

CH227 Interpreting Matthew
Fall 2004
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Course Description: We will study the Gospel of Matthew using historical-critical and literary methods for exegesis. We will consider this Gospel in relationship with the other Synoptic Gospels. Consideration will be given to this New Testament writing in its first century context and to its meanings in contemporary contexts. We will read secondary literature (commentaries, articles, etc.) related to the selected texts each week.

Required Books:

Harper-Collins Study Bible
Gospel Parallels, 5th edition, Throckmorton, editor
Borg and Wright, The Meaning of Jesus
Nickelsburg, Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins
Overman, J. Andrew, Church and Community in Crisis

Recommended:

Harrington, D.J., The Gospel of Matthew
Hayes and Holladay, Biblical Exegesis

Goals:

1. to become familiar with particular characteristics of the story of Jesus as the Gospel of Matthew tells it
2. to become acquainted with current scholarship on Matthew
3. to become acquainted with resources for biblical study
4. to interpret Matthew for contemporary contexts

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. All written assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. If there are extenuating circumstances affecting your ability to complete the assignments when due, 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.

See Student Handbook for policies relevant to classes.

Schedule of Assignments

- 9/14 Introduction;Gospels in Context
- 9/21 Context and Point of View
Read: Matthew 1-2
Overman, 1-51; 413-419
Nickelsburg, 1-28, 147-184
Write: Read the passage in Overman's Church and Community, p. 9, beginning with "In this time, there existed a number of competing..." and concluding with "the turn of the eras in Roman Palestine." What evidence do you see in the first two chapters of Matthew that support the claims Overman makes in this paragraph? Cite textual evidence in parentheses, chapter and verse. (500-750 words)
- 9/28 Synoptic Gospels Review; The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry
Read: Matthew 3-4
Gospel Parallels; color (see end of syllabus)
Overman, 52-72
Harrington, 50-75
Hayes and Holladay, chapters 5 and 8
Powell, "Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew."
Interpretation, October, 1992 (copy on reserve)
Prepare to Discuss: What are the distinctive features of "Matthew's" redaction of the pericopes in these two chapters, assuming Mark and Q as sources?
- 10/5 Sermon on the Mount I; Kingdom; Pharisees; Torah Observance
Read: Mathew 5-7
Gospel Parallels for Matthew 5
Overman, 73-87
Harrington, 76-93
Nickelsburg, 29-60
Write: On the basis of your reading of Mt 5 (pay particular attention to vs 17-20), and the commentaries and article, what do you think was the place of Torah observance (Sabbath, dietary, circumcision) as a mark of identity for the Matthean community? Cite textual evidence by chapter and verse, secondary sources by author and p.#, in parentheses. (500-700)
- 10/12 Sermon on the Mount II; Righteousness; Kingdom Prayer
Read: Matthew 6-7
Gospel Parallels; color 6:7-18
Overman, 87-110
Harrington, 93-111
Write: Respond to someone who objects to any changes in the language of the Lord's Prayer. Base your response on your work with gospel parallels, your understanding of the nature, purpose, and/or authority of the gospels,

and your own sense for the place of tradition. OR Explain why some commentators call this “The Kingdom Prayer.” You might want to frame this as an article for a parish newsletter or part of an adult education forum. (400-500)

- 10/19 Structure of the Sermon on the Mount; Polemic; Audience; Matthew’s Jesus
Read: Mt 5-7; 23
Gospel Parallels; note Mt’s arrangement of material from sources and special material
Nickelsburg, 89-118
Johnson, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Convention of Ancient Polemic,” Journal of Biblical Literature, 108 (1989)
Write: What does the narrator of this gospel suggest about Jesus in Mt 5-7? His authority, purpose, meaning? What could one say about Jesus, according to this gospel, based on what tradition calls The Sermon on the Mount? (500)
Looking Ahead: Begin reading The Meaning of Jesus

Reading Week: classes do not meet

11/2 Class will not meet today

- 11/9 Jesus of History and Jesus of Faith; Miracles of Jesus Criticism
Read: Borg and Wright, The Meaning of Jesus
Mt 8-9:34
Gospel Parallels; color
Overman, 112-137
Nickelsburg, 61-88
Write: See separate handout for assignment on The Meaning of Jesus
Prepare to Discuss: How does form criticism help us exegete the miracles of Jesus? What do the miracles tell us about Jesus, in the context of the first century? How might we interpret them today?

- 11/16 Discipleship and Mission
Read: Mt 9:35-11:1
Gospel Parallels
Overman, 138-161
Harrington, 135-154
Prepare to Discuss: What do we learn about the relationship between Jesus and disciples? What are the expectations, costs, rewards? How would you describe the mission? Relevance for the church today?

11/23 Discussion of Selected Texts; Introduction to Parables

Read: Mt 11-19

Gospel Parallels for: 12:22-32; 13:24-43; 14:22-33; 15:21-28; 16:13-28; 17:14-20; 18:15-22; 18:23-24; 19:1-12; 19:16-26. Color, unless there are no parallels.

Commentaries, Overman and Harrington, related to assigned pericopes

Recommended: Biblical Exegesis, first and last chapter

Prepare to Discuss: I will assign each of you one of the pericopes above for special focus. Your work should include a close reading of the text, consideration of parallels, how the text relates to the larger narrative in terms of social context, intended audience, the identity and mission of Jesus, and issues for contemporary contexts. Include engagement with commentaries. I suggest that you write your work on these pericopes, though you will not be asked to turn in your written work.

11/30 Parables

Read: Mt 20, 21, 22,24, 25

Overman, 306-352

Harrington, commentary on assigned parables (see below)

Recommended: Barbara Hall, Joining the Conversation

Write: Choose one of the following parables, and write a parable (no more than 500 words, fewer is better) that makes the same point as the biblical parable, using contemporary images and language.

20:1-15; 21:33-43; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 25:14-30

12/7 Passion Narrative; Resurrection; Commission

Read: Mt 26-28

Gospel Parallels

Harrington, 408-417

Overman, 353-412

Prepare to Discuss: What do we learn about the purpose, context, themes, of the gospel from the ending?

12/14 Written Exam in Class

You will receive a study guide two weeks in advance of the exam, and you will be asked to write on three or four questions. You will be given some options. You may bring a page of notes in addition to your Bible for the exam.

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