



BI522 The Gospels

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Michael Morrison, PhD

Course Description

This course examines the four canonical Gospels to see what each of these four portraits of Jesus tells us. Students will explore the literary and theological relationships between the Gospels, and the major themes each one presents. Students will describe how the teachings of Jesus can be used in our very different circumstances today.

Estimated workload: For a student to do well in this course, the student will need to invest a total of 137 hours, or about 12 hours per week of reading, participating on the website, and writing papers.

Required textbooks

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Read them in a scholarly translation such as the ESV, NIV or NRSV, not a paraphrase.

Strauss, Mark L. *Four Portraits, One Jesus: An Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020. ISBN: 978-0310528678. Price for a new book: \$37. Kindle, \$41. (The first edition from 2007 may also be used, and costs a little less.)

Wright, N.T. *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters*. New York: HarperOne, 2011; paperback, 2018. ISBN [978-0062084408](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780062084408). Approximate price: \$14. 256 pages.

Please obtain these books before the class begins. The links go to [bookfinder.com](https://www.bookfinder.com), where you may find lower prices.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lessons.** They will be posted each Monday for ten weeks. This will take about 2 hours per week.
2. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 800 pages. Students should allow about 4½ hours each week to read.
3. **Participate in online forum discussions.** In most courses, part of the learning that occurs comes through discussion and interaction with the instructor and other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. There will be six online forum discussions. (15 percent of the final grade.)
4. **Three quizzes.** There will be three open-book quizzes, about the lessons and assigned readings. (10 percent of the final grade.)
5. **One exegetical paper, done in three parts:** Students may choose one of four passages for the focus of these papers systematic way, and it will help me read and grade the papers in a consistent way.
 - a. First, a 5-page paper on the historical and literary setting of the passage. (25% of grade.)
 - b. Second, a 5-page paper analyzing key words and the original message of the passage. (25% of grade.)
 - c. Last, a 4-page paper discussing how the passage is relevant in our own context, either in theology and/or in ethics. (25% of grade.)