts of the Gospel of Mark are used to demonstrate and to practice a methodological approach that can be used in other biblical books. Some of the main themes of the Gospel are highlighted in this process.”

We attempt to convey the sort of “Inductive Bible Study Method” which is:

Spiritual and reverent: pursuing Biblical study humbly, prayerfully, and in surrender to the Spirit.

confessional: understanding the entire enterprise of encountering Scripture as housed within the faith and life of the Church of Jesus Christ; and especially within a Wesleyan perspective,

appropriational: insisting that studying Scripture must issue in obedient and faithful speech and action throughout the whole spectrum of one’s life,

theological: seeking to place the passage in the context of the whole canon of Holy Scripture and Christian doctrine; and honoring the unity of the canon of Scripture,

interactive: engaging the interpretations of others across history, tradition, and culture,

literary: recognizing the literary character of Scripture and the significance of literary context

structural: observing conceptual connections between units of text as a key component of meaning,

methodical: following orderly procedure that is methodologically and hermeneutically self-aware,

inductive: promoting direct personal study of the text prior to use of secondary sources,

historical: honoring the location of Biblical texts in their particular historical and cultural settings,

II. Course Objectives:
Having successfully completed this course, students should be able to:

A. Demonstrate basic skills in observing the text, including aspects that pertain to the original language, with a view toward using these observations in the interpretation of the text;

B. Demonstrate basic skills in interpreting the text by citing, describing, and drawing inferences from various types of evidence, including those that pertain to the original language;

C. Demonstrate ability to discuss some of the major hermeneutical issues surrounding observation and interpretation;

D. Demonstrate a preliminary and basic awareness of issues pertaining to the evaluation of passages for their contemporary possibilities for application and to the process of actually applying passages to specific contemporary situations; and

E. Demonstrate knowledge of the content of the book of Mark in its literary, theological, and historical contexts.

NOTE: The skill and knowledge to be demonstrated by students will find expression in their weekly assignments (Lessons A through J [see section VI below]). Students shall be prepared to complete these lessons by specific instruction in each class session, and through use of the tools cited below as likewise explained in class sessions.
III. Course Texts:
   A. Required
      1. **English Bibles**: At least three (3) modern English versions from different traditions
   B. **Not Required** (recommended for use as needed, but not required; see Bauer above for a wider listing of resources for Biblical study.)
      Guelich, Robert A. *Mark 1-8:26*. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, TX: Word, 1989. [Note: The second volume of this commentary is not yet available.]

IV. Requirements:
   A. **Assignments**: Lessons must be finished by class time on the dates given in this Syllabus. Lessons may be typed or may even be handwritten, provided the handwriting is legible. Please use the cover sheet provided, and securely staple work to it.
   B. **Attendance**: It is expected that students will punctually attend every class session unless detained by illness or other emergency.
   C. **Participation**: It is expected that students will participate meaningfully and creatively both in small group discussions and in plenary class discussion.

V. Grading Policies:
A. Grade Calculations:

The final grade for the course will be the numerical average of the six (6) graded assignments with a seventh grade, the self-assigned class participation grade. [The six graded assignments will constitute $6/7$ths of the grade, and the class participation grade will constitute $1/7^{th}$ of the grade.] A grading rubric for determining class participation is supplied in this syllabus.

The class participation grade will be filled out by the student at the close of the semester, and will reflect the student’s own assessment of the quality of his or her class attendance (including tardiness), participation in plenary class discussion and small group discussion, contribution to the morale of the class, and quality of note taking during the semester.
B. Related Matters:

1. The ATS Catalog's description of grades and their values will apply.

   The letter grades within this course will be averaged arithmetically by converting them to the numerical values below:
   
   A 97; A- 92; B+ 88; B 84.5; B- 81; C+ 78; C 74.5; C- 71; D+ 68; D 64.5; D- 61;
   
   F 50 (if an assignment is completed, but at a failing quality); F 0 (if no work is submitted).

   The final numerical average will be assigned a final letter grades according to this range of values:
   
   A 100-95; A- 94-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D+ 69-67; D 66-63; D- 62-60; F 59-0

2. Exceptional work will exhibit these characteristics:

   • precision, accuracy, specificity, depth, insight, clarity, freshness, thoroughness, and balance. It must me remembered that merely “good and accurate” work does not necessarily merit an “A”. Also, exceptional work must engage the Biblical texts (to some degree) in their original languages, and must manifest a balanced use of time.

3. Lessons Entirely Omitted If a graded lesson is omitted entirely (i.e. never turned in), then it will be calculated as a “0” in the numerical averaging of the final grade. If a credit-no credit lesson is omitted (never turned in), then the final course grade will be reduced by a full letter (e.g. from B+ to C+).

4. Late Lessons: A lesson turned in late (any time after the due date) will be received, but reduced one and a half letter grades (e.g. from B+ to C-). Of course, if there is an appropriate reason (serious illness, family emergency) then no penalty will be assessed.

5. Independence: Assignments must reflect the independent work of each student unless otherwise specified in an assignment. Study groups (which are encouraged) must exercise special care to preserve the independence of each member. Group members may encourage each other and provide accountability for study, but may not produce group projects, nor nurse each other along with specific content-related guidance and suggestions. Violation of "Independence" constitutes cheating, and may result in loss of credit for the entire course.

VI. The Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Grade Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>credit/no credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Sept. 20</td>
<td>credit/no credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[NO LESSON]</td>
<td>Oct. 4</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Oct. 11</td>
<td>graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[NO LESSON]</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Oct. 25</td>
<td>graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[NO LESSON]</td>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nov. 8</td>
<td>credit/no credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[NO LESSON]</td>
<td>Nov. 29</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Exam Period</td>
<td>graded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• class participation grading rubric (filled out, with copy of sample notebook page attached)
• self-addressed envelop for return of Lesson I (if desired)
**VII. The Lessons**

*Advice Gathered from Many Students*

*Don't* do a whole lesson in a single sitting. Eight straight hours even of Gilligan's Island can be fatal.

**Do work in several blocks of time.**

*Don't* do your work during the worst hours of your day. When would you want your doctor operating?

**Do your work during your peak production hours, if possible.**

*Don't* do your work around proven distractions. Most minds are not like multi-task computer chips.

**Do find a place conducive to reflective study.**

*Don't* postpone work until the day before. Don't join the April 15th 11:59 PM crowd. It's depressing!

**Do begin your work earlier in the week, allowing your thoughts to "percolate".**

*Don't* wander through the week, just hoping you'll find an ideal time to do the assignment. You won't!

**Do plan ahead in order to set aside good study time.**

*Don't* forget to read the text carefully, first. How could you know much about a person without "dating"?

**Do invest up-front time in careful reading of the text.**

*Don't* treat these assignments as "just assignments".

**Do pray for illumination, and expect to learn something life-transforming!**

**The Time Factor in Doing Lessons**

Each of the Lessons is designed to take from **nine to ten hours (9-10) to complete.**

When multiplied over the ten (10) Lessons of the semester, that translates into ninety to one hundred (90-100) hours of student investment for this course. These figures are just below the range of hours recommended in the catalogue for a three-hour course (97.5-117 hours, calculated as 7.5-9.0 hours of investment each week for a three-hour course, over 13 weeks of the semester, see p. 25 of the 2000-2001 catalog).

No one should interpret the 9-10 hour target for each Lesson as a “time limit,” or think that there would be a penalty for going beyond. I am not interested in penalizing anyone who has the time and desire to invest more than 9-10. However, no one should feel any pressure to do more than the expected. Grading is not based on a simple measure of hours invested. Do your best to complete the phases of each Lesson within the 10 hour target. If you have trouble getting to each phase of the Lessons, reflect on how you are spending you time. You may need to set the depth of your plow a little shallower, at places; or just “call it quits” on one phase of a Lesson that has gotten out of hand timewise.

A nice correlation between the weekly investment of 9-10 hours in this course, and in the life of ministry, is to be found in Haddon Robinson’s suggestions about the preparation of sermons. In his view, 8 or 9 hours may be spent in working with the full interpretation of the Biblical text to be preached, with 4 or 5 hours devoted afterwards to crafting the text of the sermon itself. The weekly investment in IBS Lessons, then, may help us develop the monthly rhythm that Robinson submits as a healthy pattern for sermon preparation.
Please
Staple
Here

Student Name___________________________________________________

Group Name___________________________________________________

Lesson #________________________

Time Invested____________________

Course_________________________

Time of Class___________________

********* Lesson handed in on time?******

Yes_______                                    No________

****If Late, have these items below filled in:

Date actually turned in:____________________

Professor’s signature______________________
IBS Lesson Cover Sheet for Dr. Dongell
Class Participation Grading Rubric

Each student begins with the score of 100, which should reflect (in principle) excellent class participation. Such excellence will involve full involvement in all class sessions (attendance), promptness in attendance, acceptable completion of all (credit/no-credit) assignments, positive small group participation, and compilation of a usable and organized notebook.

From the initial score of 100, subtractions will be made according to the following factors:

I. **Un-excused Absences**: Excused absences are those caused by sickness, serious family emergency, death in the family, or required meeting with ordaining boards. All other absences, including those related to ministry responsibilities or other class assignments, are generally not excusable. [5 points subtracted for first unexcused absence; 10 points for each additional]      

II. **Tardiness** constitutes not being present and “ready to start” when the class period officially begins. This is not a judgment call based on “when I feel the class business really begins” but rather is measured by the official (clock) starting time of the class. [2 points subtracted for tardiness; 5 points for each additional tardiness]

   Note: Tardiness is not a subjective matter determined by whether the student judges that “nothing really important” was missed, or whether “only prayer, or devotions” was missed. Tardiness is determined by the clock alone.

III. **Flagged (credit/no-credit) Lessons**: On occasion a credit/no-credit lesson is not poor enough to receive a “no-credit,” but shows obvious signs of being casually, carelessly, or incompletely produced. Such lessons will be “credit” but also “flagged.” [20 points subtracted for each of a flagged lesson]

IV. **Less-than-ideal Group Participation**:
   • weakness in encouraging other group members with a positive and open attitude toward learning
   • weakness in entrusting one’s best thoughts, insights, and ideas to others
   • weakness in listening to and valuing the contributions and ideas of others
   • weakness in expressing disagreement without becoming hostile or demeaning
   • weakness in the quality and depth of the content of one’s contribution to the group
   • weakness in receiving comments of disagreement without becoming defensive or hostile
   • weakness in valuing communal reflection as a necessary component of healthy Christian living
   • weakness in making room for the contributions of others in the group
   [points subtracted according to the student’s own self-evaluation]

V. **Less-than-ideal Notebook Compilation**:
   • lack of calendar dates marking each class period
   • weakness in neatness or organization
   • weakness in completeness
   [points subtracted according to the judgment of the student]
   (note: one day of notetaking needs to be Xeroxed and attached to this grade sheet to illustrate the student’s notebook)

VI. **Total Number of Points Subtracted** (add I through V above)
VII. Final Numerical Score for Class Participation (subtract VI from 100)
I. Read through the Gospel of Mark...in a single sitting....and aloud. [Do this twice. Each reading will take about 2 hours.] You may use any translation you wish, or even shift to a second translation for your second reading. As you read, make every effort to ignore editorial headings, notes, outlining, and even the chapter divisions since they are supplied by the modern editors of your translation. Try to read Mark’s story of Jesus as an uncharted adventure. [Note: If English is not your native language, please feel free to read a translation in your own vernacular.]

II. In around 200 words, explain some of the benefits of reading the entire Gospel A) aloud and B) in one sitting, as opposed to silent, piecemeal readings.

III. Identify ten (10) major themes in Mark’s Gospel. [A theme may consist of the repetition of a key term or phrase, the repetition of similar events, or the repetition of the same concept, claim, or truth.] Explain briefly (about 50 words for each theme) each of the themes you have located. Limit your explanation to what you can safely say on the basis of what you have read in the Gospel of Mark itself. [I.e., do not “download” a ready-made Christian theology into the text of Mark, and do not engage in secondary research.]

IV. Hermeneutical Reflection: Now that you have invested significant energy in attending to the Gospel of Mark, try to identify some tensions between: A) what you hoped, expected, or desired to find as you read this gospel and B) what you think you actually encountered as you read. Also, C) where in this Gospel do you suspect there might be arising a “challenge” to your life: something that might be calling into question some pattern of speech, action, outlook, or attitude in your life? (*Note: This is a tentative reflection, not necessarily a final conclusion.) Report on these matters in an essay of about 250 words.

V. Collateral Reading: In the Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels read the article by Hurtado entitled “Gospel (Genre)” (pp. 276-282). Identify in writing (and be ready to discuss) the essential point Hurtado wants to make about the Gospels in general, and Mark in particular. Also, identify in writing about 5 items in the article that were most helpful and illuminating to you.

VI. Reexamine the Syllabus to be sure you are acquainted with the nature and policies of the course. Also, study over any handouts you received in the first week of instruction.

Note: Be sure to duplicate the cover sheet at the end of this syllabus for use with each of the Lessons you submit throughout the semester. Be sure to secure your work with a stapler.