

ADVANCED EXEGESIS OF MARK (NT 2023)

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Fall 2019

Professor: Dr. Susan R. Garrett

Times: Thursdays 8:30 – 11:20 am

Course Description

At first reading Mark's Gospel looks like a simple narrative, simply told. It recounts the story of a man who made a few claims for himself, did a few deeds that attracted attention, ran into some trouble with authorities, and then got himself killed. The Greek is plain or even awkward, and the style of narration appears naïve: "And then Jesus did this, and then he did that, and then he said this, and then that happened."

Closer investigation, however, reveals great depth to Mark's narrative. This Gospel's layered quality reflects the author's reliance on the Jewish scriptures to shape the plot and make points about Jesus' identity and God's purposes. For example, in the accounts of the loaves and fishes, the Exodus story of the children of Israel receiving manna in the wilderness seems to lie just below the surface. But the layered quality also reflects Mark's assumption that reality itself is layered. There is a hidden dimension to things, which is not apparent to the naked eye but can be perceived only by those for whom there has been an *apokalypsis*, or uncovering.

In this course we will explore these and other features of Mark, reading the Gospel in English with frequent reference to the Greek. You will become deeply familiar with the content and character of Mark, and with issues addressed in past and current scholarly interpretations of it. You will have opportunity to reflect on how this Gospel might shape your understanding of Jesus Christ and of Christian discipleship. The class format will be seminar discussion, the success of which will depend on each student's thoughtful preparation and participation.

The course aims to meet MDiv student learning outcome #1 ("Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible, and the ability to use critical skills and educated imagination to interpret it in contemporary social and cultural contexts") and #5 ("Students will acquire the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the practice of Christian ministry," with specific attention to preaching and teaching); and MAR student learning outcome #1 ("Students will be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively").

Intended Major Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, each student will be able to:

1. Describe the interconnectedness of important themes in Mark, identifying and analyzing pertinent passages in the Gospel. Themes include:
 - a. Knowledge Hidden and Revealed: the messianic secret, the incomprehension of the disciples, and the mystery of the kingdom of God;

- b. Christology: Jesus as “tried and true,” as Son of Man and Son of God, and as the suffering Messiah-King; and
 - c. Discipleship: Following in Jesus’ way, single-mindedness and prayer, and endurance to “the end.”
2. Recognize the difference between historical, literary, and theological questions to be addressed in the study of Mark.
 3. Demonstrate capacity to preach or teach from Mark in ways that reflect careful textual study while staying true to the student’s own tradition.

Textbooks

Blount, Brian K., and Gary W. Charles. Preaching Mark in Two Voices. Westminster John Knox. 2002. ISBN 0664223931. [Used copies available for under \\$7.00, including shipping.](#)

Boring, M. Eugene. Mark: A Commentary. Westminster John Knox. 2006. ISBN 0664221076. [Kindle is best deal at \\$23.49. Hard copies are close to \\$50.](#)

Garrett, Susan R. The Temptations of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel. Eerdmans, 1996. ISBN 0802842593. [Used copies available for about \\$9.00, including shipping.](#)

Requirements and Evaluation

- (1) Perfect or near-perfect class attendance (please note attendance and makeup policy below). For each class session: careful reading and study of the assigned verses of Mark; also reading (prior to the session) of corresponding sections in Boring’s commentary or any other materials designated for that day. Students should come to class with notes on readings and with questions in mind for discussion. *Worth 20% of the final grade.*
- (2) Leadership of a 45-minute segment of one class session. Student should come prepared to guide the discussion on the relevant passage from Mark. No formal presentation is required, but preparation of a handout identifying key issues, questions, or theories about the passage is essential. This handout should be submitted electronically to the professor one week before the student’s assigned session. *Worth 20% of the final grade.*
- (3) A notebook with answers to six essay questions (included in an Appendix below). *Each half of the notebook will be worth 15% of the final grade, for a total of 30%.*

Students are encouraged to work together on these. The number of students who may submit a joint notebook is limited only by the class size, and it is permissible to switch groups after the first half of the notebook has been submitted on October 31. All students working collaboratively on a notebook will be assigned the same grade for their submission. **The first half of the notebook (covering essays 1-3) is due at 5 p.m. on**

October 31. The second half of the notebook (covering essays 4-6) is due at 5 p.m. on November 21. A rubric to assist with preparation and assessment of the notebook is included below.

- (4) An exegesis paper (8-10 double-spaced pages, not including title page, bibliography, or endnotes) on a passage from Mark selected in consultation with the professor, due at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 12. Please email directly to the professor at sgarrett@lpts.edu. A rubric to assist with preparation and assessment of the paper will be provided in advance. *Worth 30% of the final grade.*

Schedule

September 5. Orientation to the Course. Introduction to the Study of the Gospels. Overview of the Gospel of Mark.

Preparation:

- Boring, 1-25
- Garrett, Temptations, 1-4
- Garrett, "Narratives of the NT" (manuscript)

September 12. Mark 1: The beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

Preparation:

- Mark 1
- Boring, 29-73
- Garrett, Temptations, 51-88
- Blount and Charles, 1-40

September 19. Mark 2–3: Authority, rejection, and the new community.

Preparation:

- Mark 2–3
- Boring, 73-111
- Blount and Charles, 41-59

September 26. Mark 4:1-34: Parables and the mystery of the Reign of God.

Preparation:

- Mark 4:1-34
- Boring, 111-42
- Blount and Charles, 60-75

October 3. Mark 4:35–6:56 – Jesus the miracle worker.

Preparation:

- Mark 4:35–6:56
- Boring, 142-96
- Blount and Charles, 76-115

October 10. Mark 7:1–8:21 – The scope of Jesus' ministry.

Preparation:

- Mark 7:1–8:21
- Boring, 196-228
- Blount and Charles, 116-43

October 17: Research and Study

October 24: Mark 8:22–9:13. Incidents on the Way to Jerusalem (Part 1)

Preparation:

- Mark 8:22–9:13
- Boring, 229-71
- Blount and Charles, 144-60

October 31. Mark 9:14–10:52. Incidents on the Way to Jerusalem (Part 2)

Preparation:

- Mark 9:14–10:52
- Boring, 271-307
- Blount and Charles, 161-85

First half of notebook (covering questions 1-3) due at 5 p.m.

November 7. Mark 11:1–12:44. In the Holy City.

Preparation:

- Mark 11:1–13:4
- Boring, 311-56
- Blount and Charles, 186-207

November 14. Mark 13:1-37. The apocalyptic discourse.

Preparation:

- Mark 13:5-37
- Boring, 356-78
- Garrett, Temptations, 137-69
- Blount and Charles, 208-31

November 21. Mark 14-15 – The passion narrative.

Preparation:

- Mark 14-15
- Boring, 378-440
- Garrett, Temptations, 89-135
- Blount and Charles, 232-54

Second half of notebook (covering questions 4-6) due at 5 p.m.

November 28. Thanksgiving.

December 5. Mark 16:1-8 - The resurrection of Jesus. The ending of Mark.

Preparation:

- Mark 16:1-8
- Boring, 441-53
- Garrett, Temptations, 171-81
- Blount and Charles, 255-73

December 12, 5:00 p.m. **Exegesis paper due.**

Appendix 1:

Questions and Rubric for Notebook

Questions

1. Discuss the Parable of the Sower and its interpretation in Mark 4:1-20, suggesting ways that this passage fits into the narrative as a whole.
2. Discuss Mark's portrayal of the twelve disciples. What are some of the theories that have been posited to account for the negative emphases of this portrayal, and what are their strengths and weaknesses?
3. Discuss Mark's portrait of Jesus as a hidden and suffering Messiah. Be sure to incorporate some discussion of Wrede's theory of the "messianic secret" and subsequent scholarly assessments of that theory.
4. Discuss Mark's depiction of Jesus' conflict with satanic/demonic powers. What indications does Mark give that this conflict continues beyond the last exorcism and into the passion narrative?
5. Discuss the so-called 'apocalyptic discourse' (Mark 13). Your discussion should include consideration of the following issues: What are the objections sometimes raised to the

authenticity of the attribution of these words to Jesus? What motifs does the discourse have in common with the rest of Mark's Gospel? In what ways does Mark signal his readers that Jesus' teachings in this section are relevant for them in particular?

6. In what ways does Mark's account of Jesus' passion advance christological motifs laid out in the preceding sections of the Gospel? Consider especially the portrayal of Jesus as a hidden and suffering messiah, as a royal messiah, and as the Son of Man.

Rubric: Qualities of a First-Rate Notebook

1. Each essay stays closely focused on the prompt-question as posed. Answers are well organized, with readily apparent overall structure and coherent paragraphs.
2. Each essay identifies and discusses key passages relevant to the prompt-question, and calls attention to related supporting themes. (For example, an essay discussing the "messianic secret" might explain how it is related to the theme of the incomprehension of the disciples.)
3. Each essay makes substantive, precise, and insightful use of one or more of the texts assigned for class, with citations (may format as author's last name + page number[s] in parentheses).
4. Where relevant, essays demonstrate awareness of how the historical, literary, and theological dimensions to the study of Mark differ from one another.
5. Answers show creative insight and independence of judgment.

Appendix 2: Course Policies

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site on ["Inclusive and Expansive Language"](#) (under the menu for current students).

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the professor is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others (including other students as well as online sources) must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Failure to credit sources (whether intentional or due to oversight) constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar

with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy

Perfect or near-perfect attendance is expected, and roll will be taken. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class prior to the session. Whether excused or unexcused, absence will affect the “attendance and participation” component of the student’s grade, and more than three absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Policy on Late Papers and Exams, and on Incompletes

Out of fairness to other students, papers turned in after the time and date specified in the syllabus will receive a grade penalty. Schedule of penalties: 1 minute to 24 hours late = 1 letter-grade deduction; 24 to 48 hours late = 2 letter-grade deduction. Papers more than 48 hours late will not be accepted. Grades of incomplete for the course will be permitted only in extreme circumstances, and must be arranged by the date specified by the registrar’s office.

Policy on Use of Electronic Devices in Class

Do not send text messages during class. All cell phones should be silenced during class (if you are waiting for an important call, you should let the professor know ahead of time). When using computers in class do not access the Internet unless specifically for purposes relevant to the course. Checking of email or social networking sites will be grounds for dismissal from the session and will result in a one-letter-grade reduction in the student’s participation grade for the semester.