

CH219 Interpreting Luke-Acts
Spring 2004
Marilyn Salmon, Instructor

Course Description: In this course we will study several texts from the Lukan writings. We will examine prominent themes and work with historical-critical and literary methods of interpreting Luke-Acts in historical context. We will read secondary literature (i.e., commentaries, articles) related to the selected texts each week.

Goals:

1. to become familiar with themes in Luke-Acts
2. to become acquainted with current Lukan scholarship
3. to become acquainted with resources for biblical study
4. to interpret Luke-Acts for contemporary contexts

Required Texts:

HarperCollins Study Bible, NRSV
Gospel Parallels, fifth edition, Throckmorton, editor
Custom Course Packet

Brawley, Robert, Luke-Acts and the Jews

Tannehill, Robert, Luke

Supplementary Texts:

Tiede, David, Luke, Augsburg Commentary of the New Testament

Hayes and Holladay, Biblical Exegesis

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation in each class meeting. Because much of the learning in this course takes place in class discussion and lectures, more than two absences will affect your ability to pass the course.
2. Complete reading assignments for each week.
3. Complete all written assignments and hand in when due. This is especially important since the assignments relate to the material we will discuss that day. If there are extenuating circumstances, please discuss them with me.

Evaluations:

Grades will be based on the written assignments and the written final exam and on participation in class discussions. The weekly written assignments will be evaluated on the basis of: (1) ability to interpret the biblical texts, (2) engagement with the secondary literature, (3) evidence of critical thinking skills, (4) responding to the questions asked, (5) effective written communication skills.

Policy on Extensions:

The faculty voted to approve the following policy on extensions in April, 1999:

The work for a course is terminated at the end of the final class session. The performance in the course is evaluated on the basis of the work submitted by that time, unless an exception is made by the instructor, in which case a formal petition for extension must be approved by the instructor by the end of the final class session. Extensions (of course work) beyond the end of the semester will be approved only under extraordinary circumstances. Each instructor will include this policy on each course syllabus as well as the criteria by which she or he will grant such an extraordinary exception.

For this course, extraordinary circumstances include: death in the family, hospitalization for illness or injury, or serious illness of self or family member. If you think you have an extraordinary circumstance that affects your ability to complete the course, please talk with me about it.

Please note that all written work, including the final exam, must be completed in order to pass this course.

Policy on Sexual Harassment: See Student Handbook.

Policy on Plagiarism: See Student Handbook

Schedule of Assignments

2/3 Introduction; Luke-Acts in Context

2/10 Purpose of Luke-Acts

Read: Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-11

Tiede, 17-38

Brawley, 1-5

Miner, "Dear Theo" (course packet)

Jervell, "God's Faithfulness to the Faithless People," Word and World XII (Winter, 1992)

Tannehill, Introduction

Write: Summarize briefly the main points of each interpreter's view of the purpose of Luke-Acts, intent of author, situation of audience. Indicate the differences you see among the scholars. Note if the differences are incompatible or different in emphasis. Note the key texts which support their views. (about 750 words)

2/17 The "Overture"

Read: Luke 1-2, including notes

Miner, "Luke's Use of the Birth Stories" (course packet)

Tiede, "Glory to Thy People Israel" (course packet)

Tannehill, commentary on Luke 1-2

Prepare to Discuss: What clues does the author give in the first two chapters as to how to read, what to expect, as the story unfolds? What does he tell us about Jesus that the other Gospels don't tell us? Why? What, in particular, do the speeches tell us about what to look for?

2/24 Baptism

Read: Luke 3

Gospel Parallels for Luke 3 (color)

Tannehill, commentary on Luke 3:1-4:13

Dahl, "The Story of Abraham in Luke-Acts" (course packet)

Recommended: Biblical Exegesis, Redaction Criticism

Write: Compare Luke's version of John's preaching and Jesus' baptism with Mark and Matthew. What is distinctive about Luke's version? How does Luke's version affect the story? Change the emphasis? What does his version suggest about author's purpose or intended audience? (300 – 500)

Prepare to Discuss: What is the meaning of baptism in each one of the synoptics? How does the account of Jesus' baptism function in the story? What does it suggest about the place of baptism in the early church?

3/2 Identity and Mission

Read: Luke 4:1-5:11

Gospel Parallels (color)

Tiede, "No Prophet Is Acceptable in His Own Country" (course packet)

Brawley, chapter 2

Evans and Sanders, "Gospel and Midrash" (course packet)

Commentary by either Fitzmyer or Marshall (reserve)

Hayes and Holladay, chapter on literary criticism

Prepare to Discuss: What are the main points of the interpretation by Brawley? Tiede? By Fitzmyer or Marshall? What does Luke tell us about Jesus' identity? What is Jesus' mission? How does it differ from Jesus' mission in Mark and Matthew?

3/9 Jesus (and Paul) and Torah Observance

Read: Luke 5:12-16; 6:1-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 10:25-28; Acts 15:1-16:1-5;
21:17-26; 23:1-10

Gospel Parallels (color)

Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," (course packet)

Write: What evidence do you see that, according to Luke-Acts, Jesus (and Paul) did not oppose the Law? What difference does it make for your understanding of Jesus and/or the origin of Christianity? Or that Torah observance is a positive aspect of the identity of the faithful community? What are the implications for classical Christian dichotomy between Law and Gospel, or between the letter and the spirit of the Law? (500-700)

Reading Week: classes do not meet

3/23 Table Fellowship

Read: Luke 5:27-32; 7:36-50; 14:1-24; 15:1-32; 22:14-28; 24:28-35;

Gospel Parallels (color)

Prepare to Discuss: Who is at the table? Who is the host? The guest(s)? Who is excluded? Where is the table? Who wants to be there? What happens at the table? Why is eating and drinking together important? What analogies do you draw between Luke's emphasis on table fellowship for Jesus, the early church and our own communities?

3/30 The Journey

Read: Luke 9:51-19:27;

Evans, "He Set His Face" in Luke and Scripture (reserve)

Prepare to Discuss: This section in Luke, though there are parallels in Mark and Matthew for some pericopae, it is unique in that it is framed as a journey. Also, it includes material found only in Luke. What does Luke say, imply, about Jesus' journey? About the journey of every disciple? Read this section carefully, and consider the material contained in these chapters as they relate to the journey. Consider how this journey relates to the identity and mission of Jesus set forth in chapter 4.

- 4/6 Passion Narrative
Read: Luke 18:28-24:53
Gospel Parallels, including John
See: Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion"

Write: Respond to the movie, addressing the following questions: Why do some believe the movie is anti-Jewish? Do you agree or disagree? How does the John (the gospel Gibson's movie follows) differ from Luke and/or the other synoptics? What does this suggest about the claim to historical accuracy? What is the relationship between context (of the gospels, audiences in different times and places) and meaning? What is the relationship between history and faith, for you? Prepare to Discuss: What are the clues in the Emmaus story that indicate the story is a kind of "journey of every believer" rather than an account of an historical event?

Easter Break Classes do not meet.

- 4/20 Parables
Read: Luke 10:25-37; 14:15-24; 15; 16:1-13; 18:1-8; 19:11-27; 20:9-19
Gospel parallels (color)
Prepare to Discuss: Select four of the parables and state in one or two sentences what is the main point of the parable.
- 4/27 Discussion of Selected Texts
Read: 5:17-26; 8:26-39; 9:18-27; 10:25-37; 13:1-9; 16:19-31; 18:18-30; 19:1-10
Gospel Parallels (color)
Recommended: Biblical Exegesis, first and last chapter
Write: You will write an exegesis paper on one of the above texts. Your paper should include a close reading of the text, consideration of parallels, its location in Luke, how the text relates to the purpose of the author, the intended, audience, the identity and mission of Jesus, the main point(s) of the text, and how you might preach or teach it for a contemporary audience. Include conversation with other voices (commentators) in your own interpretation. (1000-1500)
- 5/4 Interpreting Acts; Gentile Mission
Read: Acts 1-5; 10:1-11:18; 15-28
Brawley, chapters 3 and 4
Jervell, "The Church of Jews and Godfearers" (course packet)
Gager, "Jews, Gentiles, and Synagogues in the Book of Acts" (packet)
Prepare to Discuss: thesis and key points of Brawley's argument, including what he is arguing against.
- 5/11 Written Exam in Class

You will receive a study guide two weeks in advance of the exam, and you will select three or four questions for your essays. You will have choices.

Guide for Coloring Gospel Parallels

Color the parallel texts using the following color code:

Underline in red	words found in Mt, Mk, Lk
Underline in blue	words found in Mt and Mk but not in Lk
Underline in green	words found in Lk and Mk but not in Mt
Underline in black	words found in Mt and Lk but not in Mk
Underline in brown	words in Mk only
Underline in yellow	words in Mt only
Underline in orange	words in Lk only